PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 159

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1988-89

COMPRISING PERIOD
30 OCTOBER—10 NOVEMBER 1989

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IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 159

EIGHTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1988-89

House of Commons

Monday 30 October 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

London Regional Transport

1. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chair of London Regional Transport; and what matters were discussed.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil **Parkinson**): I last met the chairman of London Regional Transport, Mr. Wilfrid Newton, on 17 October. We discussed various issues relating to LRT's finances.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Secretary of State comment on LRT's waste in pulping thousands of fare rise tickets which were scrapped because they did not have the Minister's approval? Will he assure the House that fare rises will be kept below the rate of inflation? Will he undertake to provide the substantial new public investment called for today by the London Regional Passengers Committee so that a start can be made to end the squalor on London's public transport?

Mr. Parkinson: I have had discussions with the chairman about all aspects of LRT's finances —its fares, investment programmes and overall finances—and the results of those talks will be announced in due course. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that we plan to maintain the tradition of huge increases in public investment in LRT.

Mr. Squire: Is my right hon. Friend aware how grateful I am to hear his answer to that question? Will he stress that the provision of public transport to the east of London is among the Department's priorities, given the existing imbalance between east and west London?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend makes an important point. When people talk about the Jubilee line as a line for developers, they ignore the impact that it could have on the lives of the many people in east London who are looking forward to its arrival.

Ms. Ruddock: Will the Secretary of State admit that he has instructed LRT to produce fare increases substantially below the 15 per cent. that LRT believes that it needs? If LRT carries out his wishes, does he intend to make up the difference between that fare increase and the 15 per cent?

Mr. Parkinson: I have had discussions about the whole range of LRT's finances, its investment programme and so on, as part of the public expenditure survey round. The result of those discussions will be announced shortly. I hope that if fare rises are lower than they would have been the hon. Lady will not be critical, because her hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), in his previous incarnation as spokesman on energy, was constantly accusing me of trying to push prices up. If they go down—I am not saying that they will—I hope that the Opposition will give us credit for that.

London Traffic

2. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how new technology is being used to improve traffic management in London.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Atkins): New urban traffic control systems and traffic lights that adjust to changing conditions are planned to be installed at 700 junctions by 1993. Delays at these junctions should be reduced by about 12 per cent. Police traffic controllers use closed circuit television to monitor key locations. A large-scale pilot scheme for the autoguide electronic guidance system is being planned for 1992.

Mr. Irvine: Does my hon. Friend agree that the great merit of this new technology is that it maximises existing road capacity and greatly improves traffic flow along existing roads? Will he give the House further details about the new Scoot system for improving the flow through traffic lights?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is right. The Scoot system is working extremely effectively. We have already installed about 180 signals and it is our intention to install more. My hon. Friend touches on an important point when he says that new technology can relieve congestion. He is quite correct.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Secretary of State aware of the growing traffic chaos in London? He surely must be. What discussions is his Department having with the Home Office to try to get some police priority for traffic management in London? Is he aware that unless there is an all-out campaign involving his Department, the Home Department and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, the traffic will get worse and worse and in the end people will have to walk over the roofs of the cars because that will be the fastest way of getting along the roads?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. He will not be surprised to learn that, since taking office, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have been looking at these matters with a great deal of urgency. We hope to be able to say something about them soon.

Mr. Cormack: When my hon. Friend is considering these matters, will he seriously consider a ban on deliveries between 7 am and 7 pm or 8 am and 8 pm because delivery vehicles are responsible for much of the chaos and congestion in London?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend makes a fair point, and it is one of the maters that we shall be considering.

Road Building

3. **Mr. Prescott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the new roadbuilding programme, outlined in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The expanded programme set out in "Roads for Prosperity" is one of the Government's priorities. We are making good progress in preparing the schemes.

Mr. Prescott: I express my sympathy with the Secretary of State for being with us today. It must have been most disappointing for him last Thursday when he awaited the call that never came, especially as the Treasury is breaking all the commitments made by his predecessor. Is the Secretary of State now backtracking on the plans in the White Paper? Was not his predecessor quite wrong to believe that the private sector would always provide the necessary private finance, as can be seen by the chaos and confusion surrounding the tunnel links in the central London rail study? Is it not time for the Secretary of State to tackle the Treasury like a rottweiler rather than the Prime Minister's poodle?

Mr. Parkinson: I was thinking of buying a lead for my favourite rottweiler, but he is sitting opposite me and Ministers do not exchange gifts with Opposition Members. My predecessor produced an excellent White Paper. So far, we have commissioned studies and assessments on more than 40 of the schemes. I am glad to note that the hon. Gentleman is reading a better class of newspaper these days. If he keeps on reading it, he will become increasingly disappointed as the good news emerges.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we need roads not just for prosperity but for safety? I had just managed to convince his predecessor to come and look at the St. Michael's bridge, which is a menace. Fortunately, I do not need to ask my right hon. Friend to come because he will know it well from his youth. Will he please ensure that Lancashire county council does not rat on us and that we get the bypass because somebody will be killed if two cars meet on that terrible hump-backed bridge?

Mr. Parkinson: I know the hump-backed bridge at St. Michael's, which is near my home town, and I will do my best to ensure that my hon. Friend is happy about the future arrangements.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Has the Secretary of State had any further studies done, to add to the studies upon studies, to estimate the extra cost to industry in Wales and the north-west of England of sitting in traffic jams on the M6 and the M1 which inhibit movement of goods to the Channel ports? Is the Secretary of State aware that ports in my constituency will have no benefit from the Channel tunnel unless drastic action is taken to improve communications?

Mr. Parkinson: I am glad to have the hon. and learned Gentleman's endorsement of the White Paper, which makes proposals for the great improvement and widening of the two roads that he mentioned. We look forward to having his support in the months ahead for the work that is to be undertaken.

Mr. Lord: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the A140, which runs through Norfolk and Suffolk, is probably one of the most dangerous roads in East Anglia? This results from a staggering increase of traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles and, more sadly, has led to a large number of fatal accidents. There was great amazement and not a little anger when it was announced that the A140 would be dualed north of Scole in Norfolk, but not south of Scole in Suffolk. Is my right hon. Friend aware that we are hoping for an announcement later this year that the whole of that road will be dualed, to everybody's satisfaction?

Mr. Parkinson: One of the main features of the White Paper was its recognition that East Anglia has an inadequate road infrastructure. There are substantial plans set out in the White Paper to produce an improvement, and we shall honour them.

Channel Tunnel

4. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the likely increase of *(a)* road users and *(b)* public transport users in London as a result of the construction of the Channel tunnel terminal at King's Cross.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): The Department is examining the impact of the proposed terminal on the surrounding road network. The impact on the public transport network is expected to be small.

Mr. Banks: Does the Minister recall that when I saw him nearly a year ago I reported that the Channel tunnel and second London terminal projects would be chaotic and that political intervention would be required? Is he aware that confusion is now upon us and that we are in great danger of having three quarters of a tunnel, half a fast rail link and no second London terminal? When does the Minister intend to intervene to bring central political decision-making into the free market chaos which now surrounds us?

Mr. Portillo: Decisions on all these matters will be made shortly. The hon. Gentleman is alway urging me to take a strategic view, but I believe that it should be for British Rail to propose the railway line and the terminal that it wishes to build, see whether it can get private sector participation and then take a Bill through the House. If that is not successful, it is for British Rail to consider the options. If a strategic view were to be taken, I am not sure that one would not conclude that King's Cross, with its good access to the north, would be a better proposition.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: As British Rail's half-baked ideas for a Channel tunnel rail link terminating at King's Cross are now in disarray, having failed to attract any private financial support, will my hon. Friend the Minister consider the available options where there is private backing for viable plans that will serve the entire United Kingdom?

Mr. Portillo: I am well aware of my hon. Friend's concern and the assiduous way in which he represents his constituents on these and other matters, but the project has not reached the stage that he suggests. We shall have to wait and see whether British Rail will make an announcement in the coming days and weeks about a partnership with the private sector and whether it will wish to propose a Bill. If it proposed a Bill and that measure was not successful, it would then be appropriate to consider the options. A proposal has been worked out with a great deal of time and effort and I believe that it should be considered fully.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does the Minister agree that King's Cross is already the most congested location in London both above ground and below? Is it not sheer folly to propose funnelling a further 10 million or 15 million passengers per year through an over-congested location by locating the second Channel tunnel terminus there? Is it not time to think again and consider other options?

Mr. Portillo: King's Cross is extremely well connected in terms of public transport. There are more tube lines there than in any other place in London. There are also extremely good connections to the north of England. In that sense, it is very well connected. If the hon. Gentleman is referring to traffic congestion, he should remember that that problem will arise with any site that is chosen. My Department will be giving evidence to the Select Committee on Transport on the railway proposal and to the London borough of Camden on the lands development proposal, which will be a matter for Camden to consider.

Severn Crossing

5. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has drawn from the latest round of public consultation meetings in connection with revised routes for approaches to the proposed second Severn crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We are still considering the many helpful comments received following the exhibitions held in June and July. I hope to issue a statement shortly concerning modifications to the routes of the approach roads.

Mr. Stern: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he consider with some sympathy the suggestions being made for an intermediate link between the industrial areas of the north of Bristol and the southern relief road linking the second Severn crossing to the M5, which would be welcome to industry and commerce in the area?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend makes a plea for his constituents and for others nearby. The plan has considerable merit. I shall be looking to local authorities and developers to provide the resources for such a link

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that extra roads mean extra hazards and that this weekend we took a step that will involve extra danger on the roads when we put the clock forward by one hour? Does he recall the transport and road research laboratory saying that daylight saving would reduce the numbers of serious and fatal accidents by 600 per year? Will he therefore impress on other members of the Government the need for daylight saving, which will mean life saving?

Mr. Atkins: Such matters are for the Home Office. One of the reasons why that Department is currently involved in a number of consultations is that there are many differences of opinion—not least among trade unions and between people living in the north and those in the south. No doubt common sense proposals will come out of those consultations, and I look forward to that happening as much as the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Knapman (Stroud): Is my hon. Friend aware that river pilots are very concerned about the siting of the bridge and, in particular, about its effect on access to the port of Sharpness in my constituency? Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that their views will be taken fully into consideration before any decision is taken?

Mr. Atkins: Yes, Sir.

Underground Railways (London)

6. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning future plans for new underground railways serving east London.

Mr. Portillo: We are considering the cases for schemes proposed in the central London rail study and for extending the Jubilee line to docklands and Stratford. A key factor for the Jubilee line will be the contributions forthcoming from developers who will benefit from the line.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister agree that there is also an important cross-rail link? Does he recall that the concept of such a link dates back to the Royal Commission on London traffic of 1905? Which does the Minister regard as more important? The Waterloo to Canary wharf line is concept of Messrs. Olympia and York and essentially a developer's railway. If the Minister gives preference to that rather than to the cross-rail link, will he not be favouring the stockbrokers and providing them with seats for tomorrow, rather than seats for east London straphangers of today?

Mr. Portillo: The Jubilee line is important in public transport terms and would provide an important connection to Stratford, which I thought would be welcomed by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who spoke earlier. I feel sure that the people of east London would find it of considerable value. It would be of value also in terms of regenerating the inner city, which the Labour party supports. I cannot make a statement about our priorities as between the Jubilee line and the east-west cross-rail—that decision will be made shortly—but as developers also benefit from the Jubilee line it must be right that we should attempt to secure the maximum contribution from them and to minimise the contribution that the taxpayer will have to make.

Mr. Haselhurst: I am embarrassed to be in even partial agreement with the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), but is my hon. Friend aware that however admirable the idea of extensions to the Underground system, which I support, they are no substitute for the east-west cross-rail tunnel, which would do much to relieve pressure on Liverpool Street station and thus assist commuters entering London from Essex constituencies?

Mr. Portillo: The east-west cross-rail showed up very well in the central rail study as being a decongesting railway. However, my hon. Friend will recognise that the Jubilee line also provides an important link between east London and the west end, and its extension would help to establish docklands even more firmly as a new centre of activity. That in itself could also help to relieve congestion in the central area.

Mr. Cartwright: Is the Minister aware that south-east London is the forgotten corner of the city when it comes to the tube system? Can he give any grounds for hope that the proposed extensions through east London will cross the river, to give hundreds of thousands of south-east Londoners more alternatives to British Rail services?

Mr. Portillo: There are two proposals on the stocks. One is to route the Jubilee line through the Greenwich peninsula, but that is a more expensive option which would not provide good connections to the rest of the network south of the river. The other is a Lewisham extension of the docklands light railway, on which I recently received representations from a number of hon. Members and others—but as I have not received a formal proposal from London Regional Transport I am not in a position to comment on that scheme.

Mr. Roger King: Is my hon. Friend aware that while many people living outside London view investment in its infrastructure with sympathy and hope, they too have their priorities for modernisation? I refer principally to the cross-city line in Birmingham. I hope that if my hon. Friend approves all the Underground schemes proposed for London there will be a few shillings left in his coffers to undertake investment schemes in our area.

Mr. Portillo: The Government are extremely even-handed in such matters. Only last week it was my great pleasure to announce our investment in the Manchester metrolink, which I am sure is a popular decision. The proposal for the Birmingham cross-city electrification has just arrived on the desk of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, and I am sure that he will deal with it quickly.

Channel Tunnel

7. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the need for a fast rail link between Scotland and the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Parkinson: We have received a small number of such representations.

Mr. Macdonald: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that the uncertainty hanging over the link between the tunnel and London threatens to make nonsense of British Rail's plans to run a through service from Scotland to the continent? Does he agree that such a service is vital if Scotland and the regions are to benefit from the single market and the tunnel? Will he undertake to ensure that it will be in place by 1993, as BR plans, whatever the problems may be about private finance for the link with London?

Mr. Parkinson: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has raised that point. The position has been completely misunderstood. The high-speed link is not the only proposed link with the Channel tunnel and in fact will not be available until around the turn of the century. Arrangements are now being made, and large sums are being invested in both road and rail infrastructure, to ensure that Scotland and the regions have access to the tunnel from the day it is opened.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the east and west coast routes into Scotland are extremely good. British Rail has a statutory obligation to present its plans by 31 December to ensure that the regions—including Scotland—benefit, and it will be doing just that.

Mr. Amos: Does my right hon. Friend accept that a second terminal at King's Cross is vital to meet the needs of the north of England and Scotland? Will he examine the quality of service on the Newcastle-Carlisle route, which is appalling at present?

Mr. Parkinson: As I said earlier, British Rail is under an obligation to present its plans, and it is working hard on that. I cannot honestly answer my hon. Friend's question about the Newcastle-Carlisle line, but if he would care to write to me I will certainly look into the matter.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: The Secretary of State is well acquainted with the city of Aberdeen through his previous job as Secretary of State for Energy. Will he now look particularly at the rail communication links from Aberdeen, and at the clear demand that has emerged from Grampian regional council for a scheme to link Aberdeen with Edinburgh and the Channel tunnel through electrification?

Mr. Parkinson: I will bring the hon. Lady's remarks to the attention of British Rail. As part of the plans for Scotland, two major freight terminals are being considered, one of them at Gartcosh; I cannot remember offhand the site of the other. The Government's whole aim is to ensure that the regions benefit from the best possible access to the tunnel.

Road Building

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles the expanded road programme will add to the trunk road network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The expanded programme will add more than 2,700 miles of new or widened roads to the trunk road network.

Mr. Gregory: I congratulate my hon. Friend. Will he confirm that the increase in capital expenditure by the present Government is nearly 60 per cent. higher than that in 1978-79, the last full year of Socialist government? How much of the proportion that my hon. Friend has to spend will be spent in Yorkshire?

Mr. Atkins: The expanded programme will result in 51 new miles of road in Yorkshire, together with 51 miles of improved roads. All in all, that is worth some £430 million. We put our money where our mouths are.

Ms. Quin: Is the Minister aware of the strength of feeling in the north-east about the fact that the expanded road programme does not deal properly with the upgrading of the A1, either in Yorkshire or between Newcastle and Edinburgh, and also about the failure to address the problem of a proper cross-country road between Newcastle and Carlisle? Will he review the programme to meet those concerns?

Mr. Atkins: I spent all of Thursday in Newcastle talking to a wide variety of people—about the A1, among other things. They were quite satisfied with the commitment that I offered them, which was also offered in the White Paper —that we were reviewing the whole of the A1 in regard to motorway status. As the hon. Lady and other hon. Members will know, making a motorway from an existing trunk road is not as easy as it may at first appear. All those points are, however, being considered urgently.

Sir Hal Miller: Is the Minister aware that any delay in the expanded programme will prolong uncertainty and blight for those affected and add to the costs of congestion and later construction? Will he therefore do his best to ensure that construction is carried out as per the programme?

Mr. Atkins: That is certainly my intention.

Mr. Snape: Is it true that the Minister's mouth is not big enough to take the Birmingham northern relief road which has been delayed for a considerable time while the project has been hawked around the private sector? If and when it is eventually built, will the developers pay for the cost of providing policing, ambulances and lighting services along that road, or will those charges fall on the taxpayer?

Mr. Atkins: I should say that many of my hon. Friends and I are delighted with the number of people who have expressed interest in the Birmingham northern relief road. We are very pleased to have been approached by three major consortia. If that demonstrates how this scheme and many others will work, we shall be delighted. While I enjoyed the hon. Gentleman's quip, I remind him that his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), is known as "Humber mouth".

British Rail (Public Service Obligation)

10. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made in reducing the central Government public service obligation grant to British Rail in line with financial targets set in 1986.

Mr. Parkinson: The objectives that we set in 1986 called for a 25 per cent. reduction in British Rail's grant requirement by the current financial year. British Rail succeeded in achieving this target a year early, in 1988-89.

Mr. Sumberg: May I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's answer? Is not the way forward a combination of public and private capital? In that context, may I say how grateful my constituents are to his Department for the investment in the Manchester metrolink which will considerably improve communications between Bury and Manchester as well as in the south of Manchester?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, the metrolink is a good example of how the public sector and the private sector can co-operate to produce an improved service for the citizens of a very fine city.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is it not clear to the Minister that every time the PSO grant is cut while British Rail is asked to improve its investment in new services, and improve safety and services to the customer, the customer pays through the nose? Is he aware that British Rail is in danger of becoming one of the most expensive, but not one of the best, railway systems in Europe?

Mr. Parkinson: I have to admit to the hon. Lady that there is a difference in philosophy between her party and mine on this matter. We believe in cutting the grant and increasing investment. The Opposition believe in increasing the grant and reducing investment. The net result of that was ever more heavily subsidised lines getting into ever greater disrepair. We thought that that was a foolish policy, so we changed it.

Mr. Franks: Does my right hon. Friend accept that British Rail operates under the apparent inconvenience of having customers, not least the inconvenience of having customers who expect a modicum of service? When he next talks to the chairman of British Rail, will he inform him that while the first faltering steps to improve the service have been taken, there is still a long way to go before the appalling service is improved?

Mr. Parkinson: British Rail is certainly open to criticism, and I have received many letters. But it is quite wrong to pretend that the system is not slowly but steadily improving. A large investment is being made, and I wish that once in a while people would give British Rail credit where it is due for improvements in services—and there is credit due.

Mr. Prescott: Is the Secretary of State asking us to believe that it is pure coincidence that countries such as West Germany and France, which have a higher PSO level, also have lower fares, higher quality and a safer system? That fact has been confirmed by the Government's own central transport consultative committee. As he is about to abandon the plan for the privatisation of British Rail, will he now set British Rail new financial targets that do not lead to exorbitant fare increases accompanied by a poorer quality of service?

Mr. Parkinson: We shall shortly announce the new objectives for British Rail. We see no point in subsidising journeys for which people are prepared to pay a fair price, but we see the case for subsidising rural areas where it is impossible to make the service pay. We think, and I repeat, that the policy of the Greater London council—the last example of the Labour party in charge of a public transport system—of increasing subsidies and cutting investment produced disastrous results for London Transport, which is why we are having to sort it out.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that British Rail's capital investment programme is running at record levels? Has he been able to approve any specific additions to it recently?

Mr. Parkinson: British Rail's investment programme is running much higher in real terms than it was under the last Labour Government. When the public expenditure settlement is announced, my hon. Friend will note that those figures have increased. Unlike the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), we do not dream up schemes that will never come to fruition. Since I arrived at the Department, I have approved orders for more than £1 billion worth of new equipment for British Rail, LRT and local authorities.

Women and Transport

11. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has undertaken or plans to undertake into women and transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has undertaken, and is undertaking, research into various aspects of transport. The needs of women as one category of user are always taken into account.

Mrs. Mahon: I welcome any research into this much-neglected subject, but will the Minister give an assurance that the conclusions of the research will be properly resourced? More important, will he say why, in view of the Home Office's launch last week of a drive to make London a safer place in which to travel for women, Southern Region is cutting staff? The Dartford line may have no staff at night or at weekends. Sexual attacks have been prevalent on that line in the past.

Mr. Portillo: It is important to see the whole pattern of events. The resources of the British Transport police are being increased. Network SouthEast is lighting car parks and stations and improving the environment for its passengers. The article that appeared in the *Evening Standard*, on which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) leapt with such alacrity, referred to an internal consultation document that is yet to be considered even by the trade unions, let alone passengers. It was therefore premature to react to that article. There are already a number of unmanned stations on British Rail. Ticket barriers are to be phased out. Throughout the European Community, such barriers exist only in this country and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. David Martin: Is my hon. Friend aware that if he were a woman he would find what we men find when travelling on the A3 between Portsmouth and London—unacceptable traffic jams on the Guildford bypass? I hope that my hon. Friend will do all that he can to sort this out as soon as possible.

Mr. Portillo: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right.

Ms. Abbott: Is the Minister aware that women have become not less but more fearful of travelling on public transport in London over the past few months? His recent announcements about increases in the number of London Transport police do not go far enough. What will he do to ensure a proper level of policing at Finsbury Park tube station, which many women in my constituency are frightened to use?

Mr. Portillo: I recently had the pleasure of visiting Finsbury Park station, at which a new British Transport police station has recently been established, and from where it will police the Victoria, Northern and District lines. The hon. Lady said that women have become more fearful, but I must tell her that the figures are much better. For example, for the first six months of 1989, robbery on the tube is down by 42 per cent.; assault on passengers is down by 13 per cent.; and total crime on the Underground is down by 8 per cent. I attribute that to the many measures that have been taken by the British Transport police in increasing its complement, and by the fact that it has set up 42 deep-level stations, from which radio systems can now operate, thereby bringing fast response to crime.

Buses (London)

12. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure a more flexible approach to the planning of bus transport in London.

Mr. Portillo: The restructuring of London Buses Ltd. into separate subsidiaries will encourage further competition. London Regional Transport plans to increase the proportion of the network contracted out to 40 per cent. by 1992.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that ultimately an improvement in London bus services depends upon much greater deregulation, a tantalising example of which was seen during the bus strike when the Grey-Greens were able to run? In the meantime, will my hon. Friend urge on London Regional Transport a policy of listening to its new and excellent area managers, who are listening to the public and offering to provide services that the public want and will use, such as a minibus service through Battersea square? Will he encourage London Regional Transport to give such schemes the go-ahead?

Mr. Portillo: I think that London Regional Tranport listens carefully to its area managers. The background to the position in my hon. Friend's constituency is that London Regional Transport has been conducting a major survey into the services that should be provided in that area. It intends to come forward with proposals for consultation in the new year. It has also announced its intention to put the new network in Wandsworth out to competitive tender during 1990. I think therefore that in every respect that meets my hon. Friend's wishes. London Regional Transport is considering proposals from residents for a minibus service for north Battersea.

THE ARTS

Victoria and Albert Museum

52. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the director of the Victoria and Albert museum to discuss the future funding of the museum's photographic collection.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I meet the director of the Victoria and Albert museum from time to time to discuss current issues, but I have no plans at present to do so specifically to discuss the future funding of the photographic collection.

Mr. Boyes: Will the Minister join me in congratulating the curator of the photography section at the Victoria and Albert museum on his excellent work, especially in putting on the 150 years of photography exhibition? I understand that there is strong support in the Victoria and Albert for photography. All I would ask the Minister to do in terms of funding is to ensure that there is no fall in funding for the gallery. However, while I have his ear, may I ask him whether, given that our proceedings in the Chamber are now being televised, he will support my plea to allow still photographers to take pictures in the Chamber as well?

Mr. Luce: I shall think about the hon. Gentleman's last question. On the first, I know the hon. Gentleman's keen interest in photography. I join him in congratulating the Victoria and Albert and its curator on the work that they do. There has recently been an excellent photographic exhibition and there are plans for relocating the photographic gallery, which shows the very strong support there for photography.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as photography has a proud British heritage, it is right that the Victoria and Albert should celebrate this in its exhibition? Does he agree that the museum can rely on the Government's good will for funding, especially as the revenue funding has increased by 40 per cent. in real terms and the capital programme by 50 per cent. since the Conservative party came to power?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. There is no shadow of doubt that there has been an overall increase in real resources. Resources for the V and A's running costs have increased by 28 per cent. in real terms since 1979-80. There is also, as my hon. Friend knows, an important centre for photography and television in Bradford, which is an extension of the national institution and which does much good work.

National Museums (Funding)

53. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Museums and Galleries Commission to discuss the level of funding of national museums.

Mr. Luce: I meet the chairman of the Museum and Galleries Commission regularly and discuss a wide range of subjects, which have included museum and gallery funding.

Mrs. Clwyd: Did the Minister discuss with the chairman of the commission its claim that the Government are grossly underfunding our largest museums? When will the right hon. Gentleman face up to the crisis in our museums? The director of the Tate has accused the Government of making their calculations on the back of an envelope. Half the Tate's British collection is in store because the building is falling apart.

Mr. Luce: I am surprised that the hon. Lady says that there is gross underfunding and that she does not welcome the recent decision by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to invest an extra £21 million in a major extension and redevelopment of the national museum of Wales. The hon. Lady accuses the Government of underfunding and cannot even welcome that investment. That is extraordinary. It is extraordinary also that she accuses the Government of underfunding, when in 1979-80 funding for museums and galleries was £54 million whereas today it is £158 million—a real increase of 25 per cent. If the hon. Lady thinks that the Government are underfunding the museums, what does she think that the Labour Government were doing at the end of the 1970s?

Mr. Carrington: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the drain of our artistic heritage overseas as a result of the recent rise in the price of goods at auction and the inability of our museums and galleries to bid competitively to retain those art treasures in this country. Will my right hon. Friend review that situation and consider whether to review the whole procedure for the licensing of artistic exports?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right to put his finger on the fact that the dramatic increase in the prices of works of art puts extra pressure on the available resources for saving our most important works of heritage. However, throughout the 1980s, we have had the national heritage memorial fund, which has spent well over £100 million in saving important works of art for this country. If my hon. Friend intended to put his finger on the level of the purchase grant, I must point out that I said a year ago that I would look at the way in which the purchase grant was working. I ask him to be patient for a little longer, while I try to take decisions. The first priority must be to find money for the fabric, building and maintenance of our national institutions.

Mr. Fisher: It is clear that the Minister thinks that he knows better than the chairmen of the five national galleries who told him and the Prime Minister in July that unless he provided enormously increased funding for those museums and galleries, the effects would be disastrous. Did the Minister give a specific assurance to the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts in January 1988, when he announced three-year funding, that if there were exceptional circumstances, such as a rise in inflation, he would reopen the books for the national museums and consider their funding again? Will he now redeem that assurance to the Select Committee, reopen the books, pay attention to what the chairmen of those galleries are saying and provide the extra funding needed?

Mr. Luce: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman does not join me in confirming the figures, which show a real increase in support for the national museums and galleries, although he knows perfectly well that there has been an increase. Having said that, it was two years ago that I introduced three-year funding. I hope that I read in the hon. Gentleman's question the fact that he does not disagree with the concept of three-year funding. It is right to say that the levels of inflation in recent months have undermined three-year funding to some extent. The Government as a whole are clearly committed to maintaining support for the arts.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the health of our museums is best shown not only by funding, but by the number of museums that have opened in recent years and the number of people who attend those museums? Will he also take the opportunity to reject the suggestion made recently by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) that there is a Government plan to introduce compulsory admission charges? Will he confirm that it is still a voluntary scheme?

Mr. Luce: On the latter point, it is wholly for the trustees to decide whether admission charges should be introduced. That remains our policy and it is the right policy. We should let them decide how best to proceed with that matter. The Government have a fine record in terms of the catalogue of refurbishment of our national institutions—our museums and galleries. There have been extensions, such as Bodelwyddan castle, the national portrait gallery and the Tate gallery in Liverpool, various redevelopments at the Tate gallery itself, the Clore gallery extension and many other redevelopments. In the past decade, about 10 galleries at the British museum have been refurbished.

Arts Funding

54. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss the level of arts funding.

Mr. Luce: I meet the chairman regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Mr. Haynes: I want to know what the Minister is playing at as regards the Arts Council. He makes statements in the House and statements in Select Committees. He knows full well that inflation is running at 7·6 per cent. and that the Arts Council is looking to him for additional funds, yet he offers a measly 2 per cent. What is he playing at?

Mr. Luce *rose*——

Mr. Haynes: I have not finished yet. The Minister should come to the Dispatch Box and say that he is going to help the Arts Council—or else I shall be having a word with him afterwards.

Mr. Luce: I shall really miss the hon. Gentleman when he retires from the House.

We have increased resources for the Arts Council in real terms. The Government are committed to maintaining taxpayers' support for the arts. In 1987, I introduced three-year funding for the arts for the first time ever, with a 16 per cent. overall increase for the Arts Council for that period. That is a fine record and I reiterate my statement that the Government are committed to maintaining support for the arts.

CIVIL SERVICE

Trade Unions

72. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service trade unions; and what subjects were discussed.

75. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met the Civil Service trade unions; and what matters were discussed.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Luce): I have meetings from time to time with representatives of Civil Service trade unions both centrally and during visits to Civil Service establishments. A wide variety of matters is raised. I met the Civil Service unions in June this year to discuss planned changes in Civil Service recruitment.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister give an assurance to civil servants working at the south bank complex and in the national galleries and museums that their pay arrangements will be conducted and their pay negotiated nationally, that their employers at the south bank complex and in the national galleries and museums will honour those national rates of pay and that there will be no detriment or severance of those conditions?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman is ingenious in extending arts questions into Civil Service questions. I recognise the significance of his remarks. He rightly implies that the national galleries and museums operate Civil Service pay and conditions. Of course, the national structures continue but within that context the whole Civil Service is moving to a more flexible pay system. That is being developed not only in agencies but within the Civil Service, and the same applies to the national galleries and museums.

Mr. Barnes: Was the issuing of fire certificates discussed? Has the Minister issued fire certificates or been involved in the issuing of fire certificates for all the buildings for which he is responsible, as required by the Fire Precautions Act 1971? If such certificates have not been issued, will he prosecute himself?

Mr. Luce: I am not clear whether the hon. Gentleman is referring to national museums and galleries or whether his question goes wider. If he is talking about the museums and galleries, his question goes beyond the Civil Service in the broadest sense. The whole question of fire regulations is of concern. The local authorities have conducted a review of the institutions. They have given their views and they are being taken into account in the discussions.

Mr. Higgins: When my right hon. Friend next meets the Civil Service unions, will he draw their attention to his excellent response to the fifth report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee this afternoon, which shows that considerable progress is being made in the "next steps" programme, which under present plans will affect no fewer than 180,000 civil servants?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He will, of course, have seen the reply that has now been given to the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service. Since the House last discussed these issues in July, there have been further changes and more progress on "next steps". Today my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is launching the Laboratory of the Government Chemist as an executive agency, while the Historic Royal Palaces Agency was launched as an executive agency of the Department of the Environment on 1 October. Moreover, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has announced five new candidates to become defence support agencies and they will be established in due course. By July next year about 20 agencies will be established.

Mr. Holt: My right hon. Friend has had conversations with the trade unions. Does he agree that at no time has there been any truth in the rumours that civil servants do not wish to move to the north of England, and that the moving of the Departments earmarked for the north of England will go ahead?

Mr. Luce: I can assure my hon. Friend that I know of no evidence of people refusing. Of course there is an option in relocation for civil servants working in London and the south-east not to go with the job if it is moved elsewhere. Only a week or so ago I opened a new headquarters for the occupational health service in Edinburgh and that service is part of the Cabinet Office. It is important to note that 34,000 jobs are under review for relocation. That does not mean to say that they will all be relocated, but that number are under review for relocation outside the south-east.

Dr. Marek: I welcome the fact that the Minister says that the issue of fire certificates is a matter of concern. He will be aware that the Home Office has responsibility for issuing fire certificates for most Civil Service buildings outside the Ministry of Defence. He will also know that there is a four-year backlog for that. As the Minister with responsibility for the Civil Service, is he concerned about that? I hope that he is. What proposals does the Minister have to ensure that that backlog is dealt with as expeditiously as possible?

Mr. Luce: Each Secretary of State must answer for his own Department. I will look into the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised. I will take it seriously and let him have a reply. Each Minister is responsible for his Department and the standards within that Department. In reply to an earlier question, I could respond only in connection with my direct responsibilities for national museums and galleries.

Civil Servants (Discipline)

73. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many past or present members of the Civil Service have been disciplined for incidents of political bias or breach of confidentiality since 1979; and what channels of communication are in place for civil servants who wish to make representations that Ministers are making improper use of their ministerial powers.

Mr. Luce: About 10 on average each year, but only limited information is held centrally. There are guidelines set out for civil servants for dealing with matters of conscience.

Mr. Speller: I thank my right hon. Friend for his rather partial answer. As there are two sides to the playing field, when civil servants want to make representations about a Minister abusing his power, is my right hon. Friend satisfied that there is a level playing field for them as there is for the Minister if a civil servant should abuse his basic right or obligation to neutrality?

Mr. Luce: Of course every Minister is accountable directly to the House of Commons and the House can hold every Minister to account. However, there are special rules and conditions for civil servants. Those guidelines, of which the Armstrong guidelines are the most recent, give civil servants the option to appeal first to their manager and then to their permanent secretary. There is an ultimate right of appeal on matters of conscience. They can go to the professional head of the Civil Service. No one, I might point out, has yet done that.

Mr. Rooker: How many of those incidents have involved civil servants who have refused to carry out politically biased work for their Ministers?

Mr. Luce: If the hon. Gentleman keeps a sense of perspective, he will appreciate that there have been 10 cases of breaches of confidentiality of one kind or another out of a total Civil Service membership of 567,000. We really must keep this in proportion. The vast bulk of civil servants are loyal and impartial to the elected Government of the day. That is my experience and I am sure that that was the experience of Labour Governments.

Plain English

74. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what progress has been made in his campaign for plain English in, and ease of completion of, Government forms.

Mr. Luce: Since 1982 we have saved about £14 million on our review of Government forms. We have made them easier to understand and we regularly win awards from the plain English campaign. We are keeping up this pressure.

Mr. Hague: The fifth progress report on Government forms states that 40,000 Government forms have been reviewed, 15,000 have been redesigned and 9,000 have been scrapped. Will my right hon. Friend undertake to continue the momentum of that excellent work, and be particularly vigilant with the Inland Revenue and the Department of Social Security whose forms must be completed by the public?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right and the figures to which he referred show what we have achieved in the past 10 years in redesigning or scrapping forms. We regard that task as a relentless obligation. I am inclined to follow the advice of Winnie the Pooh by A. A. Milne when Pooh said, "Long words bother me." That is good advice when considering Government forms.

Mr. Vaz: I support the Minister's campaign for plain English in Government forms. When can we look forward to a campaign for plain Gujarati, plain Punjabi and plain

Urdu in Government forms? Many people speak those languages, but they are not, unfortunately, spoken by the Minister.

Mr. Lace: I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman in that I cannot speak evey language under the sun. I am a great believer in keeping to plain English. That is our objective. There is a plain English campaign and we should make forms as simple as possible. We should keep the words and the language simple. That is our objective.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, although long words may bother him, many of his ministerial colleagues do not suffer in a similar manner? Only last week we had an extraordinary array of words —for example, "hospitalisation"—and we heard "level playing field" this afternoon. Could every member of the ministerial team be supplied with a copy of Sir Ernest Gower's "Plain Words" and be asked to use it, mark it, learn it and inwardly digest it?

Mr. Lace: I still stick to the view of Winnie the Pooh that "Long words bother me." If everyone follows that advice, we will be much better off.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Minister agree with the plain English of Lord Hailsham, who said that it was no business of the press office of the Prime Minister to undermine the authority of Ministers? Does Civil Service discipline apply to Mr. Ingham?

Mr. Lace: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman asked that question about Mr. Ingham, of all people, who served the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) with great distinction in a former Government, as well as serving my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. If anyone could have shown his impartiality to an elected Government today, he has done just that.

Ambulance Service

3.30 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you had any request from the Government concerning a statement yesterday by the Secretary of State for Health in *The Sunday Correspondent* to the effect that the Army has been put into preparedness, in case "some hothead somewhere" starts putting public safety at risk in the ambulance men's dispute? I am sure that you will be aware that such a move by the Government would be extremely dangerous, particularly when the ambulance men's union is merely asking for the dispute to be referred to arbitration, and that at no stage, at no time and nowhere have the ambulance men refused to answer 999 calls and undertake 999 duties. I am sure that you will agree that it is important to have a statement on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: I have had no request for a statement, and I do not think that much has changed since we had a statement on this matter last week.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 (Amendment) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1501) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

CUSTOMS DUTIES

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 5) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1610) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Question agreed to.

European Community Documents

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House I will put together the three motions relating to European Community documents.

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 8819/89 relating to gas appliances be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.

That European Community Document No. 8446/89 relating to nutrition labelling be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.

That European Community Document No. 5032/89 relating to public takeover bids be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

FOOTBALL SPECTATORS BILL *[Lords]* (ALLOCATION OF TIME)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 80 (Allocation of time to Bills),

That the Report [18 October] of the Business Committee be now considered.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That—

(1) The order in which proceedings on Consideration are taken shall be amendments to Clauses 1 to 7, Schedule 1, Clause 8, Schedule 2, Clauses 9 to 13, New Clauses relating to Part I of the Bill, New Schedules relating to Part I of the Bill amendments to Clauses 14 to 22, New Clauses relating to Part II of the Bill, New Schedules relating to Part II of the Bill, remaining New Clauses, amendments to Clauses 23 to 26 and remaining New Schedules.

(2) On the allotted day which under the Order [17th July] is be be given to the proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading, the proceedings on Consideration shall be allotted in the manner shown in the Table set out below and, subject to the provisions of that Order, each part of those proceedings shall be brought to a conclusion at the time specified in the second column of that Table.

TABLE

Proceedings	Time for conclusion of proceedings
Amendments up to the end of Clause 13, New Clauses relating to Part I of the Bill, and new Schedules relating to Part I of the Bill	9 p.m.
Remaining proceedings on Consideration	10 p.m.

Orders of the Day

Football Spectators Bill *[Lords]*

[ALLOTTED DAY]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 1

SCOPE AND INTERPRETATION OF THIS PART

3.32 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 14, at end insert—

'( ) The Secretary of State shall not make a designation under subsection (2) above without giving the Football Membership Authority an opportuniy to make representations about the proposed designation, and taking any representations he receives into account.'.

This is the first of many amendments which carry forward undertakings which I gave in Committee. The House will be discussing several Government amendments today, many of them tabled in response to points raised by hon. Members in Committee. Other Government amendments are designed to clarify the drafting of the Bill and to spell out rather more of the workings of the Football Licensing Authority than we had time to do in Committee. I hope that the House will regard them as helpful. Amendment No. 1 is in response to a proposal made by the Opposition.

When the Standing Committee discussed the Secretary of State's designation of matches to which the provisions of the Bill would apply, I promised to consider tabling an amendment on report which would ensure that discussions with the Football Membership Authority would take place before any such designation was made. Amendment No. 1 gives effect to that undertaking. It requires the Secretary of State, before designating any matches, to provide the FMA with the opportunity to make representations about the proposed designation. The amendment also makes it clear that any views expressed by the FMA must be taken into account by the Secretary of State before he makes a designation order in accordance with clause 2(1).

I am sure that the House will agree that the advice of the FMA should be available to the Secretary of State to assist him in reaching such decisions. The amendment ensures that that will be the case, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): Both in this and in other amendments the Minister has sought to meet points that were made in Committee, and we thank him for doing so. It gives me an opportunity to ask the Minister about a statement that appeared on the tapes in the late morning to the effect that the Secretary of State has agreed that there should be pilot schemes with one club in each division, and that they should last for 12 months. I should like to know whether that statement is correct. Can the Minister confirm that he will be taking that line of action and recommending it to the House during the afternoon?

Mr. Moynihan: I am more than happy to assist the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell)

[Mr. Moynihan]

on that point. If the right hon. Gentleman has accurately outlined it, and I am sure he has, and if it is as he has stated it, the statement is totally without foundation and inaccurate. There will be an opportunity to discuss other amendments relating to the phasing in of the technology, but the position remains as was stated by me in Committee and as it was placed on record last Friday. Whatever the source, I can categorically state that the statement is inaccurate.

Mr. Howell: I shall not detain the House on that point. I am sorry that that is not the case, as we should have welcomed it. Since every other Minister of independence in the Government has declared his independence this weekend, I am sorry to find that the Minister for Sport intends to be the last poodle in the Government.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Moynihan: I beg to move amendment No. 25, in page 1, line 15, after 'above' insert—'(a)'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 26 to 30.

Mr. Moynihan: The amendments relate to the application of the national membership scheme to international matches and to matches between Football League and non-league clubs. The question how best to treat these matches was considered at length in Committee. The Government have made it clear that their intention is that matches played at Wembley and matches between league and non-league teams played at a league ground should be designated and that the scheme should apply to them. However, we have always emphasised that, when it comes to how the scheme should be applied to such matches, special arrangements will be necessary.

It would be unreasonable to expect, say, Italian supporters making a one-off trip to Wembley to see their national team play England to be members of the scheme. Similarly with supporters of a non-league team who do not attend Football League matches but who wish to see their team in what may be their only game against league opposition. There must be special arrangements for these categories of spectators so that they can be authorised to attend designated matches without being members of the scheme.

As I explained in Committee, this is where the Football Licensing Authority has an important role to play. The amendments will enable the Secretary of State, when designating a match or matches, to provide that spectators admitted to a ground are authorised spectators, subject to special conditions, and that they should be treated as part of the licence.

No doubt the Football Licensing Authority will wish to discuss with the local police, with the club or, in the case of Wembley, with the Wembley authorities just what the special arrangements for the matches should be. They will be able to take full account of the circumstances of the individual match and of the ground and decide the most appropriate arrangements under which a particular game can be played. They may wish to make different arrangements at different matches and for different parts of the ground. It is important that they must be free to decide what is best in any particular case—a point put very strongly by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) in Committee.

Therefore, I commend the amendments to the House. I hope that it will share my view about the importance of the FLA being able to decide, in consultation with the interested parties locally, the most appropriate arrangements under which a particular match in these categories should be played. It is important that appropriate measures to minimise the threat of violence at these matches are put in place. The amendments mean that the FLA will be able to achieve that in the most appropriate way.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 26, in page 1, line 17, at end insert

'; and

(b) may provide, in relation to the match or description of match designated by the order or any description of match falling withint the designation, that spectators admitted to the ground shall be authorised spectators to the extent, and subject to any restrictions or condidtions, determined in pursuance of the order by the licensing authority under this Part of this Act.'.

No. 27, in page 2, line 2, after 'if', insert—

'(a)'.

No. 28, in page 2, line 4, after 'match', insert

'; or

(b) he is an authorised spectator by virtue of subsection (3)(b) above,'.

Clause 2

OFFENCES RELATING TO UNAUTHORISED ATTENDANCE AT DESIGNATED FOOTBALL MATCHES

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I beg to move amendment No. 31, in page 2, line 40 at end insert—

'( ) Where a person is charged under subsection (1) above with an offence of entering or remaining on premises, and was at the time of the alleged offence not disqualified from being a member of the national football membership scheme, it shall be a defence to prove that he was allowed to enter the premises as a spectator by a person reasonably appearing to him to have lawful authority to do so.'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Government amendments Nos. 32, 33, and 34.

Amendment No. 55, in page 5, line 29, at end insert—

'(2A) In case of serious emergency or the failure of computer equipment the senior officers of police attending premises at which a designated football match is being or is intended to be played shall have power to direct that the national football membership scheme shall be temporarily suspended in its application to those premises and to that match and, where a direction is given under this section, section 2 and 7 of this Act shall be of no effect during the period of suspension.'.

Mr. Lloyd: Amendments Nos. 31 to 34 provide in one form or another for emergency admission to grounds. Considerable thought was given in Committee to whether it was right for the offence of unlawful entry in clause 2(1) to be absolute—that is, to have no defence provided in the Bill.

The Government have reflected further in the light of these debates and believe it right to provide a defence, which amendment No. 31 achieves. Hon. Members were rightly troubled by the possibility of a dangerous crush developing outside grounds, despite everything that we are doing to try to avoid that, and it becoming essential to reduce the risk of serious injury or loss of life for those outside the ground to be admitted quickly and safely without proper checks on membership.

In such circumstances it would be impractical to distinguish properly between members and non-members of the scheme. We therefore feel it right to exempt from the offence innocent people who were not members of the scheme—those who had perhaps joined the queue unaware of the requirement for a card or who were unintentionally caught up in the crowd.

There is one important qualification to this defence. The House will agree that it would be nonsense to extend the new defence to persons disqualified from the scheme. That would create an incentive for the very hooligans whom the scheme would seek to exclude to kick up enough trouble outside the grounds for the club and the police to let them in. They may indeed try that on, but with the defence as proposed here they could not be let in free of the criminal offence of unlawful entry; and if they were not seeking admission, it would be difficult to justify their presence in the midst of a crowd queuing at the turnstiles for that purpose.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): The Minister suggests that someone be let in without a card because of possible problems outside, but how will anyone know that such a person is disqualified—since he will not have a card, or will claim not to have one?

Mr. Lloyd: That is right. The whole purpose of the amendment is to permit clubs not to be in breach of their licence in an emergency by letting in such people, since there will be no opportunity to check, but the person who has come in and is disqualified can be prosecuted if it becomes apparent at some stage that he is disqualified. But the law cannot be used against the club.

The Government have consistently maintained that any provision for adapting admission procedures in an emergency will not be covered in the Bill because the aim of the Bill is to ensure that the licence is the means whereby the detailed requirements are made. So amendment No. 32 introduces the mandatory requirement for the scheme so to provide. Amendment No. 33 qualifies the offence in clause 9(1) of admitting spectators to unlicensed premises by the new defence that the responsible person did so in an emergency.

Amendment No. 34 requires the licensing authority to consider arrangements to deal with emergencies when granting a licence to admit spectators. Implicitly, that puts within the scope of a licence the provision to admit spectators in an emergency, safeguarding the licensee from an offence under clause 10(10) in such circumstances.

I should explain two additional points to make the new arrangements clear. I mentioned that the new defence of acting on lawful authority would not and should not apply to those disqualified from the scheme, and I am sure that that is right. However, the same is not necessary in respect of offences by the club, which could not be expected to discriminate between disqualified persons and others in an emergency. The offences in clauses 9 and 10 should reflect that, as provided by amendments Nos. 33 and 34.

My other point is about the practical meaning of the term "emergency". The Bill does not explicitly define the term and I suspect that the search for a precise definition would prove fruitless. There are many degrees of emergency, and in my perception they all carry a genuine risk of injury or loss of life, whether actual or potential. The term is not a convenient form of shorthand simply for an operating delay or incovenience. The various provisions for emergencies in the Bill and, in due course, in the scheme, will come into play at a football ground only when such a risk actually arises. The Bill does not set out who should declare whether an emergency exists. It is the club's responsibility to get that right, since it is the club's licence that is at stake and it is the club which would risk committing an offence under clauses 9 or 10.

3.45 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Will my hon. Friend confirm that an emergency means just that, and that in terms of the spirit of the Bill such a situation arises only at the last minute? Does he agree that the Government view the events in Stockholm and the decision by the police there to let in people without tickets to that rather sad game as totally exceptional? Will he confirm that the main thrust of his argument and of the Bill is that such an occasion would be very rare and would be discouraged by the Government?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend well understands the Government's position. It is not our perception that the solution to problems that arise is to let people in whether or not they are members or whether membership cards are inspected. The club authorities and the police will have to take sensible and responsible decisions about what to do in an emergency when it has materialised, or when it looks as if one is about to occur.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Perhaps the Minister would give us a practical explanation, because we are all anxious to get the matter right. If the chief police officer at the match saw many people outside the turnstiles and the possibility of a crush, could he declare that an emergency? Could he have the gates opened in order to reduce the risk to life and limb of people who were outside the turnstiles?

Mr. Lloyd: If in his judgment the responsible police office thought that there was a real possibility of injury, he would recommend the right steps, which could well be to open the gates and let people in under the emergency provisions that I am introducing. That is what the amendment allows, and what it is for. I should emphasise that it is for the club authorities and the police on the spot to make the judgment. It is for them to judge the situation and decide whether a real emergency exists or is about to occur. There does not need to be injury before this provision comes into effect, but there must be a real possibility of it. As I said earlier, it would not be triggered by a small inconvenience or difficulty and a little crowd building up outside. There has to be the possibility of an emergency.

Mr. Randall: May I again press the Minister on the practical details? He made it quite clear that it would be for the senior police officer or a certain police officer and the club to make the decision that an emergency existed and that action should be taken to open the gates. How does the Minister envisage that taking place? We know from other incidents, certainly from what happened at Hillsborough, that one needs to deal with these matters expeditiously. How does he imagine that happening on a

[Mr. Randall]

day on which there is a crush outside a turnstile which the police officer sees, when perhaps an officer of the club is not around? In practice, how would the decision be made?

Mr. Lloyd: With intelligence and forethought. These people have reached their positions in the police force because of their judgment, experience and ability to make decisions. The hon. Gentleman has followed the Bill and served on the Committee. I, alas, did not have that advantage, but it is clear to me that what is required from a club by the membership authority is that the club should have thought about what emergencies might occur, and how they should be met in the circumstances of the ground. All grounds differ, and as the hon. Gentleman knows, one needs to know not merely the situation at that point, but the layout of the ground and the possibilities of it, and the club and the local police should have thought out the possibilities in advance. I would rather rely on the good sense of police officers who have thought through such circumstances than on my efforts to give a recipe for each different ground from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I am not the only one concerned about the absence of any attempt to define an emergency. If the club gets an emergency wrong or considers a certain set of circumstances to constitute an emergency when, on another view, it does not, as I understand the Minister that is a breach of the licence. That may be a serious matter. In those circumstances, is it not necessary for the Bill to contain some set of principles or criteria by which clubs can give forthought to the circumstances in which an emergency might arise? What concerns me, and I am sure others, is that clubs are being cast loose, with no set of principles against which to test their conduct.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. and learned Gentleman may have missed what I said earlier. We proceed in this matter not primarily through the Bill but through the licence. This makes it mandatory for the licence to go into more detail for each club on these matters. He is right to say that forethought should be given in these matters. They will be required in more detail through the licence, but the responsibility of the licensee—the club—and the police authority, is to think through in great detail what the hon. and learned Gentleman has suggested. I have sympathy with what he said, and the end result, but the Bill and the Dispatch Box are not the places to do it.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): As a supporter of rugby league, I am also concerned about the lack of definition of emergency. The Minister is leaving the matter to be determined by courts if a dispute arises either because someone has decided to appeal against conviction or because a club has decided to appeal against the accusation of infringement of the conditions of their licence. Surely the priority at the time must not be whether there might be a breach of the conditions of the licence, and so an offence, but whether there is a safety risk. By excluding a definition, the Minister puts on police officers, and the chain of command, an unnecessary restriction, and intervenes in their determination of what should be safety matters. The courts will determine, after an accident, whether a breach has taken place, and that is serious, given that the Bill was introduced to prevent accidents and serious disorder.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman is not right. We are not leaving it to the courts to decide. We are requiring the licence to specify these matters as a mandatory requirement. The licence for different clubs will differ in different places. The right place to make these differences is through the licence, so that each will be tailormade for the club to which it applies. I accept the hon. Gentleman's concern, but he is wrong to think that these things will not be gone into more thoroughly. They are matters for the licence and for those police officers with this responsibility.

Mr. Randall: The Committee stage finished some time ago, so will the Minister refresh my memory on one point? Who is the ultimate authority on the definition of emergency? Will it be the police or the club? There could be a dispute between the police and the club: what would happen then? If there were a dispute, there could be risk to people. How would dispute be resolved?

Mr. Lloyd: The final authority will be the police. There must, however, be close co-operation between club officials and the police, and the nature of that co-operation will be laid down in the licence. The worry expressed in Committee, that there was no clear-cut responsibility, is one that we have taken on board, and it will be dealt with in the way in which I have described.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): The judgment that there is an emergency on a match day will be made as events take place and as they are seen to take place. When a few days have passed, the judgment of the moment may be called into question by those who have the benefit of hindsight. Those who are called upon to take a decision as the match is taking place will know that it could pose a threat to the club's licence.

Mr. Lloyd: If a club makes a decision in good faith and on good grounds and there is an argument afterwards that a slightly different decision should have been taken, the club's licence will not be at risk. We need the report of the inquiry and its recommendations before we can come to detailed conclusions on some of the matters which the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me—his emphasis appeared to be somewhat different from that of some of his hon. Friends—that detailed decisions cannot be made at the Government Dispatch Box that relate to specific circumstances at a certain time at a particular ground. Such decisions must rest with the police and the club officials.

Mr. McCartney: Is there not a classic conflict of interest that could put a police officer in an invidious position? An officer may have to determine in a matter of moments whether an offence may or may not take place or whether there is a serious possibility that injury may ensue. That was the conflict of interest that existed at Sheffield and which has existed elsewhere. When the conflict arises, it is the spectator who suffers. We should not be inserting in the Bill further conflicts of interest that will be faced by the chain of command when it comes to determine safety priorities.

Mr. Lloyd: There is not the conflict of interest that the hon. Gentleman describes. It is not a question whether there is the risk of injury or the risk that the law will be broken. If a police officer decides that there is an emergency, or the risk of one, and he recommends that advantage should be taken of the provisions that are set out in the amendment, there is no question of an offence being committed. That is with the exception of someone who has been disqualified who slips in with the crowd. Only he would be committing an offence.

Mr. John Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend agree that perhaps Lord Justice Taylor's conclusions so far on Hillsborough have been somewhat less than fortunate, in that they almost fully blame the police for the Hillsborough disaster? I refer to the conclusions that are set out in his interim report. That being so, this admirable and sensible amendment may be prejudiced. The Opposition take a different position from ours when it comes to support for the police—*[Interruption.]* That is in the spirit of what my hon. Friends and I have been hearing. Perhaps Lord Justice Taylor's conclusions so far have not assisted the passage of the amendment. His final conclusions, however, may mute the half-time conclusions, if I may so describe them, that attach criticism to the police at Hillsborough.

Mr. Lloyd: The police have an extremely difficult job. In the circumstances that we are considering, they have a central and crucial role. It is understandable that the first comments in Lord Justice Taylor's interim report were on the police, when we consider that their role is central. I understand that my hon. Friend is saying that the shortcomings and the difficulties that formed the background to the tragedy stemmed from a number of failures and were not confined to failures on the part of the police. Alas, the police were responsible for some failures. The licences will make the role of the police and of the club authorities much clearer.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I ask my hon. Friend to comment on amendment No. 55. Whether or not the wording of the amendment is correct, it is clear that it is designed to determine who shall be the ultimate arbiter on what I shall loosely call the declaration of emergency. Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House have sought clarification, and while I entirely accept the spirit of the Government amendment, which I clearly welcome, will he explain why he is not minded to accept amendment No. 55?

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I have not yet proposed amendment No. 55.

Mr. Norris: It would seem desirable to determine in advance whether the club authorities or the police have the ultimate say in declaring a state of emergency.

4 pm

Mr. Lloyd: I shall not address amendment No. 55 until my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) has spoken to it. I answered earlier the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) —although I have now forgotten what it was.

Mr. John Greenway: I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) that it is not my intention that clubs should be authorised to declare an emergency, for that is for the police to do. That is the spirit of amendment No. 55, to which I shall speak in due course.

Mr. Lloyd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale, for reminding me of the point with which I dealt earlier, when I said that the licence wil make it clear where responsibility lay. It will be primarily a matter for the police, but club officials will also have a degree of responsibility. If they see an emergency developing, they will obviously want to speak to the police in deciding what should be done. If there is not sufficient time to do that, the club officials will have the responsibility for taking a decision. It is intended that the licence will make it clear that that responsibility will be primarily with the police.

The Government amendments meet the concerns expressed by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House, and although there will be extensive debate on the new subsection introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale, I hope that amendment No. 31 as it stands commends itself to the House.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I appreciate the Minister's difficulties in not having served on the Committee as a representative of the Home Office, but hon. Members on both sides of the Committee made the point that neither the Bill nor future legislation should create more offences of strict liability. Also stressed was the importance of providing a defence for those caught in situations that they could not control.

I am grateful that the Minister has moved on the point of strict liability, but his proposals will not meet the objections that have been raised. It goes to the ethos of the Bill that the Government believe that the creation of more criminal offences will solve the problem of hooliganism, which we do not believe. We do not accept that the drafting of a subsection to create a new offence will overcome the problems and difficulties that have arisen in the past few years and which led to the Bill's introduction. Instead, the new subsection will criminalise football supporters and place them at risk, and it will make them more confused and concerned about the possibility of committing offences through no fault of their own. It will place a greater burden on both the police and the courts.

I am very concerned about the drafting of the final sentence in the amendment: I believe that it puts too much onus on identification evidence when it comes to court. Let us suppose that a spectator who is arrested tells the police officer that a certain person allowed him to enter the ground, and had lawful authority to do so. If, given the circumstances of the arrest, the officer feels that the time is not appropriate for him to take such information, the spectator will be arrested and detained, and will have to go to court. The defence provided will be a defence in the court, and it will be up to the spectator to prove that the person who let him in had lawful authority to do so.

It may be very difficult for the spectator to remember exactly who let him in, and to work out whether that person in fact had lawful authority. We shall get into difficulties with definitions and with identification evidence, and the drafting of that sentence will not help. It will impose a greater burden on the Crown prosecution service, which will have to consider whether to prosecute, and will have to examine the possibility of different kinds of identification evidence. I urge the Minister to look again at that definition, and to consider whether he is really satisfied that its wording will solve the problem.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman says that he does not want us to create a new group of offences, and I

[Mr. Norris]

sympathise with his view. Surely, however, a person found in a ground without lawful authority—one who had not paid the admission charge, for instance—could be charged with a number of offences at this stage, while under the amendments, which I too welcome, a person will have a defence for being in a ground without having passed through the turnstiles in the normal way. Surely that cannot be to the disadvantage of the spectator.

Mr. Vaz: I accept that point. The problem is, however, that we are creating a new criminal offence. We have a duty to be clear: if we are not, we shall create more confusion and provide for identification difficulties. Spectators will point to people who have disappeared. After all, a spectator who has been allowed in and then arrested can hardly be expected to make a note of the name, address and designation of the person who let him in and who he claims had lawful authority.

I feel that the word "emergencies" should be defined. I know that it is difficult, and I note what the Minister says about well-trained police officers; the problem has, however, been identified already in the interim report by Lord Justice Taylor, who makes specific criticisms of the police. The Government and their legislation will not make more resources available for the training of police officers, and it is therefore wrong for the Minister to say that police officers will be given the proper training to make a definitive decision in difficult circumstances.

We are opening the clubs, the police and others to the possibility of judicial review—lengthy proceedings before higher courts, determining not just what constitutes an emergency but the whole question of statutory interpretation. If we are able to prevent that from happening, we should do so.

My final point concerns the examples given in Committee. I do not think that the amendment meets the position of someone walking outside a ground who has nothing to do with football and does not wish to be a spectator, but is driven into the ground with the rest of the crowd because of an emergency. He or she will generally be pushed forward. The Minister laughs, but that point was raised by Conservative Members. My example was slightly different. If a person is outside the ground where a large crowd has gathered, and a police officer, for example, decides to open the gates, that person, who is not a spectator and therefore is not protected by the defence in amendments Nos. 31, 32 or 34 which refer specifically to a spectator, may be forced by the general melee to go into the ground. As he has nothing to do with football and does not wish to enter the ground, he is not protected.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It may help the hon. Gentleman to conclude his remarks to know that a passer-by who is swept into the ground by a crowd will have a complete defence. The only person who does not is someone who has been disqualified. Only such a person will not be covered by that defence.

Mr. Vaz: I am grateful to the Minister, but the amendment refers to "a spectator". Unless he can point me to another amendment relating to a person or a passer-by, in the case of a person who is not a spectator, whatever the Minister says now does not bind the courts. The courts will be looking for someone who is a spectator, so a defence is not provided.

To give a bizarre example, similar to the one I gave in Committee, if a helicopter crash lands on a football ground, a person who gets out of the helicopter will be committing an offence because that person is not a spectator. Unless the Minister can point the House to the defence of a passer-by that makes no reference to the word "spectator", that defence is not provided. No matter what the Minister tells the House, we are discussing civil liberties and lengthy court proceedings that will cost the taxpayer a great deal of money.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am not quite sure which sentence the hon. Gentleman is referring to, but he has mentioned the word "spectator". If a person is allowed into the premises as a spectator, that is the nature of the permission he was given. That does not mean that he was a spectator or that he intended to be a spectator, but that he was assumed to be a spectator and brought in. Therefore, he has a complete defence unless he has been disqualified from the membership scheme. I shall look at the wording again after the debate to satisfy myself that I am right to be satisfied that the Bill completely covers the eventualities that concern the hon. Gentleman, but I believe that it does.

Mr. Vaz: I shall not pursue the matter because my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) is eager to make progress. It may seem a small point, but I can envisage such a situation arising and we should cover it. I suggest an amendment to the Minister's amendment changing the wording to "a spectator or any other person who enters the ground in those circumstances". I disagree with the Minister, as I believe that a person happily walking on a street on the afternoon of a football match is not a spectator. A spectator denotes a particular state of affairs in that he is going to watch a football match. Just because a person is allowed in by a police officer does not mean that he is a spectator.

Mr. John Greenway: I beg to move amendment No. 55——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot move the amendment, but he is free to speak to it.

Mr. Greenway: Amendment No. 55 seeks to ensure that a serious public order problem could be avoided by the senior police officer supervising the policing of a match being in no doubt of his powers to suspend the football membership scheme for the match he is policing, should circumstances so dictate.

The House has spent some time discussing that issue. I welcome the attempt by my hon. Friend the Minister to rectify the situation. I do not believe that my amendment in any way contradicts this amendment. In fact, they are complementary. Hon. Members are concerned with what constitutes an emergency and precisely who would take the decision to suspend the scheme at a football ground should circumstances so dictate.

The officer policing the match should be in no doubt of his powers to suspend the scheme in all or part of the ground, and club officials must be aware that such powers exist. Smaller clubs are already experiencing difficulty interpreting Lord Justice Taylor's interim recommendations on the policing of matches. I do not blame the police for that, but the police and clubs will have to work together. My hon. Friend the Minister has said that he intends that the new licensing arrangements should make their duties and obligations absolutely clear, but the fact that there is concern and confusion about Lord Justice Taylor's interim report, especially about perimeter fences, shows the need to make the powers absolutely clear in the Bill.

4.15 pm

One of the main grounds of opposition of hon. Members who oppose the Bill is the practicality of the computer system and the problems that it could cause outside grounds. At this juncture, and in the light of the terrible Hillsborough tragedy, the safety of supporters must be paramount, which is why I tabled amendment No. 55. Concern has been expressed that the amendment might encourage hooligans to wreck the scheme, and we saw such an attempt during the recent trial scheme in Holland. I recognise that risk, but it will exist in any event, because people may try to wreck the scheme whether or not we make the powers of the police clear. That does not therefore obviate the need to ensure that the powers of the police are properly set out in the Bill.

Recommendation No. 29 of Lord Justice Taylor's interim report says:

> "The option to postpone kick-off should be in the discretion of the officer in command at the ground. Crowd safety should be the paramount consideration in deciding whether to exercise it."

It is incredible that that recommendation should have to be included in the report. If crowd safety is to be paramount, police officers should have the power to ensure that a match is postponed. That is a criticism not of the police but of the Football League and the Football Association. There is no doubt that they would welcome amendment No. 55 to ensure that the powers of the police are made absolutely clear.

We are told that the Bill is an enabling Bill. We do not yet know what the technical specification of the scheme, or the different schemes, will be. The scheme could embrace a number of different schemes at different levels of football, particularly in the light of Government amendment No. 1. I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister that it would be extremely difficult to define in the Bill "a serious emergency".

The amendment deals with the possibility of computer failure or failure of equipment. Such a failure need not be malicious. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) tabled amendment No. 56, which deals with the need for a prolonged test of the equipment, including throughout the winter. As we are passing this enabling Bill, it is right to consider every possible eventuality. Judging by the failures that one experiences daily in the performance of computer systems, whether they be cash-dispensing machines or ticket machines at Underground stations, failures will occur.

We must ensure that the senior officer at a football match has the power to suspend the scheme and, therefore, as I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister will agree, none of the offences outlined in the Bill in relation to entering a football match would apply.

Even at small clubs the amendment could be essential. At a big match involving clubs such as Arsenal, a commander of the Metropolitan police may be in charge of police operations. However, at a small club such as York City—of which I am president—where crowds are smaller, only a police inspector or chief inspector may be in charge and it is important that he knows what his powers are to suspend the scheme should equipment fail.

I recognise that the police have wide powers already, and it has been suggested to me privately that the amendment may not be necessary. However, I suggest that the amendment is appropriate in the light of what happened at Hillsborough. We know only too well that the police were criticised for treating the event as one of public order, when it was a serious problem of crowd safety. That must never happen again. As a former police officer, I deeply regret much of the criticism heaped upon the police, since in my judgment they were in an impossible position. I do not want to see that occur again.

There are five reasons why I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will support the amendment. The first reason is because of what happened at Hillsborought. Secondly, we do not yet know what Lord Justice Taylor's final recommendation will be with regard to membership schemes and the policing of football matches. Thirdly, this is an enabling Bill. Fourthly, there is a need for clarity, and finally, there is an overwhelming need to put safety first. Therefore, I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The comments of the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) have a great deal of force and merit. He has set out to provide, in the sometimes frantic circumstances that might attend the 10, 15 or 20 minutes before the kick-off at a major football match, a degree of certainty and a clarity of responsibility. That should commend itself, even at this stage, to those on the Treasury Bench. That absence of clarity detracts substantially from the advantage that might have been conferred on the Bill by the insertion in clause 9 of the defence of what might be called, for shorthand purposes, the defence of emergency.

The House will appreciate that clause 9(2), to which amendment No. 33 appplies, contains two defences. The onus of establishing these defences will rest upon the person charged with the criminal offence. The additional defence that it seeks to insert is

> "that the spectators were admitted in an emergency".

That will still need to be proved, by the person against whom criminal proceedings are to be taken. If that defence is to have any substance or be of any real value, it is only right and proper that the word "emergency ", which is such a substantial part of that defence, should be further defined.

I accept that that may be difficult. However, it is not all that difficult for a draftsman to arrive at a form of words that would give the person charged with a criminal offence some clearer indication of the factors upon which he or she might be able reply. For example, an "emergency" might be defined as circumstances in which there was a threat to public order and safety or injury to persons or property.

Those factors are clearly defined and would make clear to a person seeking to rely on the defence precisely what the ambit of that defence was. They would also give the courts, which will be responsible for derterming whether a criminal offence has occurred, a set of criteria by which to measure the defence.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): The hon. and learned Gentleman is trying to define "emergency". Amendment No. 55 refers to a "serious emergency". Is there a legal difference between the two?

Mr. Campbell: For the moment, I am concerned with Government amendment No. 31, which provides for an additional defence under clause 9. Courts do not have any difficulty in determining what application is to be given to the word "serious". They may find difficulty in dealing with the use of the word "emergency" without any further definition of the criteria by which an emergency is to be established.

For that reason, I hope that Ministers will consider —as I think they are still technically able to do before the Bill finally receives Royal Assent—whether a definition of "emergency" can reasonably be inserted in the Bill to provide the clarity and precision that all of us believe such legislation should have.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I wish first to declare my interest as parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation. I should like to associate myself with the remarks made by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). Clarification of the word "emergency" is necessary, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for saying that he will consider this matter again before the Bill finally receives Royal Assent.

We all know that the police have the primary responsibility for deciding what is and what is not an emergency. That is well established. The police must make such decisions every hour of the day and every day of the week. Given everything that has happened during the past year, especially the Hillsborough stadium disaster, the utmost clarity is essential if the police are to be able to do their job properly and have the support of the public, especially those who attend football matches regularly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) has put his finger on an important point in amendment No. 55, to which I hope my hon. Friend the Minister will give serious consideration. My only doubt is whether the amendment will encourage those elements which we know exist to press all the more strongly in trying to wreck the scheme from its inception. I should like to hear what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say. I want to be sure that the amendment does not contain anything that will have the opposite effect to the one intended. All hon. Members recognise that, unfortunately, there are hooligans in our community who are determined to wreck any attempt to impose this or any other scheme that is designed to avoid the terrible problems that we had at Hillsborough. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with that specific point.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Amendment No. 55 seems very reasonable and it was described persuasively and reasonably by the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). I hope that the Minister will accept it. Do not the police already have such powers to act in an emergency? Hon. Members who ask for definitions of "emergency" ask for a particularly obscure form of definition. Naturally, "emergency" must cover any foreseeable or unforeseeable circumstances. A definition of "emergency" is precisely that—emergency. One does not define it further. I should have thought that in those circumstances the police would probably have such powers anyway to set aside the scheme.

This is the real point. As we all know, the one thing about which we can be sure with a computer system is that it will break down sooner rather than later, usually sooner. There was that embarrassing experience for the Government, including the Minister for Sport, when the computer system broke down at the Conservative party conference, and there were difficulties in getting in. Why on earth anyone wanted to get into a Conservative party conference I do not know, given that most of the violence was already occurring inside. I do not believe that the breakdown was a major problem, but it showed that computer systems can break down, as undoubtedly they will under the scheme. If the police do not already have the necessary powers, clearly they must be given them in the Bill. I am sure that the Minister can clear up this matter.

4.30 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I especially welcome the Government amendments on the opportunities to evade conviction because of a good and sound defence. I especially commend to the House the Government amendments that relate to the responsibilities of club officials. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to pay tribute to the club officials from whom so much will be expected through the scheme.

Over the past 20 years, club secretaries and chairmen have had to cope with the problems of crowd control, violence and disorder. Some of them, especially at small clubs such as Bury, my own local club, were concerned that the Bill would add to their responsibilities and might lead to the problem that if there was an emergency and they let people into the ground, they might face the penalty of being fined or even going to prison. My own chairman, Terry Robinson, was especially worried about that. I reassured him that I was sure that something would be done to relieve his anxiety, and I believe that the Government amendments do that.

May I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to pay tribute to the work of the various officials who have already done much for football and who will be expected to do more? Will he confirm that these proposals should remove some of the anxiety that the officials felt about what would happen if emergencies arose outside the ground?

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I support amendment No. 55 and endorse everything said by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) in his opening remarks. My opposition to the football membership scheme is on record in the House and outside. I do not believe that the scheme will work, and I believe that such money as is spent on it would be infinitely better spent on introducing all-seater stadiums and better facilities for spectators.

Having said that, I am wholly persuaded that it would be nonsense for us to create a situation whereby the Hillsborough inquiry might recommend a scheme—I recognise that I am not the fount of all knowledge on the subject, any more than anyone else is—and we did not have the legislation in place to cater for such a scheme. For that reason alone, I shall support the Bill, although I have also made it plain that, if the Hillsborough inquiry does not recommend the introduction of a scheme, I shall not suport its introduction. I hope that, in the light of my reasonable attitude, my hon. Friend the Minister will take an equally reasonable approach to amendment No. 55.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred to an incident at Blackpool, when there was a small computer failure as a result of which a large but extremely orderly body of people were required to wait on the pavement. I shudder to think what might have happened had such a scheme been introduced earlier and been in place at Brighton, for example, where the crowd would not have been quite so orderly, or were 40,000 or 50,000 football spectators to be kept out of a ground as a result of a computer failure and, therefore, of a membership scheme.

It is clear that the police must have the necessary powers to act swiftly and, if necessary, an individual police officer must have such powers in what he or she believes to be an emergency. It would be quite appalling, as I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister will accept, if a major emergency were to turn into a disaster because a single police officer was unaware that he or she had the power to fling open the gates if necessary.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I am a great admirer of my hon. Friend. Does he agree that there are many instances in which policemen on duty at football matches do not have personal radios? Usually, there are only enough available for a particular shift, and if policemen come on duty as a result of rest day working or overtime, they are in a football crowd without any personal radio and it is impossible for them to be in contact with their senior officers.

Mr. Gale: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. That is why I laid some emphasis on my belief that the individual man or woman on duty should have the power—and know that he or she has the power—to make an instant decision, if that becomes necessary. That is the spirit in which amendment No. 55 has been tabled, and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will recognise it as such. I hope that he will feel able to accept the amendment.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I want to speak briefly to amendment No. 55, the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) because I suffered particularly as a result of the failure of the computer scheme at the Conservative party conference. My wife was excluded and I had to stand outside with her for two hours in the rain while we went through the whole procedure for the third time to try to get her admitted. I accept, therefore, that computer failures can happen and that they can have very serious consequences.

I do not think that we should say that we cannot accept an amendment that makes sense because those who might seek to break the scheme might take advantage of it. I hardly think that those who would anyway seek to break the scheme will claim in their defence that amendment No. 55 allowed them to take on the whole scheme. Some football supporters will regard the scheme as a great challenge, as the Dutch fans did, but our job is to pass good, sound and clear legislation under which everyone knows where they stand. People's safety should be the paramount consideration. I support the amendment whole-heartedly because it clearly defines under what conditions and by whom the scheme may be declared temporarily suspended in the interest of saving lives.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I support the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). Like him, I have a lower division club in my constituency and policing at its ground is under the supervision of a comparatively junior officer. It will be essential that the person in charge of the police on match days has full knowledge of what he or she may do, in terms of allowing fans in, to bypass the equipment that has broken down. I beseech my hon. Friend the Minister to take that into account in his final thoughts on the Bill.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Many points have been made, but I may succeed in being brief nevertheless because some of them have been fairly similar.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) said that he did not like the creation of what he saw as a new offence. I would say to the hon. Gentleman—at least, I would say to the hon. Gentleman if he were still in his place—that the amendment would not create a new offence but provide a new defence which has been generally welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. The hon. Gentleman was worried that an individual might be prosecuted and say, "Well, I am sure that there was an emergency because somebody told me so but I do not remember the name of the person who declared the emergency." The evidence that the supporter was inside the ground unlawfully will be given either by the club or by the police, one of which will have declared the emergency. The inability to identify the person who has declared the emergency should not, therefore, prove to be a problem.

I have much sympathy with the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), and I understand what his worries are. He wondered who would have the primary responsibility in such cases, and wanted that to be set out clearly. As I said earlier, the primary responsibility for the declaration of an emergency will belong to the police, although there will also be a responsibility belonging to the club as the licence holder. One would expect clubs and police to negotiate.

As I have said before, these matters will be spelt out much more fully in the licence, and it is right that they should be spelt out there, rather than in the Bill, because different circumstances pertain for different clubs and different grounds and each licence should take those circumstances into account. Most important of all, before the licence is finally approved there should be consultation, not merely with the club officials but with the police and other responsible people so that there is no doubt whatever regarding both their general responsibilities and their responsibilities by reference to the particular ground and the particular club.

The reason that I cannot accept the amendment, although I am sympathetic to it, is that it would enable police officers—and, indeed, by implication, club officials—to suspend the provisions of the Act.

We do not want the new Act to be suspended in an emergency. We want the police and club officials to be able to take the right decisions without the fear of innocent people discovering that they have transgressed the law. If I accept amendment No. 55, no penalties could be applied to anyone for unauthorised attendance on that day because the Act would not have force for that particular match. I suspect that my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale would not want that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale was understandably worried about a difficulty that fell short of an emergency in which there might be risk of injury. He referred to the possibility of a computer breakdown. If a breakdown led to huge queues which caused a police officer to believe that the situation might become an emergency, the provisions of amendment No. 31 would

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

come into effect. However, I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale has something else in mind in his amendment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale may have in mind a situation in which the computer system breaks down. Instead of an emergency developing, the queue may simply get longer and snake back away from the ground. At such a typical football ground, there may be no sign of disorder. The fans might be good humoured and patient, but there is a huge problem of actually reading each individual membership card. Such a situation would have to be considered within the terms of the licence. Therefore, alternative arrangements could be brought into force, short of suspending the Act.

People should be let into the ground, but their cards will not be passed through the computer. However, each individual must show his membership card with his ticket. If he does not, he will not be allowed in. It will not be possible to read the details on each card, but that would be the best effort that the club could make in such circumstances and the law would not be breached. My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale and the hon. Member for Newham North-West (Mr. Banks) were worried about a situation which fell short of an emergency. If such a situation arises, it can be taken care of in the normal flexible course of applying the rules of a particular licence.

Mr. Denis Howell: This is an extremely important matter. Some of our most important football grounds have 100 or more turnstiles. If a computer breaks down, it is not simply a question of one or two local police officers deciding what to do. If the computer breaks down, 100 turnstiles may be affected. If a turnstile breaks, that is a more local problem.

The sense of the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) is overwhelming. There are still a few more days before the Bill goes to another place. I hope that the Minister will accept the rationale of this argument. We cannot allow a situation to develop 10 minutes before kick-off at say, Arsenal, Tottenham, Liverpool or Manchester United when the computer system has broken down and then discussions must take place to allow a pre-arranged system between the clubs and the police to come into operation. That is not right, and I beg the Minister to think again.

Mr. Lloyd: I believe that it is right that the clubs should consider what might happen if there are mechanical or other breakdowns. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) referred to a turnstile becoming stuck; clubs must plan for such eventualities to deal with them when they occur. I understand the particular concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale. His concern is genuine, but we do not require a special amendment—or amendment No. 55 which he has tabled—to meet his concern.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): A little earlier the Minister said that it would be an offence to be in a ground without holding a membership card. I thought that we had decided in Committee that it would not be an offence to be inside a ground without a card. It will be an offence to be inside a ground if someone is not a member of the scheme. It will not be an offence to be inside the ground without a membership card as such. Will the Minister confirm that? A little earlier I thought that he said that people must have their cards to be inside grounds.

Mr. Lloyd: If there was a breakdown and a member of the scheme did not have his card, he could expect to be refused admission to the ground. If he was in the ground having left his card behind—I wait to be corrected by my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport who has guided the Bill through Committee—I imagine that that person would not have committed an offence if he could show that he was a member of the scheme. I was referring to whether he would be allowed into the ground. Without a card, he would very properly be turned away because he could not demonstrate that he was a member.

4.45 pm

Mr. John Greenway: I accept my hon. Friend's point with regard to the licensing arrangements. I am sure that he understands that we must have primary legislation in the Bill. We cannot have separate arrangements for different police forces in relation to different football grounds.

If there is a mechanical failure at a turnstile and the machines do not read the computer cards, it need not necessarily follow that all the other turnstiles have broken down. The problem may affect only a block of turnstiles at a particular ground. Certain police officers will be presented with a difficult situation. Do they allow the fans to pass through the turnstiles? There is no question here of a suggestion that the gates should be opened, because the club will still want to collect the admission fees. However, membership cards will not be checked if there is a breakdown.

I accept the point made by my hon. Friend that the scheme could be operated so that if someone enters a ground, but is not a scheme member, he would still be guilty of an offence even though scheme cards had not been processed. My point is that club officials need to know that the police have the power to take whatever action they think is fit with regard to crowd safety. My hon. Friend the Minister should make that abundantly clear. If the position is not clear, it should be made clear in the Bill.

Mr. Lloyd: I have made it abundantly clear that it is mandatory in the Bill that licences should cover those eventualities. However, I disagree with my hon. Friend in that I believe that there must be different arrangements according to different grounds and different circumstances. That would be reflected in the licence and that is why we will operate the detail through the licence, not on the face of the Bill.

Mr. John Greenway: What about police powers?

Mr. Lloyd: The police powers are such as to allow them to take the appropriate decisions, particularly in emergencies. If the computer at one entrance point breaks down, that is not an emergency in that sense. It is a difficulty which each club will have considered and will have means to overcome. The most obvious way to do that is to have a sight check of membership cards of people entering that gate. Of course the cards will not be machine-read in detail, but at least such a check would show the almost certain probability that the people entering the ground were members in good standing. It would be perfectly proper for the club to do that and it would be something of which the police would approve —*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Small Heath may chunter, but as he is a man of common sense, that is the kind of thing that he would do if he was in charge.

Mr. Denis Howell: That is utter nonsense. A computer could break down and people might be entering a ground at a rate of more than 1,000 a minute through 100 turnstiles. Even if people hold their cards up, it will be impossible to inspect them. The Government should not try to rest on that ludicrous hypothetical situation.

Mr. Lloyd: The card readers may be independent of each other. If one breaks down there is no likelihood that the others will break down as well. Although I was not present in Committee, I imagine that the right hon. Member for Small Heath and his colleagues claimed that reading cards would hold spectators up. The cards will not be machine-read but will merely be looked at in the same way as a ticket is looked at. All the Opposition's arguments suggest that this arrangement will work particularly well in the event of a breakdown.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): I shall try to help my hon. Friend. At Luton Town football club, if the computerised system breaks down, we have a visual check, and it works very well. At Manchester United, half the ground is entered by people carrying membership cards. Its turnstiles have broken down, and once again a visual check has proved to be quite adequate and there have been no problems. Entry has not been delayed at all.

Mr. Lloyd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who knows what he is talking about. He confirms that there is no particular problem, although I understand concern being raised about this point.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) was worried about some of the points that I have already covered. He was concerned about somebody being prosecuted for being unauthorised, possibly because he had not got a membership card—I suspect, not one who had been disqualified—and having to prove that there was an emergency. He would not need to prove that there was an emergency. It would be for the police or club authorities to say that there was an emergency. That would be a complete defence for that individual, even though it might be arguable whether the police or the club had correctly defined an emergency. Those about whom the hon. and learned Member was worried do not have a problem.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I was particularly concerned about the position of a responsible person under clause 9(2), which sets out two defences. The purpose of one amendment is to add an additional defence—the emergency defence. The onus of proof of that defence will rest on the person attempting to establish it, who will be the person who was accused of a contravention of this part of the Bill. On that basis, is he entitled to know in advance what criteria he can plead in support of that defence?

Mr. Lloyd: He will see very much more clearly from the licence under which he operates. That worry is more theoretical than practical. Who is to produce the evidence to prosecute such a person? It will be either the police or a club official. As they will be most concerned and will consult each other, I suspect that they will arrive at the conclusion that there is an emergency and that they should act. I understand also that the court would act on the basis of what it was reasonable for someone to assume. Because of all the problems that it creates, it is very unlikely that either the police or a club official will unreasonably declare an emergency. I see the hon. and learned Member's theoretical point, but I do not think that it is practical.

I understand the special concern and interest of my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). I agree that clarity is necessary. I hope that clarity will exist in the licences, because there will need to be consultation with the police before licences are finally issued. The police input will be real and extensive before licences are in effect. The police will work under arrangements that they have helped to make.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West made some sensible observations. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is often sensible, but usually not when he is commenting on things that I have said. I am particularly grateful to him. He is quite right that it would be a mistake to try to define "emergency" too closely. All sorts of unexpected situations can arise, and it would be a pity if they were excluded by the tightness of the language that we decide to adopt in the Bill for the sake of clarity.

I can satisfy the request by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) that we should acknowledge the role that officials will play. We understand that they have performed and will continue to perform an onerous job under this legislation. I hope that, in some respects, their job will be easier because the licences will clarify their role and that of the police. Nevertheless, it is an onerous role and, in exercising it in good faith, they will run no risk of prosecution. If they do their job as well as they can and seek to take the decisions that seem to them to be right at the time, they will have nothing to fear.

I am glad to have the conditional support of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). I hope that, at the end of my remarks on this set of amendments, I will have his whole-hearted support. The police need to know what their powers are. Again, that is part of the purpose of the licence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxstowe (Mr. Lester) raised certain points. I am sorry about his wife not getting into the conference. I am sure that she had a valid ticket, that she did not riot outside or complain, and that the turnstiles were able to be sidestepped, as would happen in any well conducted football ground.

I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman). With that, I again commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Randall: I compliment the Minister on giving such full replies to many of the issues that have been raised today. However, his reasons for rejecting amendment No. 55 were quite inadequate and unconvincing. He said that it was the right decision because it would result in people not transgressing the law and so on. All hon. Members are concerned about the safety of people. That is the paramount argument in the debate. Amendment No. 55 states that we should suspend this complex system.

We have a complex piece of legislation and complex licences which will all be different throughout the country because all football grounds are different. Because safety is paramount, we must make sure that the licences and the legislation in no way constrain the police to make the right

[Mr. Randall]

decision in the event of unforeseen emergencies. The Minister has said that he would prefer to keep the system in place and to have the decision-making process through this complex licence arrangement, whereas the Opposition and the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) believe that, in terms of decision making and the safety of football fans, it would be better to suspend this complex system. The Minister has failed to convince the Opposition and other hon. Members.

We are talking about emergencies. We do not know what they are, and it is impossible for us to define them. Because one cannot foresee all emergencies and what they entail, and if we put people's safety before everything else, it must make absolute sense to suspend the system. The amendment is convincing, and I am disappointed at the Minister's failure to make a good case for not accepting it.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3

THE FOOTBALL MEMBERSHIP AUTHORITY

Mr. Moynihan: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 3, line 5, at beginning insert

'Subject to subsection (3A) below,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this is will be convenient to discuss the following: Government amendment No. 3, in page 3, line 11, at end insert—

'(3A) The Secretary of State shall not designate any body corporate as the Football Membership Authority unless he is satisfied that its articles of association make provision securing—

(a) that its Board shall comprise a Chairman and six other members, of whom the Chairman and four of the other members are persons approved by the Secretary of State before their election as Chairman or as member, as the case may be, and the remaining two members are persons nominated by the Secretary of State, and

(b) that the Chairman shall be a person who has no such financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially the performance of his functions as Chairman;

and all the members of the Board shall hold office in accordance with the articles of association of the body corporate.

(3B) The Secretary of State may withdraw the designation of a body corporate as the Football Membership Authority if he ceases to be satisfied of the matters mentioned in subsection (3A) above.

Amendment (a) to the Government amendment, in paragraph (a), leave out 'six' and insert 'eight'.

Amendment (b) to the Government amendment, in paragraph (a), after first "Secretary of State", insert

'being members of the Football Association and the Football League.'.

Amendment (c) to the Government amendment in paragraph (a), after second "Secretary of State", add

'being one representative each of the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs and the Football Supporters Association or, if they have ceased to function, their equivalents.'.

Government amendment No. 4.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government amendments relate to the composition of the Football Membership Authority. They follow an undertaking which I gave in Commitee to consider an amendment to make provision on the face of the Bill concerning the chairmanship and membership of the authority. I said also that I would consider an amendment to involve the supporters organisations in the running of the FMA. That is the subject of a later Government amendment, but I will refer briefly to it in my comments on these amendments.

I promised to consider an amendment about the composition of the authority in response to Opposition amendments on the subject tabled in this House and in another place.

The Bill, as introduced, said nothing on the subject, because the Football Membership Authority will be a private company, not a quango like the National Rivers Authority or the Football Licensing Authority. We should not, therefore, be in the business of spelling out detailed rules on how the FMA will operate, as we have to do for the Football Licensing Authority. I recognise, however, that there is a strong desire to see certain aspects of the chairmanship and membership spelt out in the Bill.

5 pm

The Government amendments require that the authority shall have a chairman who is independent of any financial interest or any other area of potential conflict with football and that it shall have six other members. Two of those six members will be nominated by the Secretary of State. The remaining four will be approved by him and will, we hope, be agreed with the football authorities if they take on the responsibility for the FMA. The Chairman will also be approved by the Secretary of State, in agreement, we expect, with the football authorities.

The amendment does not refer to the football authorities by name because we must take account of the possibility—a very small one, I hope—that they may decide not to take on the FMA. I cannot, therefore, accept the Opposition amendment to that effect. At the same time, the working party set up by the Football Association and the Football League to prepare for the FMA has been hard at work since the Bill's Committee stage, and we envisage that together they will set up the company which the Secretary of State will designate as the FMA.

The Government amendments do not refer specifically to members appointed to represent the interests of football supporters. I do not rule out that possibility, although the public comments of the chairman of the Football Supporters Association appear to suggest that his personal attitude to the FMA would be a negative one. It is hard to believe that he would want to be associated with the FMA.

I have always accepted, however, that there is a case for football supporters to be mush more closely involved in running the game. That is why we have tabled amendment No. 8, which would require the FMA to give the representatives of football supporters an opportunity to make representations about the content of the football membership scheme. I understand that the football authorities' working party on the scheme has already held one meeting with both the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs and the Football Supporters Association.

The Bill has already begun to have desirable effects. Our amendment will ensure that they keep the consultation process going. I commend the approach that the Government amendments take on the subject rather than that of the Opposition in enlarging the number of members and then seeking to spell out who should appoint the members of the authority. Of course football must be fully represented on the authority. It remains our hope and expectation that the football authorities will form the company that will be designated as the FMA, but if they should decline the offer made to them for first refusal to establish the FMA, or fail to live up to the conditions indicated in that letter, or if something should go wrong with their appointment as the FMA, the legislation must allow for the possibility that someone else, or other nominees from football, will and can be appointed.

Mr. John Carlisle: Have official moves been made inviting the Football Association and the Football League to be members of the FMA? If such an approach has already been made, what has been their response?

Mr. Moynihan: I am not aware that any of the organisations representing football supporters have made formal representations to be appointed to the FMA. A number of people within the world of football—not least those identified by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) in his amendment which was not accepted for debate—might like to be considered for representation. Some of them have said informally that they would like to be considered. Suffice it to say that we shall consider carefully the nominations. I hope that the football authorities will carefully consider the nominees who might be put to them as part of their team—be it from the supporters' organisations, or representatives of the Professional Footballers Association and other bodies.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister has referred throughout his speech to the "chairman" of the FMA, and that word appears in the amendment No. 3. Is that normal Government use of sexist language, or will the Minister contemplate the possibility of a woman being the chair of the FMA?

Mr. Moynihan: I assure the hon. Gentleman that this is traditional language which has been employed by his party as well as ours in legislation of this kind. In no way does it rule out the possibility of a woman being appointed as chairman of the FMA.

The third amendment is a drafting amendment. It relates to the possibility that a body established as the FMA might give up the job. In that event, the technically correct phrase is that its functions would be divested rather than withdrawn, as the Bill says at present. The amendment will put that drafting right.

The effect of the Government amendments is to spell out that the chairman of the FMA, be it a man or a woman, must be independent and that there will be six other members—two of them appointed by the Secretary of State and the other four approved by him, or her. If all goes well, that will also be agreed with the football authorities. The amendments carry forward the undertaking that I gave the Committee, and I commend them to the House.

Mr. Denis Howell: Although the Minister tabled the amendment, if falls far short of what we were led to believe the Government intended to do. The Minister has fallen into the trap of believing that football should be represented by the two governing bodies and by no one else. As we know from the petition that was recently presented to the House, over 500,000 people watch football on any Saturday afternoon, but the Minister is telling us in these amendments that they have no right of membership of the Football Membership Authority. That is monstrous.

The Minister says that a later amendment gives to the Football Supporters Association and the National Federation of Football Supporters' Clubs the right to make representations. How very kind of him. What a big deal that is.

The Chester committee of inquiry into football reported 30 years ago and recommended that all those with an interest in football should have a place on the Football Association's governing body, and that that should include the Professional Footballers Association as well as the supporters. Thirty years later that recommendation has not been accepted. That does not give us confidence that the Football Association and the Football League will pay any attention to the inclusion of representatives of supporters and players. Parliament ought to insist that, as of right, they should be represented. When the social contract that is to be enshrined in European legislation is universally applied, the Professional Footballers Association will have the right of membership of the FMA. However, we hope to have that provision in place before then.

We do not seek in our amendments to displace the chairman and the six other members. We wish to increase that number. I have to confess that we have made an error. Instead of increasing that number to eight, we ought to have increased it to nine. When the Bill reaches another place later in the week, I hope that our omission will be rectified. Apart from the Football Association and the Football League, three organisations are entitled to membership of what the Minister says will be a limited company. Therefore, the House ought to say exactly who should be represented on that limited company. The two football organisations that I have mentioned and the Professional Footballers Association ought to be represented, and that brings the number to nine. The Minister and the House of Lords will have the opportunity to consider that later.

We have thought it right to include the Football Association and the Football League by name. The Minister just gave an extraordinary reason for not agreeing to that: he said that they might decide not to co-operate, so he might have to impose some scheme on them and appoint people to run it. Even if the league and the FA say that they will not co-operate, I cannot believe that it would not be possible to obtain the names of people from those organisations to meet the terms of our amendment. The only circumstances in which the FA or the league would not co-operate would be those in which a scheme was forced on them and football was not represented as the majority——

Mr. John Carlisle: Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that if the FA and the league express, as they have, their opposition to the scheme and the opinion that they will not join the FMA if invited to do so, his idea is that they should still be invited on to the committee? We all know of the right hon. Gentleman's close relationship with the Football League and the FA, so perhaps he can inform us of what would happen. Is he saying that those bodies will refuse to serve on the FMA because of their opposition?

Mr. Howell: I am saying no such thing: that is what the Minister is saying. The Minister cannot accept our amendment, in which we name the Football Association and the Football League, on the ground that they might not agree to serve. I say that there are members of those organisations—one is sitting here now: the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans)—who could fall into the necessary category.

Of course the FA and the league are opposed to the scheme, because they know that it will not work, that it will cause mayhem at the turnstiles and that it is an affront to civil liberties which will cause a considerable fall-off in gates among casual visitors, particularly at Christmas and during the holidays. That is why they and we oppose this ridiculous scheme. However, they are democrats and, I am sorry to say, most of them support the Government, although their support is dwindling. If the House puts the Bill on the statute book, members of these organisations will do their best, as law-abiding citizens, to make it work. I think that they would be better advised to have nothing to do with it, because it will not work, and we should not make the representatives of football accept a lawful responsibility, through a limited company, to operate a scheme which they know will not work—but that is their decision, and I understand that they want to participate in the scheme as best they can.

The FA and the league's position is that, although the scheme is a bad job, it should at least be run by football people who understand the difficulties and who will do their best to make it work. I respect that argument, although I am somewhat sceptical about it.

The Minister gave us a clear undertaking that the Football Supporters Association and the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs would be able to serve on the scheme, so why has he gone back on that? I do not know why we need an amendment to give the right to make submissions—that is meaningless flannel. Anyone can made representations, but these bodies should be participating——

Mr. David Evans: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that football club supporters' views are not co-ordinated and that the bodies that he is talking about have only a minuscule representation of football supporters? The vast majority of the 500,000 people that he is discussing are not represented by these two football bodies.

Mr. Howell: That was an extraordinary intervention, given that on Friday I presented a petition signed by 500,000 people, every one of whose signatures was gathered by these two organisations. Before this debate started, the Professional Footballers Association presented me with a petition against the Bill which I will be sending to the Prime Minister and which every professional footballer in the country has signed. These people should have a place: every footballer to be found on the fields of England opposes the Bill, but they, too, are disregarded and are not even to have a place in the working of the the scheme——

5.15 pm

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Would my right hon. Friend wish to point out that not only are these bodies well organised but the Football Supporters Association is so well thought of that Lord Justice Taylor insisted that it be given legal advice and be able to give evidence to his inquiry?

Mr. Howell: I am grateful——

Mr. John Carlisle: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Howell: No, I shall deal with my hon. Friend's intervention. If I do not deal with it satisfactorily I shall give way with my customary courtesy—I seem to spend more time at Luton Town than at Villa Park these days, which is sad.

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Lord Justice Taylor said that the FSA should have the right of audience and of counsel paid for from central funds—expensively—and I understand that he continues to seek its advice on points that have arisen during his deliberations. Both these organisations, as anyone who has had anything to do with them will know, are most responsible. I declare an interest in that I am the patron of the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs, which may well be even more responsible than I am, because it does not have to bother with political points.

These organisations clearly have more information than the Minister has. I spent the weekend in the company of one of their officials who gave me a blow-by-blow account of what went on in Poland at the last international match—an area with which we shall deal in part II of the Bill. The Minister may think this amusing—perhaps he can tell us more later. Perhaps he can confirm that the National Front and other organisations behaved contemptibly during the England-Poland match—they went to Auschwitz and behaved in a way that no hon. Member would condone. We tried to raise this matter, but the Chair did not accept our amendment, so I can mention it only in passing.

The information on which I based the amendment came from these organisations, which took careful note of what happened—as did the *Mail on Sunday* reporter who, much to his credit, wrote a vivid report. People of this sort who travel with football supporters can gather this kind of information and know what is actually happening. Most of the directors of the league and the FA, like many of us, have not stood on the terraces for a long time, much less travelled with the England football supporters to see the antics of these disruptive people. The case for having them represented is so that they can say in the councils of the Football Membership Authority, "That is what is happening, gentlemen, and we must direct our attention to it." Having an audience is no substitute for having a responsibility for the government of the scheme.

Mr. John Carlisle: We are grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for the advice that he has supplied about the Football Supporters Association. Can he help us by giving some information about the representation and membership of that association? We are confused because the right hon. Gentleman and his right hon. Friends have put down an amendment which talks about

"the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs and the Football Supporters Association or, if they have ceased to function, their equivalents."

The right hon. Gentleman has a deep knowledge of the workings of the Football Supporters Association. Can he tell us how many people it represents? There is no point in the right hon. Gentleman saying that he presented a petition with 430,000 signatures gathered by the FSA. How many members does the FSA have, whom does it represent and what other organisations of equivalent status which are within what we might call the supporters league, could say to the right hon. Gentleman that it also wants to be represented on the FMA?

Mr. Howell: The hon. Gentleman has not sought to amend my proposals and that suggests that he does not know of any other organisation. The Football Supporters Association is like many Conservative organisations: it does not have members, it has supporters.

Mr. David Evans: How many?

Mr. Howell: I do not know. Nobody knows. If there is no membership how the devil can one say what the membership is? It is sufficient for our purposes to know that it exists, speaks for at least 500,000 people and has therefore a legitimate voice. That voice should be heard and the FSA should be a member of the FMA. The National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs is easier to define because as far as I know most of the Football League supporters clubs are members of it. There may be one or two that are not.

Mr. David Evans: Three months ago the total membership for both supporters associations was not more than 15,000 people. The right hon. Gentleman talks about 500,000.

Mr. Howells: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman got that figure. All I can tell him is that every supporters club known to me is in membership of the National Federation of Football Supporters' Clubs.

Even if Conservative Members are right and I am wrong about the definition of a body that represents supporters, it would be totally wrong to say that supporters should have no right of membership of the FMA. Equally, it is quite wrong to say that professional footballers, almost 100 per cent. of whom are members of the Professional Footballers Association and who signed a petition today, should not have the right to be on this body. Their livelihood is at stake and they should have a right of audience.

Our amendments should be accepted by the Government. If they do not accept them it will be a serious affront to all the people who pay to keep professional football going and to all the people who play it.

Mr. Lester: I shall be brief, because we had a long debate in Committee about the position of football supporters. Surely the debate is not a nice legal argument about membership and whom an organisation represents. The scheme is complicated and difficult enough and one cannot imagine it having any chance of operating unless it has the good will of the Football League, the Football Association and the football supporters' clubs, whether they are federated from individual clubs or members of the national scheme.

The real point is that whoever is appointed as a result of the Government amendment will not have a cat in hell's chance of making the scheme work if they do not have an interest in working with the grain of football. That is the point that we seek to make. If the Government want to have any chance of even making the scheme tick over, never mind work in terms of excluding the 1,800 people who are the subject of exclusion orders, they must have the good will of the Football Association, the Football League and the football supporters' clubs.

There is no point in knocking or criticising those bodies, because they run the industry and have the greatest involvement in and knowledge of it. They are most anxious to get rid of the hooligans—a point which is constantly forgotten—because they would lose more from hooligans than anybody. The central point that the Minister must consider is how to keep moving along while retaining the good will of those involved in the industry. Without that good will, whom ever he appoints to the body will have no opportunity to make the scheme work.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I was astounded by the Minister's reason for ignoring the Football Supporters Association and the other body representing football supporters. The only reason he gave was that one representative of the Football Supporters Association had seemed to signify that he would not be interested in being a member of the Football Membership Authority. The Minister has admitted that he has never had discussions with the Football League or the Football Association about whether they would be willing to be members of the FMA.

Mr. Moynihan: I am more than willing to assist the hon. Gentleman on that matter. He is wrong. The Football Association and the Football League have indicated their willingness to serve on the FMA. Indeed, they have gone further and have asked for first refusal at the time of the Secretary of State's appointments to the FMA. They have been co-operating for months on a working party to establish detailed proposals for a national membership scheme. From over 100 potential suppliers they have produced a short list of six and are working on the terms of reference to go out to tender. They have been keenly working on the details, but, of course, they have made their overall position clear about the national membership scheme. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) was right to say that despite the opposition in principle, the Football Association and the Football League consist of honourable men who will work within the law to ensure that the scheme works effectively, as I am sure it will, as soon as possible.

Mr. Wareing: The essential point is that, from the outset, the Football Association and the Football League, like the Football Supporters Association, have been completely opposed to the scheme. Only one club in the country is in accord with the Minister's desires and the Prime Minister's maniacal desires. That is Luton Town football club, whose attendances are falling and whose chairman was the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans).

There is something about what the Minister said in the debate that suggests some sort of attempt to cover up in future anything that happens in football by saying that the Football Membership Authority is a plc and is independent of the Government. At the same time, the Secretary of State will have the right to determine that, if the FMA does not live up to the desires of the Prime Minister, it can be disbanded and a new FMA set up. What plc in the country can be abolished by the Secretary of State and a new one brought into existence?

The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) made all sorts of attacks on the Football Supporters

[Mr. Wareing]

Association. He asked how many members it has and how many people it represents. The real reason for his questions is that he does not want any football supporters represented on the FMA. No Conservative Member would ask the same questions about any other quango—and, plc or not, the FMA will be a quango. No Conservative Member asked such questions about the membership of such organisations as the Port of London Authority or the Merseyside development corporation. They have only asked questions about something to which they are opposed in principle, but they are afraid to say that it is opposition in principle. The Government do not wish football supporters to be represented on the body, and that is the top and the bottom of it.

5.30 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I am pleased that Conservative Members have spoken about recognition and how many people are represented by these organisations. However, it is peculiar that they have raised it only now, bearing in mind their recognition of organisations that are thinly disguised as something else. For instance, they recognise the Federation of Professional Railway Servants and other organisations in industry and the Association of Conservative Trade Unionists, which represents little. The membership of the 92 league clubs is proportionately higher than Conservative party membership in the 650 constituencies. Where is the balance?

Mr. Wareing: As my hon. Friend is pointing out, it is ludicrous for Conservative Members, as members of an organisation that lacks much of what is regarded as democratic, to attack football supporters associations. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) has made the essential point that the football supporters and their associations are the consumers of the football industry, and consumers need to be represented. Consumers in all industries should be consulted when their essential needs are the subject of discussion and debate.

The FMA can be certain of carrying with it the weight of the opinion of football supporters only if they are represented on the authority itself. I would not say that all football directors—certainly not the ones that I have met in the House—are the most sensible of men. I remember some years ago the former professional player of Sunderland and Newcastle, Len Shackleton, writing a book, "The Clown Prince of Soccer", in which he had a blank page. At the bottom, he said, "This is the average football director's knowledge of the game." I would not go so far as to say that, except of Luton Town.

Football directors, the Football Association and the Football League should be represented on the FMA, and we seek to enshrine that in statute with our amendment, but so should football supporters, because they are at the rough end not only of this measure but of hooliganism. They are the sufferers, and they are entitled not just to make representations to, but to be represented on, the FMA.

Mr. Couchman: My hon. Friend the Minister is right not to be too prescriptive in laying down who should be members of the new FMA. However, he has given scant information about whether these people will be paid and if so, whether, like those who will become members of the Football Licensing Authority, they will be disqualified from becoming Members of the House of Commons. He has not said whether the chairman, in receiving remuneration, would enjoy the same sort of position as the chairmen of health authorities. He might have given more information about who will be members of the new body.

However, I agree that to have been prescriptive in the way that the Opposition wish my hon. Friend to be prescriptive would be to limit severely his opportunity to appoint the most appropriate people to the new FMA. He owes a little explanation on whether this will be a remunerated position, and under what circumstances. However, he should resist the Opposition's desire to pack the new FMA with people who have a highly vested interest in football.

Mr. Tony Banks: I wish to pick up something that I raised with the Minister earlier about the language in the amendment and its reference to a "chairman". It was not just tokenism. I feel strongly that consideration should seriously be given to having women representatives on the FMA. Many of us feel that if the influence of women were stronger and more obvious within football, both in management and on the terraces, some of the macho male domination and violence associated with football would be assuaged. The Minister should consider that.

Football has many women supporters, although not as many as there should be, because the violence deters them from going to matches. I would be interested to know how women have been arrested for violence either outside or inside the grounds. I suspect that, although one or two women have been arrested, that is all. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will bear this point in mind when he comes to study the nominations for the members of the FMA, and that he will make sure that women representatives are on it.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) is right to say that it is preposterous that there will not be clearly designated places on the FMA for supporters, through whatever body speaks for them. I should like to see a body much larger than the one that exists now, but no one can deny that it speaks for supporters. The various discussions in which Mr. Rogan Taylor has been involved have not only elevated him to a justified position of national significance, but have shown that he speaks a lot of good sense. We need to encourage such people. Many football supporters have views similar to those expressed by Mr. Taylor, and that should be taken into account. We tend to see football supporters as a mindless bunch of lumpen proletarians, interested only in kicking the hell out of old ladies. That is not true. Those who know anything about football know that that is a gross caricature. However, unfortunately, that is the unjustified image of football.

The Football Supporters Association had done a great job in raising the reputation of the great mass of football supporters. It is churlish of the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) to sneer at the Football Supporters Association by querying how many members it has. The hon. Member Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) dismissed it because it has only 25,000 members. As my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) said, in proportionate terms, that represents a large membership, and it is growing apace, because football supporters clubs can also affiliate. Therefore, the FSA can justifiably speak for the great majority of football supporters.

Mr. David Evans: Is the hon. Gentleman therefore suggesting that Manchester United, which has 95,000 members, should also be a member of the FMA?

Mr. Banks: If there was someone from Manchester United who was a genuine supporter and part of the supporters' club, that person would probably be a valued member of the authority. We are saying that there should be someone who clearly speaks for football supporters, and the only organisation that makes it clear that it speaks on behalf of supporters is the Football Supporters Association.

Mr. John Carlisle: If I heard the hon. Gentleman aright, he said that the membership of the Football Supporters Association is growing apace. As the right hon. Member for Birmingham Small Heath (Mr. Howell) said that he did not know how many members there were, what is the basis for the hon. Gentleman's figures? How does the hon. Gentleman know how many members there are?

Mr. Banks: I have been reading the back pages of sufficient newspapers, when I have not been reading and laughing at the articles on the front pages about the crisis that the Government have got themselves into over the resignation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to know that the number of applications that are being sent to the FSA is increasing enormously. It is a growing body. The more that supporters realise that there is a body that is prepared to speak for them, the more likely they are to join it.

We are faced with the prospect that football supporters will have as their mouthpiece a bunch of handpicked Tory stooges. No doubt the Thatcherite dictum will be applied: "Is he one of us?" That is something that we must resist.

The question has already been asked, "Why don't we have someone from the Professional Footballers Association?" There can be no argument about how many people the PFA represents. It is obvious that it speaks for professional footballers. Why is it not represented on the Football Membership Authority? It has an authentic voice and a legitimate claim to be heard.

It is not good enough for the Minister to say, "The Association can write to me." If there is to be something called a Football Membership Authority, we want to see supporters, however they are selected, and players, however they are selected, represented on it. We suspect, with some justification, that when the Minister decides who will become members of the FMA, the first and major qualification will be a Tory party membership card and not some knowledge of football. It is no good the Minister saying that he will be different and not follow the practice of the past, because we know how all quangos have been approached by the Government.

Mr. Meale: Is my hon. Friend aware that in 1983 a survey was carried out of health authority membership? When previous Governments were in office, the balance between Conservative and Labour Members was about 60:40. Following the election of the Tory Government in 1979, it was found that by 1983 the membership was 9:1 in favour of the Government. That reinforces the fears that my hon. Friend is expressing.

Mr. Banks: Indeed. The statistical as well as the anecdotal evidence shows that the present Minister for Sport, or any Minister who takes his place—no doubt two or three will do so before we have the Football Membership Authority up and running, if it ever is brought to that stage—will have as his primary consideration the affiliation and loyalty to the Conservative party of the individual that he is considering. That is not good enough, and that is why we have tabled amendments (a), (b) and (c).

I much regret that I was not a member of the Committee that considered the Bill. I have asked my colleagues who were members of it whether there was any mention in Committee of members of the Football Membership Authority receiving payments. Will the chair of the authority receive any form of payment? That is an important matter which we should know about, along with all the others that I have raised.

I ask the Minister to outline his proposals and not merely to say, "Anyone can write to me. I wish it to be understood that my door is always open." We must ensure that there are authentic spokespersons to represent the supporters and the players.

I have never heard the hon. Member for Luton, North question whom the National Viewers and Listeners Association, with Mary Whitehouse, represents. She and the association constitute one of the strongest supporters of the Conservative party. It is listened to more than any other organisation within the Conservative party when it comes to broadcasting standards. I doubt whether Mrs. Mary Whitehouse represents any more than a mere handful of loonies and nutters within the Tory party in the shire counties. It comes ill from the hon. Member for Luton, North to tell the Football Supporters Association that it does not speak on behalf of football supporters.

5.45 pm

Mr. Burt: I differ from Opposition Members, because I do not believe that the door is being shut in the face of supporters or anyone else who wishes to become a member of the Football Membership Authority. The Bill makes it clear that there is no prescriptive right for anyone to be a member of it, but the door is open for anyone who is nominated and supported. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), in his confusion, talked about whether his party should have asked for eight or nine places. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) found himself in difficulties when he was led down the road of considering whether there should be a member of the Football Membership Authority who was a representative of large football supporters' clubs. There could be a huge FMA if the Bill were prescriptive. It is far better to leave open the question of membership, but I say that with some qualifications, which I shall outline.

Some attention has been paid to the important role and development of football supporters' associations. There is no doubt that over the past few years these associations have come into their own. In a sense, the Bill gives them quite a boost. It will provide them with an opportunity to organise and to work. For some individuals—Rogan Taylor comes to mind—it has meant a profile, and I think that in the main he has responded very well to that. He has become an effective and coherent voice for the supporter.

[Mr. Burt]

He has done much to change some of the public attitudes that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West was talking about.

None of us believes that the football supporter is the sort of person that the hon. Gentleman described. The football hooligan fits that description, and he is the villain we should be aiming at. The supporter has many of the characteristics that are represented by Rogan Taylor and his colleagues.

As the various groups evolve, we cannot have a clear idea of their structures. We cannot be clear about membership or anything else. I have no doubt, however, that in time the supporters will be properly organised. Probably the distinction will be lost between the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs and the Football Supporters Association. Until that happens, I think [illegible] best that the Bill remains open. I strongly counsel my hon. Friend the Minister—he knows that I feel deeply on this issue—that there should be space for a representative voice of the football supporter within the Football Membership Authority.

It is open to question whether there should be representatives from the Professional Footballers Association. Many people believe that the Secretary of the PFA should be a commissioner for football as a whole. Some of us support the Bill because we see it as a turning point in the administration of football. We see the FMA as an embryonic body that can be used as a launching pad for a new approach to football. If the FMA is to have a membership that will take part in changing the face of football, ridding it of the old image which has lost it public support at the turnstiles, it is important that it is a tightly organised body that is determined to make certain changes with an eye to the future. That is a positive step that can be taken in the implementation of the scheme.

The difference between the positive and negative attitudes to the scheme has been evident throughout our consideration of the Bill. Opposition Members retain their view that the Bill is a bad measure and that only negative responses will flow from it. My hon. Friends and I believe that positive opportunities will flow.

I counsel my hon. Friend the Minister not only to consider the arguments of football supporters to be represented on the FMA but to ensure that its members have a clear understanding of the commercial opportunities presented by the membership scheme in changing the face of football. My belief is that only people one step removed from football administration can take a clear view of the future. We all agree that football administrators of the past made mistakes and that a new view should be taken by outsiders of changes that should be made.

Only a few years ago, the two great sports of the United States—football and baseball—were in disarray. Attendances were falling and public interest was slight. Although neither sport suffered from the hooliganism that affects soccer in Britain, both national games were in trouble. Consequently, their structure was reorganised, and football and baseball appointed commissioners to examine the way in which public attitudes to those games could be altered.

Today, as a result, American football and baseball are singularly successful. American football is now so successful that we can even watch it on television in this country. We gave soccer to the world, but if one walks down a street in Bury, one can see plenty of youngsters wearing tee-shirts featuring American football teams. How many kids in Chicago walk around wearing Manchester United or Football League tee-shirts? There are many opportunities to be exploited for the future of British football to earn revenue that can be returned to the clubs and to their supporters—and they are the people who have been missed out in many of the revenue-gathering operations of the past.

My hon. Friend the Minister should by all means keep the composition of the Football Membership Authority tight, but he ought to ensure that its members are forward-looking and make the most of the opportunities to change the way in which the man in the street views football—so that he, his wife and his children are wooed back to the game. If my hon. Friend the Minister also keeps his options open in respect of support from whichever may be the best suited football supporters' organisation, the Football Membership Authority will be ready for the future and able to exploit the changes that the Bill offers.

Mr. Joe Ashton (Bassetlaw): First, I declare an interest as vice-president of Sheffield Wednesday supporters' club, unanimously elected at its annual general meeting—yet I would not touch the Minister's proposals with a bargepole. The Bill will be the biggest disaster to beset football in a lifetime. It will be an immense, gigantic cock-up of the first order. Any football supporter who wants to be associated with the Football Membership Authority ought to have his head examined.

It surprises me that the Minister for Sport is not sufficiently astute to offer at least four or five places on the FMA to football supporters, so that if the scheme goes wrong he can say, "They helped to start it up. It is all their fault." The Minister does not even have the political nous to look for scapegoats. The former Chancellor of the Exchequer was at least able to blame trade unions for contributing to inflation by making excessive wage demands, but now that the Government have destroyed the trade unions, they can no longer be targeted.

I hope that the supporters' clubs have nothing to do with the FMA, which is 100 per cent. the brainchild of the Prime Minister, the Minister for Sport, and the two apartheid supporters from Luton—the hon. Members for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and for Luton, South (Mr. Bright)— who do not believe that anyone at the bottom of the social scale should have a voice. Blame for the scheme's shortcomings should be left fairly and squarely on their doorsteps, and they should sink with it.

Mr. David Evans: My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) hit the nail on the head. The Football Association, which has governed the sport for as long as any of us can remember, has made a complete and utter mess of it. The game has lost half its supporters and half the number of people that it previously employed. It frightens me, to say the least, that consideration is being given to inviting the failed administrators responsible for that situation to sit on the FMA, which offers football another chance in its last breath. This is the last time that our great game of football has a chance of [illegible] itself from the depths of depression, from hooliganism, and from criminal activity. I am nervous that we are about to embark on a course that will involve the total idiots that have been running the game for so long.

The association has had three presidents in only one year, and it has been trying to appoint a chief executive for 20 months. It has interviewed 68 candidates but has been unable to find one suitable person to run the Football League. Supporters should be represented on the FMA, but whom does one choose? There are 90,000 Manchester United supporters and even 20,000 paid-up Luton supporters—yet only 15,000 people belong to the Football Supporters Association, which is a ludicrous situation.

For goodness' sake, the Minister must not involve too many failed people from the Football League and Football Association. There is criminal activity both inside and outside the game, and it has not gone away. One thinks of Blackpool and of Stockholm. Far from going away, the problem has grown worse. I recommend that my hon. Friend the Minister chooses carefully from the league and the association those who are to sit on the FMA.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I want to respond to the comments of the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) but, unfortunately, he has left the Chamber. In arguing against football supporters being represented on the FMA at this stage, he stressed that the Bill offers tremendous commercial advantages. It is because such arguments are used by Conservative Members that football supporters should be involved. They bring an entirely different set of values to bear from the commercial interests that have often influenced Conservative Members.

In Committee, a fracture was evident, in that some hon. Members saw the Bill as a way of containing hooliganism —which it is ill equipped to do—whereas others stressed its commercial potential. People are jumping on the back of a spurious attempt to minimise hooliganism in order to change the whole nature of the game and to bring about a situation of a kind that has been compared with American baseball. We may therefore expect to see the sale of popcorn at half-time and other forms of commercial activity, rather than a continuation of the sport's traditions, whereby supporters attend a match solely to watch their team play. It is the Rogan Taylors of this world who should be involved in the running of the scheme, to bring some semblance of sanity to the Government's proposals.

Mr. Shersby: Much has been said about supporters' clubs being represented on the Football Membership Authority, but perhaps the Minister can say more about its chairman. If the authority has any chance of working well, it needs an outstanding chairman—an outstanding man or woman who is acceptable not only to the world of football but to the police, to this House, and to everyone else who takes an interest in crowd safety.

Can my hon. Friend reveal the chairman's term of office, his job specification, and who will take responsibility for preparing that job specification—particularly bearing in mind that we have been told today that the FMA will be not a quango but a limited company? Can my hon. Friend say also who will be responsible for drawing up the FMA's articles of association? One presumes that that will be for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, but that is not clear from the amendment.

Further, when is the commencement order likely to be laid? As I recall, we were clearly told on Second Reading that the House would have an opportunity to vote on the commencement order when it was laid. I assume, therefore, that the order will incorporate a list of authority members and another of the organisations that nominated them, and, above all, that it will deal with the important question of the chairmanship.

6 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I agree with the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) that the chair of the football authority will need to be a genius to save, if not the game, at least some clubs from potential destruction. I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) severe doubts about whether supporters ought to be involved: it seems almost like participating in one's own funeral as a pallbearer.

In the past, I have spoken rather harshly about the Under-Secretary of State, but I do not propose to do so in the future, for good practical reasons. After all, I do not know whether tomorrow he will be Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Secretary or Secretary of State for the Environment. If a former Lambeth borough councillor can become Chancellor, I do not know what will happen next. The actions of the chairman of selectors for the Government have been somewhat unpredictable recently, so I think that we had better be polite to the Under-Secretary.

If people are to be involved in decision making—I am thinking particularly of exemptions from the scheme—those people should include football supporters. It is unthinkable that, when a statutory body such as this is set up—be it a quango or a limited company—primacy should not be given to those actually engaged in the game of football.

We hear talk of the need for self-regulation in the City, and the need for it to be carried out by those most closely involved; similarly, it would have been inconceivable for the Manpower Services Commission not to be composed primarily of employers and trade unions. That is customary in the case of nearly every statutory body. The recently established Legal Aid Board, for example, although not composed exclusively of lawyers, contains a sensible number, who know what is going on. Although the Under-Secretary may not wish to write such a requirement into the statute, he should give a clear undertaking that those most closely involved in football will have a part to play and the ability to comment.

In my experience of the terraces, supporters want to get on with watching the game without interruptions or hooliganism. I often hear more sensible suggestions about policing from supporters than from the governors or the police themselves. They complain that all the supporters of the home team must diagonally cross the path of all the away team supporters, and their suggestions about how entry and exit should be organised demonstrate that they have far more common sense than many others who are involved.

The overwhelming majority of supporters want an end to the pitch invasions that hold up games. The Under-Secretary has often referred to the invasion of the Crystal Palace pitch by Birmingham fans, but the last thing that the Crystal Palace fans wanted was such an invasion: that is how any supporter would feel when his

[Mr. John Fraser]

team was ahead and had a chance of going into the first division or taking part in the play-offs. He does not want to see the match abandoned and the team having to start all over again, perhaps on a neutral ground, thus losing its advantage. There is much good sense among supporters, and much will to make the game work without hooliganism. It would be monstrous for the Government not at least to give an undertaking that supporters and others closely involved in the game will be members of the authority.

Mr. John Carlisle: I am sorry that the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), whose opinion most Conservative member respect, prefaced his remarks with a personal attack on my hon. Friend the Minister. That was quite unnecessary and, if I may say so, somewhat unneighbourly. One of the Bill's merits is that it is rather difficult for casual supporters such as the hon. Gentleman to drift into the Chamber and make such comments. His later comments, however, were more creditable, and, indeed, more in the spirit of the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell).

I am also sorry that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) are not in the Chamber. They were worried—as perhaps we all are—about the composition of the Football Membership Authority, fearing that it might be peopled by Tory stooges, as I believe they are described. The hon. Member for Newhan, North-West also accused my party of putting nominated members on to health authorities, and pointed out that there were more Conservative members of such authorities in 1983 than in previous years.

Those hon. Members are like the pot calling the kettle black. When Labour has taken office in local authorities —which, thankfully, has occurred very little recently—it has unhesitatingly removed Conservative councillors from school governing bodies, for instance, and has appointed its own supporters to local authority posts with no compunction. Unlike the Conservative party, Labour has not left even a vestige of opposition to its views. If the Secretary of State decides—as I am sure that he will not —to place Conservative supporters on the authority, on the nomination of six members, that will be by no means unfortunate, as they may be the only people willing and sensible enough to see the scheme go through.

The only sense spoken in this debate and in Committee has come from Conservative Members. The right hon. Member for Small Heath—much though we respect his views—let the cat out of the bag. His amendment requires members of the football supporters' associations to be members of the FMA, yet he admitted to the House that those associations had no members, which seemed to come as a complete surprise to Opposition Members. He could not tell the House exactly what their composition was. Obviously they have officers; perhaps we should ask the right hon. Gentleman whether those officers are self-apppointed, or whether elections take place. Who are the members of the associations? But I must correct myself: according to the right hon. Gentleman, they have no members.

How, in all logic, can the right hon. Gentleman put down an amendment requiring bodies with no members to be represented on the FMA? If the FMA were to say to the supporters' associations, "Please nominate one of your members for representation," the associations would have to reply, "I am sorry, we cannot do so, because we have no members."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) pointed out, in his utter confusion the right hon. Gentleman stated in amendment (a) that the authority should have eight members when he meant nine. There is, indeed, complete confusion on the Opposition Benches about who represents football supporters. Is it the National Federation of Football Supporters' Clubs, or is it the Football Supporters Association? Is it the members of Manchester United supporters association, the 20,000 members of Luton supporters association or, indeed, the many people throughout the country who are members of associations supporting their individual clubs, but not necessarily members of the FSA?

The right hon. Gentleman will know that our experience in Committee with FSA members—particularly my experience—was less than fortunate. The only hooliganism that took place, albeit after the Committee had risen for lunch, was perpetrated against me, when a member of the FSA brandished papers and threatened to inflict physical violence on me because of what I had said. If that is the sort of person that the Opposition would like to be represented on the FMA, so be it, but they must decide for themselves exactly who should be nominated.

It is perhaps a little unfortunate that we have not yet reached amendment No. 8, in which my hon. Friend the Minister speaks of giving

"such persons as appear . . . to represent the interests of football supporters an opportunity to make representations."

Perhaps that would be a better idea. There is no doubt whatsoever that the confusion spread by the right hon. Member for Small Heath and his hon. Friends makes it difficult for us to see who should be on the FMA. We are far better to take the wise words and counsel of my hon. Friend the Minister, as we have throughout the Committee, that the FMA and the Secretary of State will have the wisdom and foresight to include on that authority representatives of the supporters' groups.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) accused me of wanting to have no supporters on the FMA. That is a total misrepresentation, although that has not been unusual for the hon. Gentleman in our deliberations on the Bill. I agree with him that the supporters should have a voice. But regrettably, the Opposition in their ineptitude have not been able to suggest anyone who would be truly representative or able to nominate anyone. [HON. MEMBERS: "Who would the hon. Gentleman suggest?"] Opposition Members ask who I would suggest. As my hon. Friend the Minister has suggested in amendment No. 8, I would be happy for representatives of football supporters' associations to suggest particular names. When I refer to football supporters' associations, I refer to associations throughout the country, not to that mysterious, ghostlike organisation that exists with no members, when we do not know whether its representatives are elected or appointed, whom they represent and where that representation will go.

My hon. Friend has the utmost support from Conservative Members, who throughout the passage of the Bill sought clarity of purpose, and wish to make sure that those involved in the running of the FMA know something about the game. He has our support because we are convinced that we have the right formula for correcting the problems that have been listed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Therefore, I fully support the amendment.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I intend to detain the House just for a moment. I had no intention of speaking in this debate until I heard the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). It is as well to put the record straight. Many hon. Members from both sides of the House were present at that Committee meeting. It is true that when the Committee adjourned for lunch, one supporter, who rightly felt very angry at some of the nonsense from the hon. Member for Luton, North, voiced his opinions very strongly. But there was no physical contact and he only brandished a piece of paper. We witnessed that, and it was most unfair of the hon. Gentleman to raise that matter and slur the organisation concerned. I hope that is clearly on record, and I see that my hon. Friends agree that that is an accurate description of what took place.

We should take some credit for the fact that until now the Minister has appeared to be converted to the idea that football supporters should be heard in the higher echelons of the game. Not only has he said that in the House, in committee and in other forums throughout the country, but he said it to a very wide audience on "Wogan". He said that supporters should be heard by football clubs at board level. If he feels that they should be on the boards of football clubs, it is a short step to allow them on the FMA.

I hope that the Minister will say clearly that he is in favour of the Opposition amendment. It is clear that the people who represent football supporters are the true lovers of football. They are the people who stand on the terraces whatever the weather supporting that great game. They bring an element of sense into the whole debate. That has been recognised by most people involved in the game, including Lord Justice Taylor, who now turn to those bodies because they talk the level-headed sense that we expect from genuine football supporters. Therefore, we urge the Minister, who has turned a little in our favour, to come full circle, accept the force of our argument and ensure, on the face of the Bill, that those representatives are on the FMA.

6.15 pm

Mr. John Greenway: I have listened to all the arguments throughout the debate and it seems to me that the crucial point has been missed. We are dealing with an enabling Bill.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) suggested to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and me that six members were not sufficient and that there ought to be eight. Tonight he suggested that the figure should be nine. One could go on and on, but the real issue is that in drafting the Bill and concluding our deliberations on it, we must be sure that it specifies the right number of representatives. That number has to be sufficient to ensure that there will be room for organisations with a valid claim to be represented on the FMA. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to state clearly that he recognises the overwhelming argument for representation not only from the FA and the Football League which have suggested that they are willing to serve but from the Football Supporters Association.

As the House knows, I am not a proponent of the Bill. In general, I am against it, but if we are to have a Bill and a scheme, it behoves all of us involved in football to try to ensure that the scheme works. If, as the proponents of the Bill suggest, its purpose is to police out the hooligans, we shall be left with the overwhelming majority of law-abiding supporters attending football matches. If we are to have membership schemes, we want meaningful schemes along the lines of those that Lord Justice Popplewell suggested in his report, so that fans and clubs feel a much closer sense of identity with one another.

I have put my name to amendment (c) tabled by the right hon. Member for Small Heath. Although it may be inappropriate to add those words to the Bill, will my hon. Friend give a firm assurance tonight that there will be an opportunity for football supporter representations on the Football Membership Authority?

Mr. Moynihan: I start on an exceptionally serious note by saying that of course I am totally at one with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) about the ugly and sickening behaviour of some fans who travelled to Poland. I had extensive reports from officials working at the match. Moreover, I received reports at first hand from travelling fans, not least through the usual obscene and sickening messages, written on the back of postcards displaying black and white pictures of Auschwitz and coffins. That was in addition to the excrement, the death threats and the used condoms which my secretary finds far too regularly in the morning post. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that that is utterly sickening. Individuals who bring the game into disrepute internationally should be brought to book in whatever way possible for that aspect of their behaviour. That is something on which the right hon. Gentleman and I are totally at one.

I recognise his point about individuals who posture as National Front supporters, although I doubt whether they have the faintest clue what the National Front stands for. I believe that, subject to the will of Parliament any aspect of that behaviour should be covered by the conditions of membership irrespective of whether people are in favour of the scheme. The FMA, whoever is on it, should take the firmest action against behaviour that brings the game into disrepute, wherever it exists.

The right hon. Member for Small Heath mentioned the membership of the FMA, which has been well debated. For different reasons, which I accept, hon. Members have spoken for and against football supporters' representatives being members of the FMA. I shall repeat the clear undertaking which I gave in Committee. I said that we are sympathetic to the involvement of football supporters' organisations in the running of the FMA. I continued:

> "It would not be helpful to refer to the existing organisations by name in the Bill because there would be difficulties if they were to go out of business, or if a new supporters' organisation appeared."—[*Official Report*, Standing Committee A, 12 July 1989; c. 336.]

Two years ago, we would not have been debating the Football Supporters Association, and it is important to bear that in mind when placing the names of existing organisations on the face of legislation that will last a long time.

I repeat that I am sympathetic to the notion of directly involving supporters in the running of the FMA. The amendment is drawn sufficiently widely to ensure that, from the four appointments and two nominations, the

[Mr. Moynihan]

Secretary of State will be able carefully to consider the nomination of football supporters' organisations when considering the establishment of the FMA.

I hope that, by emphasing that point, I have satisfied not only my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) but my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and other hon. Members.

We could have had an equally sensitive and detailed debate on the merits of a range of footballing bodies being represented on the FMA. We could have argued a strong case for the Professional Footballers Association, for the Referees Association and the Football League executive staffs association. A strong case can be made for the consideration of supporters and their organisations, and I hope that nominations for the consideration of the Secretary of State will come from as wide a representation of bodies involved in football as possible. I strongly repeat the undertaking I gave about the sympathy of the Secretary of State for the direct involvement of supporters in the running of the FMA.

I had hoped that the debate would not be as lengthy as it has been, because we reponed directly to amendment No. 54, which was moved in Committee by the right hon. Member for Small Heath, who kindly said that we had responded to a number of his suggestions. He moved an amendment to ensure the independence of the chairman of the FMA. He was keen to ensure that the chairman is not involved in the ownership or management of any premises at which designated football matches are played. He suggested that no fewer than six members of the authority should hold office under the terms and conditions laid down in the schedule. In practice, we have moved to seven members for the authority.

I hope that I have responded fully to the right hon. Gentleman, and I appreciate the point that he made about eight members of the FMA. I hope that he recognises that it is important that his concerns about the independence of the chairman, which are shared by the football authorities and the Government, are met by amendment No. 2.

Payment and the terms of appointment of members of the FMA will be delt with in the articles of association of the company. As hon. Members who served on the Committee know, it will be a private company and not a quango. We should therefore keep the role of legislation in it to a minimum.

We have responded to the points that were pressed most strongly in Committee about the independence of the FMA, but it will be for the bodies that form the company to draw up its articles of association and deal with the term of the chairman's appointment, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman). The Secretary of State will take an interest in such matters, because he will be considering the appointment of the FMA, but he will not write its articles of association.

The FMA is very different from the Football Licensing Authority, which is a quango and is thus subject to all the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham made about health authorities and the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975. Those points will not apply to the FMA.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) mentioned terms of office, job specifications and articles of association. All those issues will be worked out by the FMA and will be subject to the futher consideration of the Secretary of State when he approves the FMA, subject to the will of the House in the first of the two debates that are expected to take place following Lord Justice Taylor's final report.

I recognise that that may not completely satisfy Opposition Members, but I hope that the firm commitment that I have given, in the light of the conflicting views that have been expressed, proves our keen and determined willingness to ensure the active involvement of football supporters not only in then FMA but, as the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) said, in their clubs and, through their clubs, in the running of the game. There are many international examples that British football can readily follow, not least Portugal. Although that argument is tangential to the Bill, it must nevertheless be considered carefully by football's authorities.

Mr. Denis Howell: With the leave of the House, may I thank the Minister and acknowledge that he met us about the independence of the chairman of the FMA?

Naturally, we are disappointed by what the Minister said. Normally, we would have sought to divide the House on the three amendments, but as we are already hours late, and as that would take 45 minutes, we shall not do so. I am advised by my right hon. and hon. Friends that we shall have one vote at nine o'clock, which will illustrate our various objections.

I thank the Minister for moving half a step in our direction, which is all that we can expect at this hour of the night.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 3, in page 3, line 11, at end insert—

'(3A) The Secretary of State shall not designate any body corporate as the Football Membership Authority unless he is satisfied that its articles of association make provision securing—

(a) that its Board shall comprise a Chairman and six other members, of whom the Chairman and four of the other members are persons approved by the Secretary of State before their election as Chairman or as member, as the case may be, and the remaining two members are persons nominated by the Secretary of State, and

(b) that the Chairman shall be a person who has no such financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially the performance of his functions as Chairman;

and all the members of the Board shall hold office in accordance with the articles of association of the body corporate.

(3B) The Secretary of State may withdraw the designation of a body corporate as the Football Membership Authority if he ceases to be satisfied of the matters mentioned in subsection (3A) above.

No. 4, in page 3, line 19, leave out 'withdrawn' and insert 'divested'.*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Mr. Moynihan: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 3, line 34, at end insert—

'( ) Where the Secretary of State withdraws the designation of a body as the Football Membership Authority, he shall, as soon as it appears to him to be appropriate to do so, lay before each House of Parliament a report stating his reasons for the withdrawal.'.

In Committee, I explained that it was the Government's intention that the Secretary of State should report to Parliament on any decision to withdraw his designation of a body as the FMA. I promised to consider whether it was necessary to provide for this on the face of the Bill, and, if so, to bring forward an appropriate amendment on Report. That issue was again raised tonight by Opposition Members.

Amendment No. 5 follows from that undertaking. It requires the Secretary of State to explain in a report to each House the reasons for the withdrawal of his designation, and for the report to be laid as soon as the Secretary of State considers it appropriate to do so.

The reference to timing is important. If the Bill were to require the Secretary of State to make his report within a specified period, as was suggested at an earlier stage, the circumstances of a particular case could make it very difficult, or perhaps impossible, for him to comply. If, for example, there were allegations that those running the FMA had committed criminal offences, it would clearly be impossible for the Secretary of State to make his report in advance of the resolution of the associated legal proceedings. The amendment will ensure that Parliament is fully informed as soon as possible of any decision that the Secretary of State takes to withdraw his designation.

Clause 4

NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP SCHEME: MAKING, APPROVAL, MODIFICATION ETC.

Mr. Moynihan: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 3, line 47, after 'section', insert '(a)'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this, it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 7 and 8.

Mr. Moynihan: The amendments require the Footbal Membership Authority to consult interested parties in drawing up or modifying the national membership scheme.

Amendment No. 6 requires the FMA to consult the Football Association of Wales and fulfils an undertaking I gave in Committee to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is, with the assistance of a working party of interested parties set up for the purpose, looking at the matches in Wales to which the scheme should apply. It is important that the Football Association of Wales should have the opportunity of making an input as the scheme is drawn up or in the event of its being modified. I am happy, by way of this amendment, to ensure that the association is given this opportunity.

The third amendment concerns the important matter of safeguarding the interests of football supporters. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) moved an amendment in Committee to add the Football Supporters Association and the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs to the bodies that the FMA must consult under clause 4(2). I explained in Committee that the Government are sympathetic to the notion of involving the football supporters' organisations and I said that I would consider how best to achieve it.

As I have explained fully to the House, it remains my view that it would not be helpful to refer to the existing supporters' organisations by name in the Bill, not least because there could be difficulties if they should cease to exist, or if a new organisation should be formed. The amendment therefore provides for the FMA to consult supporters' organisations. Those organisations would then have the opportunity of making representations on the detailed scheme as it is drawn up or on any changes made to it. I commend this approach to the House.

The Football Membership Authority's working party on the scheme is already consulting the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs and the Football Supporters Association. However, I regret that the chairman of the FSA may not take the positive approach to the scheme that I had hoped for. Nevertheless, it is important that the FMA should consult supporters. The Government are fully committed to involving football supporters in drawing up the scheme. They must be involved and given the chance to have their say. The amendment will bring that about.

6.30 pm

Mr. Rowlands: I thank the Minister for responding to our call in Committee to ensure that the Football Association for Wales will be properly and statutorily recognised in the consultation process. As the Minister will acknowledge, we made strenuous efforts to exclude Wales from the Bill but, having failed to do so, it is right and proper that the Football Association of Wales should have a proper statutory role in the consultation process. I hope that the Football Association of Wales will seek to strengthen and develop its links with football and football supporters in Wales.

The association had the image of an aged establishment that was not capable of responding and relating to the widespread and growing support for football—both league and non-league—in Wales. Having been given that function and role, I hope that, in future, the Football Association of Wales will start to reflect the energy, excitement, support and commitment of a large number of people. Although rugby is our national sport, football has great support in the Principality. I welcome the opportunity that the Minister has provided for the Football Association of Wales to take part in the vital consultation process.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister kept saying that the Government were determined that supporters should be consulted. However, what matters is not what the Minister says at the Dispatch Box but what is written in the Bill. If the Bill is amended as the Minister expects it to be, it will provide for consultation with the Football Association and the Football League, but football supporters will have only an "opportunity to make representations." Anyone has the opportunity to make representations to the FMA. The Minister should find some other way of ensuring that football supporters have a statutory right to be consulted, rather than the wishy-washy permissive approach that he is enshrining within the Bill.

Mr. Moynihan: Under the Bill, the FMA, in preparing a draft scheme that fulfils the requirements of clause 5, will have to

> "give such persons as appear to it to represent the interests of football supporters an opportunity to make representations."

That is a strong commitment. I have no doubt that, if lively and active football supporters' associations were not given the opportunity to represent the interests of the bodies that they form, they would act swiftly to seek judicial review.

Amendment agreed to.

[Mr. Moynihan]

Amendments made: No. 7, in page 3, line 47, after 'Association', insert

',the Football Association of Wales'.

No. 8, in page 3, line 48, at end insert

'; and

(b) give such persons as appear to it to represent the interests of football supporters an opportunity to make representations.'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Mr. Jim Lester: I beg to move amendment No. 56, in page 4, line 10, at end insert

'Provided that the Secretary of State and the Football Membership Authority are satisfied that any equipment to be used for the operation of the scheme has been thoroughly tested for a sufficient period of time as to allow such testing to take place during the winter months.'

The amendment is tabled in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). It spells out clearly the test of the Government's good faith. All along we have given credibility to the Government's promise that they would not implement any scheme unless they were satisfied that it was technically sound.

We need to insert the amendment because we all recognise that the technology needs to be tested in a full profile of the football season. It will not be enough for it to be tested for a brief period during a certain time of the year, because in football things happen at odd times. For example, cup matches are played late in the season and a first division club could play a "giant-killing" non-league club. Nobody can predict when such matches will occur. We need to cover occasions such as Boxing day. Many people go home to spend Christmas with their families and it is popular to go to a football match. Throughout the country such matches attract many casual supporters and the system needs to be tested to ensure that it causes no problems.

Those of us who are familiar with technical equipment know that the equipment will be used only at weekends and not necessarily every weekend. We need to be sure that it does not respond to adverse temperatures and condensation. I am sure that if he were here my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) would agree that the Luton scheme, with which the House has been bored on more than one occasion, has sometims failed because of condensation. We need to ensure that the technical equipment functions in all weather conditions.

Perhaps the most important point to put to the Minister is that we must test the criteria by which the machinery operates. After Hillsborough, is the criterion to ensure that the maximum number of people gain entry into the ground with the least possible trouble?

That is the crowd safety argument mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale in a previous debate. Are we testing the ability to exclude people? One of my principal criticisms is that we may be putting up to half a million people through machinery every weekend in an attempt to try to exclude any one of the 1,839 who have been excluded from matches since 1987.

The police are concerned to know what rights they have to arrest anybody who has gone through the equipment and whether the flashing red light is sufficient evidence to arrest or keep people outside the ground. That is an argument that we have had many times. It is not a popular argument, because keeping people outside creates tremendous pressure outside the grounds. Is it the intention that people should be let in and subsequently be taken away quietly to some other place within the club precincts to be questioned to find out whether the machine has made an error?

Some hon. Members have referred to the errors made by computer-type machinery. When I was at a football match this weekend I looked to see whether the flashing light referred to the right person. When a light flashes at a turnstile there are many people around, and we have to ensure that the card applies to the right person.

Mr. Pike: Is it not possible that all the turnstiles in that row—they are always in blocks—will flash red at the same time? Is that not one of the difficulties that will be shown up if the Bill is forced through Parliament and a reason why it is important that the equipment should be tested in the way suggested by the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Lestor: The hon. Gentleman makes a valuable point. Most members of the Committee who oppose the Bill, on grounds both of practicality and of principle, feel that great store must be placed on the Minister's pledge not to implement the scheme unless he is totally satisfied that it is the correct one. There must be exhaustive testing.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): As the hon. Gentleman is aware, I am vice-chairman of Hartlepool United football club. The other day, I had the pleasure of welcoming the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) to the club——

Mr. Ashton: Who won?

Mr. Boyes: York City won.

This is a good amendment. If the equipment kept breaking down in winter, it would cost money to repair it. We have just spent nine hours at Hartlepool discussing our financial problems—that is on the record in the newspapers. The Minister says that we shall have to contribute towards the cost of installing the equipment. During the winter months, the equipment may continually break down and we may have to fetch in electronic engineers and computer experts, at great expense. I am sure that I speak on behalf of dozens of football clubs when I say that the cost of repairing the equipment will be a great drain on our resources.

Mr. Lester: That is a point of finance, but the point that the hon. Gentleman makes from his detailed knowledge of the game is valid. From 5 May, in the run-up to the World cup, there will not be many opportunities to test these machines. My hon. Friend the Minister should tell us how he thinks testing can take place and, on the point made by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), how it can be financed and who will finance it.

I am sure that there will be no great rush of volunteers among the clubs to be the test men.

Mr. Randall: I have a reservation about this. Rather than my making a long speech about it, perhaps the hon. Gentleman can comment on it. The amendment places great emphasis on equipment. If we are to test the scheme, should we not test the whole system, not just the hardware and the software? After all, pages 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 of the Bill are about the licence. Should not the amendment, therefore, be just a little wider?

Mr. Lester: I suspect that licensing would go on regardless of the equipment and the testing of the scheme. The criteria hinge on the type of system and equipment, which must be tested exhaustively before the authorities can even proceed to issue licences. I cannot imagine any clubs rushing to volunteer to be test men and putting their supporters through the business of taking out cards, or using whatever system is recommended, to find out whether the system works. I have heard that it will cost £2·5 million to carry out testing, before we get anywhere near the major scheme. It will be interesting to know who is supposed to provide the £2·5 million to the volunteer clubs—which I suspect will be unwilling to take part—to see whether the equipment works. These questions and the amendment deserve careful consideration.

Mr. John Carlisle: Can my hon. Friend tell the House what definite information he has on the cost, if indeed there will be a cost? Might not the scheme be implemented by some companies at no cost to the clubs due to the commercial opportunities which might spin off from it, and would my hon. Friend welcome that?

6.45 pm

Mr. Lester: I would welcome anything which imposed no financial cost on clubs, many of which are already struggling to make ends meet, but I suspect that my hon. Friend would be as amazed as I if any fairy godmothers were found waiting in the wings to come forward with free schemes. Whatever the criteria to be included in the Bill, we must be sure that the equipment and the scheme are workable.

The onus must be on the Government, who are proposing this legislation, to ensure that it will work. I cannot see how all the testing can be done before the 1991 season, as the Arthur Young report stated. The onus on the Government is heavy because they proposed the legislation against the better judgment of 91 of the 92 clubs, the 430,000 regular football supporters and the totality of football players, as we have heard today. The Government must be sure that they are right and that their scheme will work, against the overwhelming evidence of all those who are closely involved in the game and who would be the first to rush to the Government if they were as afraid of the problems of hooliganism as some Conservative Members have suggested they are.

I am happy that this is the fourth year in which attendances at football matches have increased. At the weekend, I had a good look around to see how many ladies and children were in the audience at the match between Nottingham Forest and Queen's Park Rangers. I am happy to say that a high proportion of women and children were present on that happy and enjoyable family occasion. They came to a good match and enjoyed the whole game.

Mr. John Carlisle: Including those on the terraces?

Mr. Lester: Yes, those on the terraces as well.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I support the amendment. Many of us who are most strongly opposed to the Bill oppose it as a matter of principle. Throughout its passage, there have undoubtedly been a considerable number of occasions when the practicalities of the measure have seemed as important to those of us who oppose it as a matter of principle as the principle itself. If the scheme is to be approved, it must work in all circumstances and have the capacity to deal with the improbables and, indeed, the very emergency which we discussed earlier. For that reason, I believe that the amendment is clothed in common sense. I hope that the Minister will feel able to accept it.

Implicit in the amendment is the suggestion that one is necessarily dealing with electronic equipment. I know that at least one of the six proposals that are still before the Minister for consideration does not necessarily involve electronic equipment. I do not expect the hon. Gentleman to offer any announcement this evening, but the House wants to be assured that the most careful consideration will be given to all the options so that the option that is finally chosen is regarded as the best possible means by which the scheme should be operated and is subjected to the most rigorous testing. In a sense, if the means by which the scheme is to be made to work at football grounds on Saturday afternoons are wrongly chosen or in any way defective, the apprehensions of many of us—that the difficulties outside football grounds may be compounded rather than alleviated—may turn out to be well founded.

The Government have chosen to embark upon this scheme. It is incumbent on them to satisfy themselves by the most rigorous and compelling evidence that it will stand up to all the strains and stresses to which it will necessarily be subjected.

Mr. John Greenway: I want to deal only with matters that my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) did not mention. Even though some of us oppose the Bill, as I mentioned earlier, it is vital that if we are to have a scheme, it should be seen to work. The confidence of the supporters that the scheme will work is crucial. At some stage, we shall have to stop talking down the Bill and ensure that fans are not put off coming to football matches because of their concern that dreadful events may happen at games.

The equipment that may be used in introducing the scheme lies at the heart of that concern, not only because the fans are worried about safety, but because they are worried about whether they will be admitted to matches to which they are entitled to be admitted and whether there may be some malfunction of the equipment, which may misread their cards.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe is right to include the words "winter months" in the amendment. About three seasons ago, York City football club played Arsenal and Liverpool in FA cup matches, one in the fourth round and the other in the fifth. Both matches were played on Saturdays in February and the fans had to clear about a foot of snow off the pitch and terraces so that the game could go ahead. The television cameramen were also keen to help us to ensure that the games went ahead, and both matches were played in sub-zero temperatures. It is important that the electronic equipment used is shown to be capable of working in such conditions.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe said, FA cup games throw up unusual fixtures and they are usually played in the winter months. It is important that the equipment is seen to work and to be capable of dealing not only with winter fixtures, but with large crowds at some of the smaller grounds, which are used to seeing only 3,000 or 4,000 spectators on Saturdays—and sometimes, sadly, even fewer—and which suddenly have to deal with 15,000 or 20,000 spectators, if they are some of the bigger stadiums in the third and fourth divisions.

The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) made a point about the cost of repairs. He tried to

[Mr. John Greenway]

suggest that if the test is carried out for too long, we could be throwing a considerable amount of money at testing and dealing with breakdowns. The finances of most third and fourth division clubs will not allow for a massive influx of money to make the equipment repairs to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. David Evans: At Luton, we introduced a computerised system and the cost of testing was zero. It took no time to test. It was tested completely within one day and, over the past three and a half years, the antiquated system has not failed us. I suggest that, with the modern equipment available, the point about the time for testing is just a red herring from the Opposition.

Mr. Greenway: One of the difficulties of having a test carried out at only a few clubs—several hon. Members have referred to the Government's intentions on this—is that we shall be dealing only with small numbers. When the scheme is in force in all 92 clubs, 450,000 to 500,000 people could be going through the turnstiles on the same day and they will all be using the same national membership scheme database.

Mr. Lester: If I remember correctly from our discussion in Committee, it will be a Europewide scheme, not a scheme only for the United Kingdom. That is a rather different matter from 8,000 regular attenders at Luton.

Mr. Greenway: We seem to be digressing from the point raised by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington. He said that it was surely right that the equipment should be seen to work before all 92 clubs had to put their hands in—for many of them—fairly empty pockets to pay for the equipment in the first place.

There is an argument about whether it will cost small clubs any money to institute the scheme. I remain to be convinced, as do the chairmen of the majority of Football League clubs, that the scheme could be introduced at no cost to them. I assume that there will be a cost and we require a proper period of testing to ensure that there is no waste of money. If we do not have a proper testing period and then find that the scheme does not work, much of the money will be wasted, and in many of our league grounds, that money could more reasonably be spent on new seating and facilities for supporters. If the scheme fails because it has not been tested adequately, there will be not only the serious cost to the football clubs that have paid money for the equipment to be installed: the political cost to the Government of failure will be extremely serious. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to reflect on that.

The amendment is not, as my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) suggested, born out of an attempt to filibuster the introduction of the scheme. It is not a wrecking amendment, but is born out of the desire of those of us who oppose the Bill, but who none the less see the political reality that there will be a scheme, to make the scheme work. Unless the fans have full confidence that the scheme will work, there could be serious political consequences.

Mr. Boyes: I accept the hon. Gentleman's last point. Will he accept that we on the Hartlepool board want to stay within the law? We may not like it, but we would accept the Bill when it became law. However, to say that we accept the law does not mean that we can implement it; we do not have the cash to do so. The Minister has said that there will be zero cost, but during the passage of the Bill, I have not heard the Minister say definitely that Hartlepool United, York City or any other club will be given money for the equipment, the repairs and the buildings necessary for the equipment. The Government have never told the House that there will be a grant or any other help towards that.

Mr. Greenway: I am delighted that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman because he has made a valid point, which requires no further comment from me.

The political cost of the failure of the scheme would be damaging for the Government, and I say that in sincerity and good faith. In Committee—I am sorry that I was unable to serve on that Committee—the Government gave undertakings that the scheme would be introduced on a national scale only when it could be shown to work and the technology was available. The amendment is the litmus test of that commitment.

Mr. Norris: Although the amendment may be technically unnecessary, it raises an important issue of practicability. However, we shall vote against it if necessary, although I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) will not press the amendment. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), speaking for the SLD—I do not want to get the name wrong—made an important distinction. He said that the Bill raises two issues, one of principle and the other of practicability and he is right to draw that distinction. I am concerned about the principle, and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) emphasised that in this forum we should be debating the principle.

I make that point because I believe that the practicability can be taken for granted. I do not want to be trite and wax on, although that would be breaking the habit of a lifetime, and talk about the impact of new technology. However, in an age such as this, it is surely not beyond the wit of man to devise a perfectly straightforward system to admit people to a ground, and to do so throughout normal temperature conditions and in all the normal circumstances at football grounds. Those of us who have been the most vigorous supporters of the Government's proposals, and who remain so convinced, take it for granted that the scheme that is introduced will be sensible and will have undergone all the normal, rigorous tests that should be applied to such a scheme. It must be a matter of common accord that, when the scheme is introduced, the last thing we want is for it to break down and to cause more problems than it is designed to prevent.

It is an extraordinary proposition that we should allow our attempt to control the problems of violence in football —which is the whole aim of the Bill, as I keep saying—to be frustrated because of our inability to produce cards that swipe properly in sub-zero temperatures. I have much more faith in our abilities, and the considerable number of companies that have shown an interest in providing the technology leads me to believe that we can find a solution and a technology that work.

7 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes: The Minister told us in Committee that the cards would operate nationally. That means that someone can go in the morning to a post office or to the shed at Halifax to get himself a card. He then has access to any league match in the country. He can nip down and watch a game at Arsenal. The technology must be such that, with about 300,000 people coming in in the last 15 minutes before the game, telephone connections with a national computer can be used to check the membership cards. If such technology existed, the scheme might work, but I do not think that even the Minister believes that it exists.

On Friday when we discussed the ways and means resolution, the Minister said what he will presumably say in his answer to this debate:

"If the Government went ahead with a national membership scheme, we should need to be satisfied that the technology was up and working and correct so that the scheme could be implemented effectively from day 1."—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 1267.]

It seems to me that we shall not get a practicable scheme. The principle will be established and then the Government will back off from their commitments regarding the practicalities.

Mr. Lester *rose*——

Mr. Norris: Technically, I should at least get back to my feet before giving way to my hon. Friend who so earnestly wishes to intervene.

Let me respond to the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), who has wrongly described the technical qualifications of the scheme. I look forward to my hon. Friend the Minister confirming what the essential elements will be. It is a sine qua non of the scheme that the card should be transferable from ground to ground and that it should be acceptable at all the league grounds to which the scheme applies. I see nothing particularly technically difficult about that. I understand that a large number of companies have tendered for the contract to provide the technical equipment, and I look forward to the successful tenderers producing a perfectly serviceable product.

It is important to make two points about cost. There are two elements: one is the capital cost of installing the equipment and the second is the day-to-day cost of producing the cards. I understand that the half-dozen or so serious contenders for the contract—I am not sure of the exact number—have said that the facility, or the capital works, will be provided at no cost to the club. My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), who represent the heartfelt interests of smaller and less wealthy clubs, may have missed this point when reading the reports of our proceedings in Committee. My hon. Friends and I well understand that the last thing that a club whose finances are in a parlous condition wants is a large capital imposition resulting from this scheme. But I understand that that will simply not be the case and that all the tenderers will deliver on the basis that there is no capital cost to the clubs involved.

That is not, however, the whole story. The second element of cost is what one might call the revenue cost —the cost of providing cards to individual spectators. Apparently, the maximum cost of producing the cards will be about £9·90 for three seasons—a gross cost of £3·30 per season. It is important to stress that that is the gross cost. Suppose that there are 20 home matches per season; £3·30 divided by 20 is hardly a great impost on spectators.

Moreover, many companies have recognised the advantages of using the card as a means of marketing their products and services in co-operation with football clubs, and no doubt the clubs represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale and by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington would be just as interested in sponsorship opportunities as some of their larger brethren. Such sponsorships can reduce the cost to below the £3·30 per season figure, and it is to be hoped that in many cases the cost will be virtually nil.

Those who say that the scheme will be impracticable —as if it were impossible to devise a card to be swiped through a perfectly straightforward piece of equipment such as is to be found on every third door in our high streets—are unnecessarily pessimistic.

The capital costs will simply not have to be borne by the clubs, and the revenue cost—a maximum of £3·30 per season for all the club's games and for games at any other ground—could be reduced to virtually nil. We have nothing to fear from the technology. I emphasise what I said at the beginning. Those of us who have most loyally supported my hon. Friend the Minister throughout the proceedings on the Bill take it for granted that the technology will be thoroughly tested in the circumstances that have been described, somewhat poetically, by my hon. Friends, before the scheme is implemented.

Mr. Lester: Surely the desire to test the technology has arisen because of what happened at Hillsborough. We are waiting for Lord Justice Taylor's report because we want to be satisfied—in spite of my hon. Friend's faith in our developing a technology which has never been developed before—that the technology will not give rise to further disasters. I do not share my hon. Friend's complacency and I remain convinced that we need to test the equipment, for all the reasons that we have advanced.

Mr. Norris: I merely register the fact that I do not share my hon. Friend's view. I see no reason why the technology should not help us considerably in our attempts to prevent the kind of scenes that we saw at Hillsborough recurring. It is the object of every one of us who supports the scheme to provide not only the equipment but the legislative framework to avoid incidents such as that at Hillsborough.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government have always accepted that the technology to be used in the national membership scheme should be properly tested before the scheme can begin. When we discussed the subject in Committee, I said:

"testing the technology for the scheme would be part of the preparations for implementation."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 20 July 1989, c. 503.]

I also repeated, as I have done many times, that we shall not go ahead with implementation until we are satisfied that the technology is workable, efficient and safe. It is no more in the interests of the Government than in the interests of anyone else for te scheme to be set up before those conditions are satisfied.

I listened with interest to the speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). We are talking about technologies that have not yet been chosen and which are very different from each other. If the membership authority chooses a technology that does not require large capital investment in machinery, the testing period will be very different from that for an alternative technology that the authority may

[Mr. Moynihan]

recommend. My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest spoke of a different technology. His point does not reflect the need to go down the line to check whether each card carried by 600,000 members is valid. On the contrary —some hon. Members have seen technologies allowing the club access, on the day before or the morning of the match, to a referral file of invalid cards.

As soon as that file arrives at the club, the readers, which are regularly updated with the referral files, are taken to the turnstiles and can be placed on them. As a scheme member enters, the reader shows whether his card is valid or invalid. That is not dissimilar from the operation at Luton Town or at Derby County. Those clubs have few difficulties with invalid or faulty cards. Oxford United and Reading have similar systems. If a member's card causes a red light to go on at the turnstiles at Reading because he is on the referral file, he is not allowed in. That fan must go to the club office, where an inquiry is made. The FMA believes that it is better to allow people in to avoid turning someone round in a turnstile. If people are allowed in, it is better for stewards to handle them inside grounds. That is what happens at Oxford United.

At Tottenham Hotspur similar technology with a referral file permits a supervisor in addition to the gate man to respond to a red light. If the red light comes on, a code number is indicated to the supervisor, thus giving him the reason for the red light. The way in which clubs deal with such situations depends on what is happening outside the turnstile.

The appropriate technology requires appropriate testing. As Luton Town and other clubs have found, that testing can be carried out on one or two Saturdays. The scheme is not relevant to this debate. We are considering the technology that must be tested. That testing may take place on two consecutive Saturdays next year, after the FMA has considered whether it wants two or three systems to be tested. The FMA might hypothetically decide on a short list of three and then to go to Luton Town. It may remove the equipment from three turnstiles to test the technology alongside the present system in Luton. Luton Town may assist that, and that may require testing lasting one week, two weeks or three months. When we consider the six short-listed systems, I believe the testing can be carried out efficiently and speedily. We will not be satisfied with the relevant technology until that testing has been carried out. The Government will not approve the system until we are satisfied that the technology is workable, efficient and safe.

It is utter nonsense for the *Evening Standard* to suggest today that

> "Mr. Moynihan was instead telling the Commons this afternoon that there will now be a trial scheme"

involving one club from each of the four divisions. On occasions, we have problems in the House with hon. Members unwittingly misleading the House. To mislead the public so clearly is completely wrong. It is not right that there must be a delay in the implementation of the scheme from the early months of next season for adequate testing of the technology to take place. It is clear that more than 90 clubs around the country have membership schemes at the moment which they have implemented with adequate testing without the need to wait for three seasons of testing, as the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) and his colleagues would like.

Mr. Pendry: My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) has said that the Football League and the Football Association are considering the tenders from the computer firms and have a short list of six. If at the end of the day they find that not one of the six is adequate, what will the Minister do?

Mr. Moynihan: The whole purpose of an invitation to tender is to allow the companies which are aware of the tender documentation and of the nature of the scheme to bid against one another. No doubt they will want to learn the areas in which the working group is dissatisfied with the particular schemes that have been proposed and no doubt the companies will place a cost on remedying that. The FMA will have to bear that cost.

It is clear that six companies have been shortlisted from more than 100. The experts in the FA and the Football League are considering in detail the implementation of a comprehensive national scheme at no cost to the clubs. It is clear that there will be no cost and perhaps even income generation to the clubs through the charge on their members or through commercial opportunities with local companies.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest said, the maximum cost last summer with the highest level of technology then available was £3·30 per annum per member, with no cost to the club. The cost does not take into account the development of any commercial opportunities.

7.15 pm

There are 90 membership schemes in the Football League at the moment. All those clubs have considered commercial opportunities, and some have been highly successful. If the clubs have, as we anticipate, the right to develop commercial relations with the companies that already sponsor their membership schemes, even if they do nothing, the maximum cost estimated last season was £3·30 a head. However, if they maximise the range of commercial opportunities, as clubs up and down the country have done already with their partial membership schemes, there would not be a cost, and those clubs may have an income generator. If the right hon. Member for Small Heath believes that those clubs should not take those opportunities, he is denying them the right to earn money to invest in facilities, get better players, create closer relations with their members and break once and for all the link between football hooligans and true football supporters.

Mr. Boyes: I had thought that the Minister would have learned from his experiences in Hartlepool. I invited him there and he will remember that the buildings at the club are wooden structures. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) has referred to security. I do not believe that we will get everything for free. However, where will the money come from to make the buildings secure? The Minister is living in cloud cuckoo land if he believes that builders in Hartlepool will do all that work for nothing.

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman has made two very important points. I hoped that I had answered to the satisfaction of the House his point on the cost and potential income generation of the national membership scheme. However, the hon. Gentleman has raised another very important point—the financing of improvements to grounds which may arise as a result of the Football Licensing Authority's interest in updating facilities to ensure that they are safe.

Like all other forms of entertainment in this country, whether at a cinema, the Albert hall or any sporting ground, football clubs as private sector businesses must find the costs to ensure that their facilities are safe. There is no difference between a licence condition imposed on a cinema and that imposed on a football club. That must be right. If a football club, cinema or any other place of entertainment or business involved in the leisure industry cannot afford to make its premises safe, it should not be open to the public for any purpose. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) may boo and hiss from a sedentary position. However, it is common ground, at least among Conservative Members, that safety must come first. If premises are unsafe, I hope that the hon. Member for Bassetlaw would agree that they should not be open to the paying public.

Mr. John Carlisle *rose*——

Mr. Meale: Surely the Minister is misguided in trying to pursue this line of argument about safety. The membership card will not ensure safety. If £50,000 or £100,000 is required to house the machinery to operate the system, that will affect the number of players and coaches for clubs like Mansfield in my constituency. Such a sum might buy twice as many players and coaches for Hartlepool in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Wahington (Mr. Boyes). Hartlepool is currently 92nd in the league and it may go out of the Football League at the end of the season. How will the Minister encourage Hartlepool to invest the level of expenditure required to house the machines to operate the system? The membership cards have nothing to do with safety.

Mr. Moynihan: I will answer the hon. Gentleman's question and then I will happily give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle).

Mr. Ashton: Do not give way.

Mr. Moynihan: I have almost exclusively given way to the Opposition. Some of my hon. Friends would like to intervene in the debate.

Safety is at the heart of the Bill and the Football Licensing Authority's work. I would happily give the hon. Gentleman a copy of the Bill to show how vital it is. All hon. Members recognise the need for the Football Licensing Authority, in the light of the appalling footballing disasters that have taken place in recent years, and the necessity to make sure that we have safe facilities. That will be a primary function of the Football Licensing Authority, which is absolutely central to the legislation.

The hon. Gentleman may try not to compare coaches, players and the costs of football with the cost of safety, but he cannot avoid the fact that a company, management structure, or football club should regard all those factors as important aspects of their expenditure and put safety at the very top. A club would let down the interests of fee-paying spectators if it failed to put safety anywhere bar at the top and to pay for required improvements, just as a cinema must pay for improvements to meet fire and safety regulations.

Mr. John Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend recall that, in Committee, it was said several times that facilities could be given in the form of financial help from the Football Trust, which already gives millions of pounds for football ground improvement and safety each year? Does my hon. Friend agree that a case for a grant could easily be made by a club such as the one mentioned by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes)? In such circumstances, if a club improved its ground—obviously, it would—its application might be looked upon favourably.

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. Friend's point is well made, and I am sure that it will be considered by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes). As I have said several times, the Football Trust has done outstandingly good work in assisting with clubs' significant costs in safety improvements. The rest of the costs must be met from football.

Mr. David Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that Luton Town football club's revenue has doubled in the past year because of the 32 companies that sponsor its membership card? Is he aware also that, only last week, the Luton bus corporation allowed anyone with a Luton Town member's card to travel at half price on any Saturday during the year?

Mr. Moynihan: Luton Town is exemplary in seeking out and developing the commercial opportunities that can be associated with its membership scheme, which is important but not exclusive to Luton town. Many clubs have followed that example. Luton Town is unique in that, having a 100 per cent. home-only scheme, it has managed to increase support from local people well beyond what it was before, to 20,000 members, and to close its books to further membership at present. It has increased income from commercial sponsors and substantially reduced the incidence of hooliganism. As the Bedfordshire police have made clear, hooliganism has not been displaced downtown. That has led to the community being a far safer place than it was three years ago.

Mr. Lester: I listened to the argument about choosing a scheme, but my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and I want an assurance that, if a club chooses a scheme which involves some equipment, that equipment will be thoroughly tested in the winter. I do not know how one could simulate winter conditions in summer or spring. I experienced technological failure when equipment at Heathrow failed in deep frost and none of us could get off an aeroplane—they had to bring ladders to us. I do not share the confidence of some of my hon. Friends that this equipment will work perfectly in the depths of winter because it worked perfectly well in the spring. If a club chooses equipment which would react to weather conditions, will my hon. Friend assure the House that it will not be put into play until it has been tested in those conditions?

Mr. Moynihan: Of course I agree with the proposition that the technology will need to be tested on dark and wet evenings as well as sunny Saturday afternoons. I do not believe that that necessarily requires the testing to continue throughout what may be described as the winter, still less that it needs to be tested throughout a whole season. If the purpose is to make sure that it is tested in cold and wet conditions, I do not think that my hon. Friend needs to

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wait a winter for that—many an autumn and spring fall neatly into that category. I give the undertaking that I have given on many occasions to my hon. Friend and other colleagues that testing will need to take place in different conditions and different locations.

However, once the FMA is satisfied that the appropriate technology is up and running, there is no doubt that having chosen it, all 92 clubs will have the opportunity to put it in place, and test it as they wish in the run-up before it goes live with the force of law. That is an important point to bear in mind. It will also reflect any change in turnstile arrangements that must be made in the off-season next summer, or any other recommendations on ground design made by the FMA or Lord Justice Taylor in his report—subject to the agreement of Parliament—prior to the beginning of next season, or possibly even sooner.

Testing the technology is not the same thing as phasing the implementation of the scheme. The Government and the FMA will have regard to the desirability of

"a phased application of the scheme"

as we are required to do by clause 6. However, we very much hope that phasing will not be necessary because of the serious risk that hooligans banned from clubs inside the scheme would simply transfer their attention to clubs outside. A hooligan convicted of an offence at one Football League club would be free to attend matches at another. That could have particularly serious implications if clubs outside the scheme could not be brought in for a period such as three years.

It will be for the Football Membership Authority to come up with a realistic programme for testing the technology for its scheme. I do not think that it is helpful now to try to reach definitive conclusions about what that timetable should be. Hon. Members have spoken about the variety of technology. The House will accept that it is wrong to be too definite about an actual testing programme and that it would not fulfil the objective that an appropriate test would need to be made. That might be a short testing period, and it might require a longer testing period. It is for the Football Membership Authority to come forward with a realistic programme in the light of the appropiate technologies it wishes to have tested.

It would not be helpful to accept the amendment about specific requirements for thorough testing for certain periods. Such a provision would also create a minefield of legal dispute. Would "thorough" mean testing at every club and in all possible weather conditions, or something less? There is a danger that an amendment of this kind could give rise to endless unhelpful and expensive disputes involving the FMA, the Secretary of State and individual clubs. That would be in no one's interests.

I recognise that my hon. Friends and other hon. Members wish to be certain that the technology will be tested properly, but I hope that they will accept that the FMA has the greatest possible incentive to ensure that the technology will work properly before the scheme begins. After all, it will have responsibility for its operation. The Government want the scheme to be tested before it is introduced. The FMA will want it to be tested. It is in both our interests that it should be tested. We do not need to amend the Bill in a way that could give rise to any number of arguments about interpretation, to ensure that the adequate testing that my hon. Friends wish to achieve will be carried out. Therefore, I invite my hon. Friends to reject the amendment.

Mr. Denis Howell: The Minister's speech was one of the most spurious that I have heard on the Bill. When we started on this Bill, which is running into more and more trouble, the Minister said that the scheme would be in operation this season, and probably last season. We do not have it this year and we will not have it next year—at any rate, not at the start of next season—and I honestly do not think that we will have it until 1991. The Minister tried to destroy a sensible amendment. He spoke as though the process would be held up by 92 clubs, whereas the amendment could not have been more reasonably drafted even by myself. It says that the Secretary of State and the Football Membership Authority—nobody else—have to be satisfied about the technology. The Minister is now turning down that sensible proposition.

What does the Minister base his argument on? We heard a lot of nonsense about how important it is that football clubs should accept the need for safety. What on earth does he think that the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 is all about? The Minister tried to make a party point at the expense of the Opposition. He knows that I was the Minister in the Labour Government who placed the Safety of Sports Grounds Act on the statute book. Lord Justice Taylor is considering whether the implementation of that Act at Hillsborough and Sheffield council's supervision of that ground were adequate. We wait to hear what Lord Justice Taylor has to say about that. There is a legal obligation on all football clubs to put safety first, and local authorities are obliged to seek to ensure that they do.

7.30 pm

The Government are not providing a penny for this scheme, but the Labour Government who placed the Safety of Sports Grounds Act on the statute book arranged that the pools promoters, "Spot the Ball" and the Chancellor of the Exchequer would provide money to finance the scheme. It has been a godsend to football.

The Minister referred to marketing opportunities. What he is saying is that football supporters should agree to having masses of junk mail pushed through their letter boxes every day of the year. He knows perfectly well that the Data Protection Act 1988 provides that on each application form there is to be a square where each member can put a cross, which will mean that he does not want his name and address to be spelt out. Those of us who were members of the Committee that considered the Data Protection Bill were anxious to protect people's privacy.

The National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs has a membership of 100,000. The Football Supporters Association has 10,000 paid-up members who can vote and 20,000 associates who do not have a vote. We were not talking earlier about trivial numbers. The Football Supporters Association, the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs, all sensible people who are interested in football, most of the members of the press who are interested in civil liberties and certainly the Opposition will advise every member who applies to join to put an "x" in that square so that they are not flooded with calls from secondhand car salesmen, double glazing window merchants and all the other messengers of doom and gloom who call at our houses if our names and addresses are sold to raise money.

If football supporters exercise their civil rights by saying, "I do not want this junk mail pushed through my letter box and people calling at my home to sell me bogus insurance and other things, so I do not wish my name to be disclosed"—and if they have any sense they will do that—there is no way in which the scheme can be introduced at a cost of £10 for three years.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: No, I do not intend to give way. We have had enough talk of Luton Town today. The hon. Gentleman will have to be quiet. Luton Town, I am sorry to say, is relegated to the second division for the purposes of this debate.

For old-age pensioners, £10 is a lot of money. An old-age pensioner may only go to a football match at Christmas. Pensioners can least afford £10, even though it is for three years. *[Interruption.]* I know how much a week that is, but the £10 is not paid weekly. It is paid in one go, and that is on top of the entrance fee. For an old-age pensioner who goes to a football match only at Christmas, it will not be £10; it will be £15, which is quite a lot of money.

I never thought that I would hear the Minister say that there should be a supervisor at each turnstile. He commended Tottenham. Most football clubs cannot afford to have supervisors at turnstiles.

Mr. Moynihan: The right hon. Gentleman could not have been listening. I gave a range of examples of how different clubs handle their partial membership schemes. They vary considerably. I never said that all were the kind of schemes that we wanted—or even that any one of them was. None of them is, because we are going for a national, not a partial, membership scheme.

Mr. Howell: I am glad that the Minister said that; he has clarified the fact that this is a Government scheme. It is the Government, not the Football Membership Authority, who will decide.

Mr. Moynihan: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman does not want to mislead the House. The Bill provides the framework for a national membership scheme, which the Government wish to see. The precise details of the scheme will be brought before the House by the Secretary of State after it has been finalised by the Football Membership Authority.

Mr. Howell: I hear what the Minister says, but I do not have time to go into all the points.

One of the impracticalities of the scheme is that anyone who has registered can attend any ground in the country. Therefore, supporters of 91 clubs could turn up at Hartlepool United or, more likely, at Tottenham or Arsenal. How on earth will that club know where to put the supporters of those 91 clubs when it is playing, for instance, Manchester United? The "smart card" that the Minister spoke about earlier without naming it will say which part of the ground the supporters are to go to. That membership card, which will admit the football supporter into any of 92 clubs, will create horrendous difficulties for all the clubs concerned.

The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) has made out an overwhelming case for trying out the scheme for half a season, or for a full season in any weather. I am sorry that the Minister has been unable to respond to his very reasonable case, which we support.

Mr. Lester: I am in a great dilemma, knowing that we want to get in some important debates before 9 pm and that a Division would take up time. I agree that, until we know what scheme the FMA comes forward with, we cannot recommend a test, but I leave my hon. Friend the Minister with a firm warning from those of us who watch these matters with great care that we shall need to be satisfied that any future scheme is thoroughly tested and safe.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 5

NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP SCHEME: CONTENTS AND PENALTIES

Miss Hoey: I beg to move amendment No. 51, in page 4, line 44, at end insert—

'(iii) women.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 52, in page 4, line 44 at end insert—

> '(iii) any persons in receipt of the National Insurance old age pension or disability allowance.'.

Miss Hoey: I am disappointed that the first piece of legislation on whose Committee I served since being elected is so punitive and that it is a posturing measure designed purely to satisfy the Prime Minister's wish to be seen to be doing something about the problem of football hooliganism. I am disappointed also that the Minister, who sat through hours of Committee debate, has chosen to listen to so little that was said by hon. Members on both sides.

These amendments highlight the real difference between the Opposition and the Government over how to solve the problem of the thugs and hooligans who associate themselves with football. The crux is that Opposition Members start from the premise that we believe that 99·7 per cent. of people who watch are decent supporters whom we want to encourage. Conservative Members seem to believe that anyone who wants to go along and watch a match is a potential thug. Unfortunately, that has led the Minister and the Government to try to penalise all football supporters instead of to target the minority of whom we would all wish to rid football here and abroad.

We believe that there is room for exemptions in the Bill. We oppose the whole part of part I, but unless Conservative Members take note of the views of those who have sent in petitions and of the people in the football world, they will go along meekly and vote with the Government tonight.

We recognise that the Bill is likely to become law, but we want exemptions in it, the most obvious of which seem to be women. I failed to get answers to some obvious questions in Committee. For instance, why does the Minister link women with football hooliganism. What statistics can he show to prove how many women have been arrested at or outside football matches, or charged or found guilty? We know from the debate in House of Lords

[Miss Hoey]

that there are no statistics to prove that any significant number of women have been involved in any sort of hooliganism——

7.45 pm

Mr. Denis Howell: Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend to make her valid point. We have done quite a lot of research in my office and found that, in the past two years, two women have offended. One of them was telling a club official in rather strong unwomanly language what she thought of him; the other was having a row outside the ground with her husband and was arrested as a result. Neither comes into the category of hooliganism.

Miss Hoey: My right hon. Friend has demonstrated my point.

Women attend football matches. There is no doubt that football is very much a male domain, but the women who attend go not only with the husbands or boy friends but because they enjoy football and want to support their local clubs and soak up the atmosphere.

We all know that not enough women attend football matches. The idea that women used to attend and must be attracted back to football, having been driven away by hooliganism, is untrue—women have never attended in great numbers. So we are trying to encourage more women to come to watch football. They do not stay away, as the Minister thinks, because of violence or hooliganism. They stay away much more because facilities for women at the clubs are not up to standard. Women's toilets on the terraces are usually taken over by men. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will not mind my pointing out that at Chelsea, the club that he supports, the toilet facilities for women are pretty appalling and are usually taken over by men.

The only thing that the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) said with which I agree is that the Football League and the Football Association have not yet moved into the 1990s. I and many of my hon. Friends share his criticisms.

It is disgraceful to link women with hooliganisam. I am especially worried that the casual supporter will be discouraged from attending football. Many men do not want to go, but their children do on the odd Saturday. If women were exempted, on a Saturday morning, say, when a son or daughter aged under 10 wanted to go to a match that afternoon—the Minister does not agree with his working party that accompanied children up to the age of 13 would be exempt—their father might be working or might not have an identity card, so it would be much more sensible if women were exempted and mothers could take their children to football matches. The Government are quite wrong about this.

I find it difficult to take seriously the idea—it was mentioned in Committee—that if women were exempt, men would dress up as women——

Mr. John Carlisle *rose*——

Miss Hoey: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman on this point. As I said in Committee, some Conservative Members seem obsessed with men dressing up as women, but it is not a serious argument against exempting women.

I am sure that the Minister will argue for universality and say that the scheme must apply to everyone, so as to break the link between the genuine supporter and the hooligan. But we believe that the genuine thug should be targeted. The Minister has already exempted some people from identity cards—those with disabilities; girls under the age of 10—and there is no logical reason why women should all be labelled potential thugs who need an identity card.

During the past year and a half, the Minister has spent a great deal of time on this Bill, pushed, as we know, by the Prime Minister. I still hope that at some stage he will accept what we have been saying throughout—that we think that he genuinely does not believe that the scheme will work. He, as Minister for Sport, cannot really want to implement this measure but he has to because he has to obey another women who heads the Government.

If the Minister cared about football, about improving our national game, then instead of spending all this time trying to get legislation through which everyone, except some Conservative Members, says will not work, he could have been laying down guidelines to clubs about facilities. Those could have included guidance on what clubs must do to come up to standard. He should have insisted on clubs getting rid of some of the ridiculous men-only board rooms that exist in some clubs. He should have been looking at the money that the Government take from football, and finding out whether it might be possible for some of it to be put back into the game.

The Minister should have been making sure that magistrates were told that the fines and sentences they are handing out to the thugs are ludicrous and pathetic. He should have been making sure that magistrates impose sentences that will deter and not just allow the thugs to get off lightly. He should have instructed the FA to reopen its English supporters travel club, instead of sitting back and saying that he does not want supporters to go abroad and that he wants England to cancel its matches. How dare the Minister say that? It is playing into the hands of the thugs to ask England not to play its matches and even to suggest that, if England qualifies for the World Cup, it should not go.

The Minister should have insisted that the FA takes account of its supporters, involves them when they are travelling abroad and takes responsibility for them, thus isolating the small number of thugs who travel abroad. The Minister should have talked to supporters' clubs and listened to what they were saying. As hon. Members have said, it is the supporter who goes week in and week out, cold nights and all, who knows what is going at the club and how to isolate the thugs. Such supporters need help to do that, and the Minister should have listened to the 500,000 supporters who signed the petition.

Some Conservative Members—although not the Minister—have implied that these signatures collected at football grounds were glibly given by people who did not know what they were signing. How dare Conservative Members suggest that young people who play football or elderly people who have taken the trouble to stop and read the petition and sign it do not know what they are signing and do not know what the Government are doing?

The Minister and the Government will receive a big shock over this issue. They will railroad the Bill through, but in many marginal Tory seats, football supporters, in addition to all the other things, will make a difference at the next general election. Football supporters will not forget what the Government have done to them and to their game.

A Government led by a woman say that women cause problems at football matches and are potential thugs. My hon. Friends will be speaking about the amendment in terms of pensioners. I urge every Conservative Member to search his conscience. If they cannot vote for the amendment, I ask them at least to abstain. I have outlined the things that the Minister should have been doing in the last two years. They are the things that Labour will do when we are in office.

Mr. John Carlisle: As the Member described by the *Sunday Mirror* the other day as one of the most chauvinist Members on the Conservative side because of my description of women as all natural bitches, I say immediately and unreservedly to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) that I would not make that criticism of her. She has once again entertained the House with a charming speech, just as she did in Committee. The plea that she puts forward is similar in content and argument to the one that she advanced in Committee. Regrettably, her arguments are spurious and tend to reduce this important Bill to the level of ribaldry and dissent among the hon. Lady's own sex.

I do not think that the hon. Lady speaks for as many women as she claims to. She and her right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Health (Mr. Howell) seek to deny women the benefits of the membership scheme which will be available to them if they choose to join. Of course the Bill does not seek to force anybody to the join the scheme. If the amendment were accepted, women would not be able to enjoy the many benefits of the scheme which will be available to others. Many women who support the Opposition may ask Opposition Members how they can justify denying the scheme's many benefits to women.

The right hon. Member for Small Heath said that he would advise the Football League, the Football Association and the Football Supporters Association not to take any of the commercial benefits that the scheme offers, and that would deny those benefits to women. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for the information that the membership of the Football Supporters Association has risen from nil to 15,000 in about an hour.

It would be appalling if the commercial opportunities which will undoubtedly be available to clubs are denied them because of the pig-headedness and stupidity of the right hon. Member for Small Heath, who says that, because he does not like the scheme, no one should join it and enjoy its commercial benefits. I know that the right hon. Gentleman is a law-abiding citizen. He has been in opposition long enough in this Parliament and in others to know that, when legislation is in place, best use should be made of it. The right hon. Gentleman should not advise people to try to ignore the scheme.

Those of us who served on the Committee have heard before the arguments of the hon. Member for Vauxhall. She must understand that membership of the scheme will bring not only commercial benefit. The greatest benefit of all is that at last football will be a clean and safe game to go to. That in itself will benefit women perhaps more than any other section of society, apart from young children. Many clubs operating the membership scheme will be able to offer their members not only commercial advantage, but advantages such as priority in application for tickets for important matches.

I have no doubt that the club supported by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will be fighting for honours towards the end of the season and may reach the Football Association cup final. In that case, if the membership scheme were in operation, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West would certainly appreciate it because some people who were members could be shown by the computer to have been to, let us say, 20 games, and that would enable them to have priority in getting cup final tickets. Under this amendment, women would not be able to benefit in that way. They would not be able to make any sort of application and would not qualify for the benefits of priority for tickets.

Mr. Randall: How will making it compulsory for women to become members of the scheme make the game safer?

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Member was a notable member of the Committee.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Middle stump.

8 pm

Mr. Carlisle: Not middle stump, I say to my athletic opponent. The more people who are in the scheme and enjoy it, the better it will be for everybody. The more people who join a scheme or a club, the greater the benefit to the club in terms, for example, of commercial advantage. However, if the members of a large section of the population are denied the opportunity to become members of the club, which would be the result of the amendment, the scheme would not work as well as it would if they were members.

I have not been privileged to hear many of the speeches made by the hon. Member for Vauxhall, except in Committee, but no doubt she is a great champion of equal rights for women, and would make speeches in favour of equal taxation, equal opportunities of employment and equal opportunities to become Members of Parliament.

Mr. Tony Banks: We all support equal opportunities.

Mr. Carlisle: I have no doubt that the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends, including the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), would all speak in favour of equality for women. However, the hon. Lady wants women to be treated specially in this system. She does not want women to be as the others, because they are women and should be treated differently. Conservative Members find that difficult to understand.

The hon. Lady dismissed, rather unfairly, the distinct possibility that men would dress up as women to go into games. She is not in the real world. We are not talking about transvestite bars in Berlin or certain television programmes. We are talking about a genuine scheme which has been proposed by the Government, and which many hundreds, if not thousands, of people will find different ways to get round. In Committee, the Opposition made this point time and again. It is not without some fear and trepidation that I believe that, should the amendment be accepted, the spirit engendered that night in Newport, when 150 supporters went to the local Oxfam shop to buy women's clothes to get into the game, would be seen again.

Labour Members know full well that abuse takes place in all walks of life. They have seen people limping into places of entertainment in front of a crowd on the basis that there is something wrong with them. They have seen

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people abusing the orange card scheme for the disabled. If too many exemptions are allowed, we shall probably find thousands upon thousands of limping men dressed in women's clothes going into football matches. That could be a serious problem, and the House should face it. It has already happened; if it had not, the thought would not have entered my head or that of any hon. Member.

If the hon. Member for Vauxhall wants to be taken seriously and to have her argument considered seriously both by those supporting and by those opposing the Bill, she should not put on a pedestal a certain sector of the community. Once the scheme is up and running, I believe that women will be as anxious as men to join it. If the amendment were passed, the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends would be denying women the benefits of membership, and for that she would not be thanked.

Mr. Pendry: It is a pity that the speech so ably made by my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) should have been followed by such a speech from the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). This is a serious debate about a serious matter. I agree with my hon. Friend. If women have no history of hooliganism in football grounds, the same can be said of old-age pensioners. It is a disappointment to them, as it is to Labour Members, that, despite our efforts in Committee to persuade the Minister to move along this line and adopt a common-sense approach, he has not seen fit to exempt women or old-age pensioners.

I know that I risk being struck off the Christmas card list of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) when I say that I actually agree with something said by the hon. Member for Luton, North in Committee. He said:

> "Pensioners are among the most active and loyal of supporters."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A;* 13 July 1989, c. 384.]

The hon. Gentleman spoke with forked tongue tonight, although I agreed with what he said then. This legislation will alienate those very people. Therefore, I was surprised by what he said tonight because I thought that, having said that in Committee, he would support those amendments.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) made a telling comment. He put my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) right when my right hon. Friend said that there was no evidence of hooliganism among old-age pensioners. He said that, during the whole of last year, there had been three incidents involving people over 65 years of age. The first was in Norwich, when a man was prosecuted for illegally selling hot dogs; the second was near the Chelsea football ground, where a pensioner attempted to steal a car; the third, when no charges were brought, occurred at Southampton, where the police arrested a person who was pretending to be Father Christmas.

Mr. Meale: In the searches done about this season, the only case of a pensioner being in trouble with the police at football grounds is that concerning the ex-chairman of Southend United, who has been charged with the misuse of lottery funds.

Mr. Pendry: My hon. Friend is saying what he said in Standing Committee, which is that the scale of the problem is negligible. It is wrong for the Government not to recognise that women and old-age pensioners have nothing to do with the hooligan problem, which we all deplore. The hooligans who attach themselves to our national game do not include women and old-age pensioners. The Government should have been big enough to show that they recognise the force of our arguments.

The millions of pensioners who regularly attend football matches find it difficult enough to go through the existing turnstiles without having to negotiate computerised equipment. The continuing debate and indecision about the nature of the equipment to be installed will hardly reassure them. The honest belief of many involved in the debate is that, due to the inevitable rejection of cards or computer breakdowns, congestion, impatience and rushing will be the outcome of the scheme, which will prove a further discouragement to pensioners. It is a pity that the Government did not wait for the final Taylor report before the scheme was thrust on women and old-age pensioners—vulnerable sections of our society who are far more sinned against than sinning.

Many of the long-standing and loyal spectators for whom standing on the terraces of their local club has been a way of life are saying that they do not wish to take up the ID. I will give one or two examples. Jacky Watts, who may be known to my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath, is a long-time supporter of Aston Villa and remembers the days of Pongo Waring, Frank Broome and others. Jimmy Wallis is a 71-year-old lifelong fan of Blackburn Rovers, who remembers my uncle Aussie Campbell, and Bobbie Pryde and Ronnie Clayton. Old age pensioners at Derby such as Cyril Flinders and Mildred Price, who saw the great Raich Carter and Dally Duncans and Leon Luety, are considering not taking out ID cards. That is a sad indictment of the Government.

The Minister for Sport is unfortunately not here, but in Committee he said that too many exemptions would interrupt the essential smooth flow of spectators through the turnstiles and that alternative arrangements would present practical problems and loopholes for the hooligans to exploit. That is complete and utter nonsense.

I hope that the Minister here today will respond in a fresh and positive manner. It is a pity that the Secretary of State for the Environment, who was in his place for about five minutes, could not stay longer. Many of us had great hopes that he would reverse many of the nonsensical policies of his predecessor. If he had listened to the debate, the outcome might have been different from the one that I expect.

The scheme will mean that spectators will be interrupted as they pass through the turnstiles and there is no reason for old age pensioners and women to be part of it. I endorse the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall that women almost never incite or become involved in violence or obscene or threatening behaviour at football matches. The same is true of old-age pensioners. I endorse my hon. Friend's comment that it is not just a matter of bringing back families to support the game—we, the Government and the football world must unite in creating a climate which will encourage families to come to the sport for the first time. There must be an atmosphere that women find acceptable. They should not be penalised by the Bill. I hope that the Government will recognise, even at this late hour, that the thrust and force of our arguments is compelling and that they will accept the amendments.

Mr. David Evans: I wish to bring the debate back to the heart of the Bill, which is the separation of football fans from football hooligans. Football has lost half its supporters in the past 25 years, and the number of professionals playing the game is half what it was those years ago. Some of the lost supporters are women and old-age pensioners, and it is those very people whom the Bill seeks to protect.

We have had hooliganism, violence and criminal activity within the game for far too long. In effect, the Bill is saying to women and old-age pensioners who supported or still support the game, "We need you to continue to come to matches and support the game." Unfortunately, with more police, more dogs, more horses and more closed-circuit television, the very people who are the subject of the debate have been made aware of the problems facing the game and have stopped attending matches. That is a fact. Supporters have left the game in droves and it is not a matter of luring them back. Hundreds of thousands have left the game, yet the Football Association and the Football League have persistently, together with Opposition Members unfortunately, failed to recognise that the game is in deep decline.

Mr. Ashton: Attendances at cinemas and cricket matches have also declined enormously. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that hooliganism at the cinema has kept people away? Television has had its effect, along with unemployment, do-it-yourself, the ownership of cars and other interests. All or most attendances at leisure activities have declined over the past 20 or 30 years.

Mr. Evans: That is not true. Attendances at motor racing meetings have increased by 300 or 400 per cent. Attendances at rugby matches have similarly increased. The same can be said of attendances at rugby league matches and horse racing. It is at football matches—the national game—that attendances have declined dramatically. Opposition Members might tell me that over the past two or three years attendances at football matches have increased, but a graph that covers the past 25 years shows that over that period attendances have just about halved. It is that problem that the Bill addresses.

We are about to see a revolution in football. Everybody will, in effect, belong to the same club, and the benefits accruing from the card will be enormous. For example, the Luton bus company has offered half-price fares on any Saturday to members of Luton football club. It is not inconceivable that in future every football fan will be able to travel to his match at half price. That is already part of the Luton scheme.

8.15 pm

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my hon. Friend inform the House of the many commercial benefits that are being offered in the form of discounts at local shops because of the Luton scheme? Will he refute the argument advanced by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), who suggested that the only commercial "advantage" would be junk mail? Other benefits exist and the scheme is working extremely well at Luton.

Mr. Evans: Indeed it is. My hon. Friend is right. The House should know that 32 companies have lent themselves to the Luton scheme. They have supported the club and offered discounts on a large range of products. Of the 20,000 who have signed up at Luton, those who have stated that they do not want to receive a 7 per cent. discount on a motor car have not enjoyed the advantage of that offer. However, from next Saturday, every Luton member will be able to travel to his match at half price. That is a fact.

It is ludicrous to say that women should not be allowed to take advantage of such an offer. Are Opposition Members telling me that old-age pensioners should have to pay the full fare when men who are of working age are charged half fare? What a ludicrous and ridiculous proposition.

Mr. Denis Howell: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in most Labour-controlled authorities old-age pensioners enjoy free travel?

Mr. Evans: That may be so, but they do not enjoy free travel on British Rail. They will enjoy that advantage under the scheme. In my opinion, anyone who is a member of the Football Membership Authority will be able to go on holiday at half price. There will be no end to the advantages that will come from this wonderful scheme. I do not wish to see old-age pensioners being excluded from half-price tickets on British Airways. That would not be right. I advise Opposition Members to withdraw their ridiculous amendment before they make themselves look ridiculous.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife): At the outset of his remarks, the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) said that he would endeavour to get to the heart of the Bill. I suppose that he made a valiant effort, but I regret that he was not very successful. The heart of the Bill is a compulsory membership scheme, and it is on that issue that the Minister and the rest of the Government have thus far been unable to advance compelling and convincing arguments. Why should there be universality for a football membership scheme when for some extraordinary reason, they eschew that approach on family income supplement, for example?

In a substantial sense, this is a matter of civil liberty. It has always been lawful for any person to go to a football match, but after the scheme is instituted it will be necessary to be a member—in effect, to have a licence—before taking part in an activity which hitherto has been entirely lawful without any licence or membership. The Government justify their proposals by saying that there are people who frequent football matches who behave in a fashion that is unacceptable to all of us in this place and to 99·7 per cent. of those who attend football matches.

The justification for removing a freedom is the benefit that it is said will accrue on the basis, so it is hoped and argued, that hooliganism will be reduced or even eliminated. If the purpose of the scheme is as the Government say, and if it is accepted that its essence is to take away a measure of freedom, it can be justified only in relation to the group of people among whom the hooligans can be found. Those groups certainly do not appear to include old-age pensioners—unless masquerading as Santa Claus is somehow of such deep significance that it may imperil the Government's proposals. The statistics show that women and old-age pensioners do not account for a large number of football hooligans.

The question is whether an activity that is currently lawful and in which one can freely participate should be the subject of regulation. Before the Government are

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

entitled to extend regulation in a universal way, they should satisfy the House that such a restriction is justified in respect of each of the categories concerned. Thus far, the Minister has been unable to give such proof. I suspect that he will be unable to do so even when these proceedings are completed. For that reason, I support the Opposition amendments.

Mr. Orme (Salford, East): I refer first to the benefits that the identity scheme will allegedly bring to football supporters. I am much in favour voluntary membership schemes. About 50 per cent. of Manchester United's attendance of 46,000 people are club members who enjoy certain benefits that could be developed. It does not require compulsory ID cards to enjoy those benefits. We want to see not a narrowing of the supporters' base, as will happen if the Government insist on women and pensioners registering as members, but a broadening of it. We know the source of the hooligan element—we see them on our television screens and when arrests are made. We want to see more women and pensioners at football matches, together with the development of family enclosures.

The attendance by women at football matches is a new phenomenon. Years ago, women did not attend matches, but after watching it on television, many of them have developed an interest in the game. Many also want to take their children, using the family enclosures. I should have thought that the Minister would want to exclude family enclosures, which are supervised, from the provisions of the Bill.

I accept many of the criticisms made of football grounds, some of which are a disgrace. Several of the best grounds in the country still do not provide adequate catering or toilet facilities. We should be aiming at improving the facilities at many of our stadiums. Many of them are also to be found in inner cities, where parking facilities are inadequate and where crowd control is difficult. Hillsborough is a classic example of a ground that is surrounded by residential housing and small roads.

We want to see the development of new stadiums and of better facilities. Perhaps the pattern set by American football could be followed, whereby entertainment is provided over a period of several hours and not for just 90 minutes. Many supporters agree that it is often a case of entering the ground just a few minutes before the game begins and leaving it as soon as the match finishes. That happens because the spectator is offered nothing more. In some cases, those attending are not even provided with cover from the rain.

We should be addressing ourselves to solving such problems, not to a compulsory identity card scheme that will cause a reduction in attendances by the very kind of people whom we want to see at matches. Amendment No. 51, covering women, proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey), and amendment No. 52, concerning pensioners, point the way forward. If the Minister really wants to see the game developing along the right lines, he should accept those amendments, which would encourage higher attendances among the right people.

We must also link genuine supporters in the fight against hooliganism. Supporters' clubs are for the first time receiving proper recognition, though they still have no power in the boardroom or influence over the provision of club facilities. A large proportion of football hooliganism will be defeated not by the police alone but by ordinary supporters saying, "We have had enough of this. We will no longer tolerate hooliganism." Such people need encouragement. I say again to the Minister that the Government's scheme will drive away many of the people —yes, including younger people—of the kind that we want to be associated with the fight against hooliganism.

Everyone knows that the Bill will not work. The clubs will be forced by law to implement its provisions, but they will do so in a half-hearted manner. That is not the way to defeat hooliganism, and that is what our argument is about.

Mr. Pike: The Opposition's amendments are eminently sensible and, if the Bill is to be forced through, they commend themselves to the House. They are so logical and positive that the Government should have been prepared to respond positively to them. The reasons advanced by the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) for not supporting the amendments were so outrageous that, had I not been present in the Chamber to hear them, I would not have believed it possible that someone could make such comments. If I had picked up a newspaper tomorrow and read of them, I would have thought that the reporter had misunderstood the hon. Gentleman's comments.

The statistics and the facts prove that, if the Government persist with their Bill, women and old-age pensioners should be exempted, because clearly they are not responsible for the problems that exist. The hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) referred to falling attendances at football matches. It is utter nonsense to suggest that hooliganism is the biggest contributory factor. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) gave several valid seasons for that trend.

In arguing his case, the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield cited the one ground where a closed membership scheme covering 20,000 supporters is in operation. He should consider the attendance at his local football club by comparison with 20 years ago. If that membership scheme is so successful, why is it that that club experiences attendances which are among the lowest in the first division? Over the past couple of years, Luton has enjoyed reasonable success, despite struggling against relegation. The year before last, it reached three cup finals, and it reached the Littlewoods cup final this year.

Mr. David Evans: I thank the hon. Gentleman; I did not realise that he wanted to intervene on my speech.

May I point out to the hon. Gentleman that Luton Town's attendance figures last year rose by 21 per cent. —the fourth highest increase in the first division?

Mr. Pike: Last year's may have been the fourth highest percentage increase, but it certainly was not the fourth highest attendance figure. Attendances at matches in which my own team played—a fourth-division team— were, at one stage, only 1,000 or 2,000 lower than the Luton average.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Does my hon. Friend realise that Luton wishes to exclude away fans, even under the scheme? Clause 1(10) will allow that to happen. Why is that provision included in legislation for what is supposed to be a national scheme?

8.30 pm

Mr. Pike: I shall come to that in a moment.

I do not believe for a moment that the Bill will solve the problem of attendances. It deals with the wrong problem, in the wrong way, and will be very damaging to football.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) asked about away supporters. I find it surprising that clubs that want to ban those spectators from their grounds are so anxious to allow their own supporters to attend their away matches. As a supporter of many years' standing, I believe that we must allow supporters from both sides to watch matches.

As I said earlier, the statistics and the facts show that exclusions can and should be made, even if the Government are stupid enough to persist with this nonsensical legislation.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) correctly identified the single aim which unites Members on both sides of the House. We are all trying to eliminate hooligans from football, and to separate them from the true supporters. The only argument is about how to do that.

If that is the hon. Gentleman's objective, however, he must surely recognise, as my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) has pointed out, that statistics clearly show that the hooligans are not women or pensioners. The principle of exempting certain categories of supporter is already enshrined in the Bill. Those categories include disabled people and children. If exceptions can be made and the Government have conceded that principle, I do not see why they should resist statistical evidence that two further groups do not pose any danger of hooliganism.

Trying to justify his rather peculiar stance, the hon. Gentleman went on to say that women and pensioners would, if excluded, merely be deprived of the multifarious benefits which would somehow flow from the scheme. That does not necessarily follow. Apart from anything else, there is nothing to stop women and pensioners from joining a scheme voluntarily, if minded to do so. Most supporters' clubs will operate the kind of scheme that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, providing travel and purchasing advantages, for instance. The hon. Gentleman was really scraping the barrel in his attempt to justify his opposition to an amendment for which, in their quieter and more rational moments, hon. Members on both sides of the House would clearly concede that there is a strong case.

It is a fairly open secret that I am a Chelsea supporter. I have been one for many years, man and boy—but, as the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) will know, not yet woman. Chelsea football club used to be nicknamed "the Pensioners". Although some people claimed that the nickname referred to the way in which the team played, it had nothing to do with that; it derived from the club's close associations with the Royal Chelsea hospital. Anyone who attends a Chelsea match nowadays will still see the Chelsea pensioners sitting there.

It strikes me as ludicrous that, to gain access to the club, Chelsea pensioners will now have to join the scheme. Can the hon. Member for Luton, North imagine—even in his wildest moments—that members of the Inter-City Firm or the Head Hunters would dress themselves up in red greatcoats and peak caps and cover themselves in whiskers and medals in an attempt to sneak into Chelsea football club? It is not as though Chelsea pensioners try to sneak in without being noticed.

Mr. John Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman has certainly put a new idea into the minds of the Inter-City football fans, which they may well follow up. He has, however, missed the point that the scheme will bring women and pensioners—particularly the Chelsea pensioners whom he has mentioned—the peace and quiet that we now enjoy at Luton. Stamford Bridge could also enjoy that peace and quiet, although it did not do so earlier this season. Supporters would be able to attend matches time and again in the certain knowledge that, because everyone present must be a member of the scheme, the game will be played in peace and they will not be beaten about the head on the way. It ill behoves the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)—who, to some extent, represents Chelsea football club in the House, and who knows the history of appalling violence in and around Stamford Bridge—not to support a scheme that will get rid of that violence once and for all.

Mr. Banks: Two points emerge from what the hon. Gentleman has just said. First, it should be pointed out that the club with which I could be said to have the closest political affiliation is West Ham, which is in my borough. As the hon. Gentleman knows, however, while it is possible to change many things in this life—one's political party, one's religion and one's partner, for instance—a true football supporter will never change his allegiance to a football club. As one whose constituents include a vast number of West Ham supporters, I am prepared to stand up and say that I am still a Chelsea supporter, and will remain one.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman's logic is faulty. The membership scheme will go ahead and pensioners and women can therefore continue to attend matches in complete confidence, because it was not they who created the problems in the past and they will certainly not be creating problems in the future. If the hon. Gentleman is right in saying that the scheme will work to exclude hooligans, those categories can still attend in the full knowledge that the hooligans have been excluded, and without themselves having to go through the inconvenience of participating in the scheme. They are not responsible for the trouble, and they should therefore be excluded. Conservative Members are reaching into the very depths of the barrel in their attempts to justify their opposition to these measured amendments.

After all the years in which Chelsea pensioners have been going to matches, dressed in such a fashion that there can be no misunderstanding about their identity and where they come from, it seems most unfair that at their advanced age—having served the country and fought in the first world war, with only a few twilight years left to enjoy the delights of Stamford Bridge and see Chelsea win the first division championship—they should now have to experience the inconvenience and humiliation of signing up for the membership scheme on the ground, I suppose, that they may be potential hooligans. What a way to treat such people. It is absurd, and I am surprised that even the hon. Member for Luton, North, who seems to spend so much time licking his lips at the thought of all those men dressed up as women in fishnet stockings and trying to sneak into the ground—no doubt he is now imagining

[Mr. Banks]

them wearing greatcoats over the fishnets—should make such comments. All I can say is that it says something about the way in which the Tory party thinks these days —it is all very odd, very kinky and entirely unreasonable.

Mr. Moynihan: Amendments Nos. 51 and 52 seek to make it compulsory for women, old-age pensioners and those in receipt of a disability allowance to be exempt from the scheme.

As my hon. Friends know, the matter of exemptions has been debated at great length in both Houses. Opposition Members pressed amendments seeking exemption for women and pensioners to a vote in Committee, after an extensive debate in which all today's arguments were rehearsed.

Let me once again make the Government's position on exemptions perfectly clear, as my hon. Friends have already done. We want to encourage membership, not seek exemptions to the scheme. It is not a case of identifying groups who will not cause trouble at matches and then exempting them from the requirement to join the scheme. Taken to its logical conclusion, if we began to remove groups who caused no problems, perhaps we would identify that all men with beards were not involved in hooliganism—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will allow me to develop my argument, I shall come to the practical reasons why disabled people are rightly exempted from the scheme.

If one exempted certain groups, we would begin to segregate great sections, who would still have to be identified as they entered the ground, and exempt them from membership. Ultimately, the only people who would not be exempted would be the hooligans. If we did that, we would retain precisely the situation that exists at the moment, in which club after club individually excludes known troublemakers. Clubs have no mechanism for excluding such people from another club up the road or any of the other 91 clubs. They are excluded only from their own club.

We will retain the situation in which 22 per cent. of people who go to football still say that they have been caught up in violence inside the ground. We would still have pitch invasions at the Crystal Palace-Birmingham City match and disorder inside the ground at the Manchester United-Manchester City game. We would still require 5,000 police to be on duty every Saturday afternoon to contain the problem and not to cure it. That would be the first natural result of applying that argument.

Secondly, there would be an important practical problem. Under a national membership scheme, all the groups that Opposition Members propose for exemption would need to prove that they fell into one or more of those categories. They would need to satisfy the turnstile operator, verbally or with a piece of paper, and would require testing at the turnstile.

Mr. Ashton: What about separate turnstiles?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman suggests separate turnstiles. Does he propose to double up on all the turnstiles? If he is suggesting that, he has answered the point for me. It would be utterly impractical to attempt to do that at football grounds. Not only would it be impractical, but I would argue that a national membership scheme that required such checking would not satisfy the criteria that we require for speed of entry. That is an essential point on safety grounds—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) would do well to stop smiling and to listen. When he does, he will know that one system being considered is a technology which will require a card simply to be touched on the outside of the turnstile to allow entry, without taking up any additional time.

The moment people have to stop, hand over their card and talk to the turnstile operators, there will be a backlog of people causing the very problems that Opposition Members are determined will not occur in the technology that the FMA chooses. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) for saying that that is right, and I give way to him.

Mr. Ashton: I am sure that the Minister is not deliberately trying to mislead the House, but he forgets that people have to pay as well as put down their cards. They have to stop to pay and take their change. Many grounds already have separate turnstiles for old-age pensioners. Why can there not be a separate turnstile for pensioners and women where they do not have to put their cards down?

Mr. Moynihan: I have made it so crystal clear to the hon. Gentleman that I am amazed that he does not hear. On the practical side, I want to make sure that every member of the national membership scheme can gain entry to all 92 clubs as quickly and effectively as possible without any discussion with the turnstile operator. That would be a requirement of ensuring that no additional time is taken.

The effect of the membership scheme is the benefit to the member. The membership scheme effectively would segregate the true football supporter, who would benefit by going to football without being encumbered by the hooligan element which has done so much to disrupt the game, bring it into disrepute, add to the falling gates in the sport and cause English clubs to be banned from playing in European competition for so long. Only when, together with the football authorities, we can prove to the European authorities and to ourselves that we can put our own house in order—and a 100 per cent. membership scheme is vital in that context—and separate the true football supporter from the hooligan, will we be able to hold our heads high, as we should both nationally and internationally in our national game.

8.45 pm

Of course it is important to make sure that there is easy access to football grounds for disabled people. At present, it would be totally impractical for disabled people in wheelchairs to go through a turnstile-operated entry. There need to be separate entrances. We need to make sure that those people can enter safely without the practical difficulties that are envisaged if they have to place a card in a turnstile. For that reason, on balance, it was the view of the committee set up last year that disabled people should be exempt from the membership scheme.

It was also the view of that committee that we should encourage youngsters under 10 accompanied by members of the scheme to go to family enclosures and to encourage families to bring young children to specific areas of the ground, accompanied by members of the scheme. I understand that that view was shared by both sides of the House. I expect that many youngsters will want to join, just as many youngsters now take up membership through the Young Lions, the Reds scheme at Charlton and dozens of other schemes to encourage youngsters to have a card. I hope that the clubs will realise the benefits of encouraging youngsters to join.

Mr. Tony Banks: Can I get something quite clear, so that I can speak to the Chelsea pensioners next time I visit Stamford Bridge? Is the Minister saying that the Chelsea pensioners, in their red frock coats, their medals, their whiskers, and their peaked caps, will have to be members of the scheme?

Mr. Moynihan: It may come as a staggering revelation to the hon. Gentleman, although the Bill has been published for well nigh 10 months now, that the answer is yes, just as hon. Members have a membership card to enter the House.

When the hon. Gentleman speaks to the Chelsea pensioners, he will be able to tell them about the benefits of membership that they will enjoy. He will be able to tell them of the benefits that they will have of going to Chelsea without the hooligan element disrupting the matches, causing so much trouble and bringing the game into disrepute. He will be able to tell them about the benefits that, one hopes, his club will reap with imagination from discount schemes and the many schemes that my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) has told us apply at Luton. In five years' time, they will be able to tell him that the appalling problem of hooliganism which racked football for the past three decades has gone. I am sure that he will enjoy that conversation, and I am certain that they will.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Will my hon. Friend point out to the House that Chelsea pensioners, being ex-service men, are used to having identity cards? They had to have them throughout their service careers, so they will feel quite at home when they go to the football terraces.

Mr. Moynihan: I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West will raise that point in his discussions with the Chelsea pensioners.

I should prefer to concentrate on the benefits of membership that I have outlined in detail to the House tonight. *[Interruption.]* I know that hon. Members would prefer me not to shout, but if Opposition Members were a little more sotto voce in their sedentary remarks, I would happily speak more quietly.

Women and retired people can benefit from the scheme in the ways that I have outlined, and the scheme can gain much from their membership. As the issue has been discussed at length on many occasions in Committee and in the other place, I hope that the Opposition will withdraw their amendment.

Mr. Vaz: I did not intend to speak until I saw the Minister's hysterical performance——

Mr. Moynihan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Vaz: No, sit down. The Minister is behaving like a deranged rabbit; he should behave himself.

Mr. Moynihan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Vaz: No, I will not give way.

In the two and a half years that I have been an hon. Member, I have never seen a performance by a Minister such as the one that we have just seen. The reason why he is hysterical is that the case against the Bill, but for the amendments, has been made. The Government have provided no evidence to show that women and pensioners have contributed to football hooliganism.

The amendments go to the heart of the Bill. They attempt to save the sport, which will be destroyed if the Bill is passed unamended. They aim to ensure that women and children, who have a history of good behaviour and who have contributed to the game as a family sport, are able to attend matches and participate fully as spectators. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) clearly stated that there is no evidence that women and pensioners have contributed to a decline in the game, so why on earth should we exclude them?

The Minister's hysterical response is that if every group that has not contributed to hooliganism is exempted, only the hooligans will be left. That should be the purpose of the Bill. Is not "targeting" a great catchword of the Government? Do they not say, "We are targeting pensioners who are supposed to be receiving benefits"? Why do not the Government target those who are responsible for creating hooliganism? Women and pensioners certainly are not responsible for that.

My mother, who incontrovertibly is a women and who is 60 years old, having just become a pensioner, told me recently when she was listening to my speeches in Committee that she used to enjoy being a spectator at football matches. She saw Leicester City play at Filbert street, before they started their decline to the bottom of the second division, from which they will soon emerge. She will not go to football matches if the Bill becomes law unamended.

Mr. Burt: Why not?

Mr. Vaz: The hon. Member wants to know why not. The reason why she will not go is that she will be confused by the new offences that the Bill creates and by the controls being placed on the game.

I received a number of representations on the Bill, as have other hon. Members. Over one third of them were from women. They say that they will not go to football matches because they believe that the Government are trying to criminalise them and pensioners and to criminalise the elements that contribute to making the game a family sport.

Mr. Denis Howell: As we draw to the end of the Report stage, it is interesting and appropriate that we are dealing with women and pensioners. They have no record of causing difficulty at football matches, yet their rights are being restricted by the Government.

Is it not ludicrous that the two memories that we shall have of the Bill's proceedings are Lord Hesketh, who is the Under-Secretary of State in the other place, saying that hooligans will buy women's clothing from Oxfam shops to gain admission to football grounds in drag, and the Minister's even more ludicrous statement in reply to my hon. Friend the Minister for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that Chelsea pensioners must register for the scheme because of the benefits that they will receive from it? The benefit that they will receive is that they will be inundated with offers of membership of sex clubs in the west end of London. That is a fine benefit for Chelsea

[Mr. Denis Howell]

pensioners. The Minister said that we should encourage all those activities and fringe benefits, which no doubt will be free for Chelsea pensioners.

We strongly object to the fact that there is no Government strategy to encourage the people who should be attending football matches to do so. Conservative Members said that everyone who registers for the scheme will receive its benefits, so why have the Government granted an exemption for disabled people? Why do not the Government want disabled people to have those great benefits? That, of course, was the give away. If it is right to exempt disabled people from the impositions of the Bill, by the same logic it must be right to exclude women and pensioners.

We know from the statement made by the former Home Secretary that the Government wish to move to all-seater stadiums. We know that soon that may become a condition of clubs' licences. Although we support all-seater stadiums in principle, I shall not go into all the difficulties that they will cause. However, one of the problems that has not been answered is whether the Government intend to make it a criminal offence for people to stand at a football match. People stand at football matches, even when they are allocated seats. I saw several thousand Leeds United supporters refuse to sit in the seats that they were allocated at Maine road. What do the Government intend to do about that? As we look at the details of the Bill, we increasingly see the impracticability of the way that the Government are moving.

We strongly believe that family enclosures should be encouraged. Time and again we said in Committee, and throughout the passage of the Bill, that it would make sense to have family enclosures, where a man and his wife can take their children and where they can be exempted from the restrictions and impositions that are made on them. For some reason, of which we are unaware, the Government continually turn that suggestion down. Yet that is the sort of development towards which we must if we have all-seater stadiums. Family enclosures certainly have our support.

The Minister is obviously obsessed by the "smart card" as he has talked about it three times now. The Minister told us that he wanted a system where a person simply "touches" the card on the turnstile and is allowed into the ground. The Minister must know that we have strong objections to that system because the card is the evidence of wrongdoing. The football authorities object to the "smart card" as they believe that a wrongdoer will simply pick up the card when the red light comes on and go off with it.

The scheme will not work unless the card has to be handed to the turnstile operator, who can retain it if a bogus entrant is trying to obtain admission to the ground. There is an overwhelming case for saying that women and pensioners are the people least likely to cause offence and break the law. Their attendance at football matches ought to be encouraged in every way. They ought not to be subject to the restrictions that the Minister and his colleagues are imposing upon them in the Bill.

It being Nine o'clock, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [17 July], and the Resolution this day, to put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided:— Ayes 202, Noes 278.

Division No. 361] **[9 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Whitney, Ray
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville

Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alistair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Deputy Speaker *then proceeded to put forthwith the Question on amendments, moved by a Member of the Government, of which notice had been given, to that part of the Bill to be concluded at Nine o'clock.*

Amendments made: No. 9, in page 5, line 12, at end insert

'and requiring that in Wales any application form for membership of the scheme shall also be available in Welsh'.

No. 32, in page 5, line 15, after 'that', insert ', except in an emergency,'.

No. 10, in page 5, line 35, leave out 'imposing charges specified in' and insert

'for the imposition of charges under'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Clause 7

DISQUALIFICATION OF MEMBERSHIP OF SCHEME

Amendments made: No. 11, in page 6, line 44, leave out from 'with' to end of line and insert

'the date of the conviction.'.

No. 12, in page 6, line 47, leave out 'be withdrawn' and insert

'cease on the date of the conviction'.

No. 13, in page 7, line 9, after 'court', insert—'(i)'.

No. 14, in page 7, line 10 at end insert—

'(ii) shall explain to him in ordinary language the effect of the conviction on his membership of the national football membership scheme; and'.

No. 15, in page 7, line 13, leave out 'give' and insert 'send'.

No. 16, in page 7, line 18, leave out 'send' and insert 'give'.

No. 17, in page 7, line 19 at end insert—

'( ) Where, on an appeal against a person's conviction of the relevant offence or against a sentence of imprisonment imposed on him in dealing with him for the offence, his conviction is quashed or the sentence is reduced to one which is not a sentence of imprisonment taking immediate effect, the court which determines the appeal or, as the case may be, the court to which the case is remitted, shall cause notice of the quashing of the conviction or of the sentence imposed to be sent to the persons specified in subsection (7)(b)(i) and (ii) above and, where his conviction is quashed, the Authority shall re-admit him to membership of the scheme, but without prejudice to any proceedings under the scheme to exclude him from membership'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Schedule 1

RELEVANT OFFENCES

No. 42, in page 21, line 23 at end insert—

'( ) any offence under section 12 of the Licensing Act 1872 (persons found drunk in public places, etc.) of being found drunk in a highway or other public place committed while the accused was on a journey to or from a designated football match being an offence as respects which the court makes a declaration of relevance;

( ) any offence under section 91(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1967 (disorderly behaviour while drunk in a public place) committed in a highway or other public place while the accused was on a journey to or from a designated football match being an offence as respects which the court makes a declaration of relevance;'.

No. 43, in page 21, line 33 at end insert—

'( ) any offence under section 4 or 5 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 (driving etc. when under the influence of drink or drugs or with an alcohol concentration above the prescribed limit) committed while the accused was on a journey to or from a designated football match being an offence as respects which the court makes a declaration of relevance,'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Clause 8

THE FOOTBALL LICENSING AUTHORITY

No. 37, in page 7, line 43, at end insert—

'(5) The expenses of the licensing authority shall be paid by the Secretary of State.'—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Schedule 2

THE FOOTBALL LICENSING AUTHORITY: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 44, in page 23, line 34, at end insert—

'19A. The terms and conditions of appointments under paragraphs 18 and 19 above shall require the approval of the Secretary of State and the consent of the Treasury.

19B. The licensing authority shall, as regards such of its inspectors, officers and employees as with the approval of the Secretary of State and the consent of the Treasury it may determine, pay to or in respect of them such pensions, allowances or gratuities (including pensions, allowances or gratuities by way of compensation for loss of employment), or provide and maintain for them such pension schemes (whether contributory or not), as may be so determined.

19C. If an inspector, officer or employee of the licensing authority—

(a) is a participant in any pension scheme applicable to that employment, and

(b) becomes a member of the licensing authority,

he may, if the Secretary of State with the consent of the Treasury so determines, be treated for the purposes of the pension scheme as if his service as a member of the licensing authority were service as an employee of the licensing authority, whether or not any benefits are to be payable to or in respect of him by virtue of paragraph 10 or 11 above.'.

No. 45, in page 23, line 34, at end insert—

'Accounts and audit

19D. The licensing authority shall keep proper accounts and proper records in relation to the accounts, and shall prepare for each accounting year a statement of accounts in such form as the Secretary of State, with the approval of the Treasury, may direct.

19E. The accounts of the licensing authority shall be audited by auditors appointed for each accounting year by the Secretary of State.

19F. A person shall not be qualified for appointment for the purposes of paragraph 19E above unless he is—

(a) a member of a body of accountants established in the United Kingdom and recognised for the purposes of section 389(1)(a) of the Companies Act 1985; or

(b) a member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy;

but a firm may be appointed if each of its members is qualified to be so appointed.

19G. A copy of any accounts of the licensing authority which are audited under paragraph 19E above and of the report made on those accounts by the auditors shall be sent by the licensing authority to the Secretary of State as soon as reasonably practicable after it receives them; and the Secretary of State shall lay before Parliament a copy of any accounts or report received by him under this paragraph.

19H. The Comptroller and Auditor General may inspect any records relating to the accounts.

19I. In paragraphs 19D and 19E above, "accounting year" means the period beginning with the day when the licensing authority is established and ending with the following 31st March, or any later period of twelve months ending with the 31st March.'—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Clause 9

OFFENCE OF ADMITTING SPECTATORS TO UNLICENSED PREMISES

Amendment made: No. 33, in page 8, line 7, after 'prove', insert

'either that the spectators were admitted in an emergency or'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Clause 10

LICENCES TO ADMIT SPECTATORS: GENERAL

Amendments made: No. 18, in page 8, line 22, at end insert—

'(2A) The licensing authority shall not refuse to grant a licence without—

(a) notifying the applicant in writing of the proposed refusal and of the grounds for it;

(b) giving him an opportunity to make representations about them within the period of twenty-eight days beginning with the service of the notice; and

(c) taking any representations so made into account in making its decision.'.

No. 19, in page 8, line 31, at end insert—

'(4A) A licence to admit spectators may also include conditions requiring specified descriptions of spectators to be refused admittance to the premises to watch designated football matches or specified descriptions of designated football matches or a particular such match.'.

No. 29, in page 8, line 31, at end insert—

'(4B) Where a designation order includes the provision authorised by section 1(3)(b) above as respects the admission of spectators to any ground as authorised spectators, the licensing authority may, by notice in writing to the licence holder, direct that, for the purposes of any match or description of match specified in the direction, the licence shall be treated as including such specified terms and conditions as respects the admission of spectators as authorised spectators as the licensing authority considers appropriate; and the licence shall have effect, for that purpose, subject to those terms and conditions.'.

No. 20, in page 8, line 46, after 'notice', insert 'in writing'.

No. 21, in page 9, line 3, after 'holder', insert 'in writing'.

No. 22, in page 9, line 8, leave out 'his' and insert 'the'.

No. 34, in page 9, line 15, after 'that', insert

', except (in the case of the procedures) in an emergency,'.

No. 38, in page 9, line 36, at end insert—

'( ) The fees charged on the issue of licences—

(a) may be fixed so as to reimburse the licensing authority their expenses under this Part of this Act; and

(b) shall be paid by the licensing authority to the Secretary of State.'.

No. 30, in page 9, line 41, after 'licence' insert

'or in the case of subsection (4B) in the direction'.

No. 39, in page 9, leave out lines 44 to 46.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Clause 13

LICENSING AUTHORITY'S POWERS IN RELATION TO SAFETY AT FOOTBALL GROUNDS

Amendments made: No. 23, in page 11, line 23, at end insert—

'( ) Before exercising its power under subsection (2) above to require the inclusion of specified terms and conditions in any safety certificate, the licensing authority shall consult the local authority, the chief officer of police and either the fire authority (where the local authority is in Greater London or a metropolitan county) or the building authority (in any other case).

( ) As respects those terms and conditions, the local authority need not consult the chief officer of police, the fire authority or the building authority under section 3(3) or 4(8) of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 before issuing a safety certificate or about any proposal to amend or replace one.'

No. 41, in page 11, line 43, at end insert—

'( ) Section 5(3) of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (appeals against terms and conditions of safety certificates) shall have effect with the insertion, after paragraph (ii), of the words "but not against the inclusion in a safety certificate of anything required to be included in it by the Football Licensing Authority under section 13(2) of the Football Spectators Act 1989".'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Clause 15

RESTRICTION ORDERS

Amendment made: No. 35, in page 13, line 19, at end insert 'in ordinary language'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Clause 21

FUNCTIONS OF ENFORCING AUTHORITY: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Amendment made: No. 40, in page 17, line 40, leave out ', out of money provided by Parliament,'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

New Clause 1

FINANCIAL PROVISION

'.—(1) Any expenses of the Secretary of State under this Act shall be paid out of money provided by Parliament.

(2) Any fees received by the Secretary of State under this Act shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund.'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Title

Amendments made: No. 24, in line 3, after 'spectators;', insert

'to provide for the safety of spectators at such matches by means of such licences and the conferment of functions on the licensing authority in relation to safety certificates for grounds at which such matches are played;'.

No. 36, in line 4, leave out 'by designated agencies'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

9.18 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

As many hon. Members will know better than I, this Bill has been debated at length in their Lordships' House and in this House, totalling 100 hours for a Bill of fewer than 30 clauses and it must still return to their Lordships, for them to consider amendments made in this place. The Bill has received a thorough examination in both Houses. I have not been involved with it until now—I have come on to the pitch rather late in the game. I have a strong sense of personal deprivation at not having been involved in the

[Mr. Chris Patten]

Bill's proceedings until now. I am told that I missed a particularly entertaining Committee stage, full of whippets and nostalgia. Although the debates have shown evidence of the strong feelings that the subject arouses, they have been conducted in a courteous and often good-humoured way, and I wish to thank the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) for that. As the House will recognise, debates with them are often vigorous but seldom, if ever, bitter.

It is a sad fact that hooliganism has been an ugly scar on the face of football for several years. The measures taken by the Government, the police and the football authorities have reduced the number of very serious incidents over the past year or two, but the effect has been to contain the problem rather than to eradicate it. The price of containment has been the rigid segregation of supporters of rival teams and a massive police presence at and around football grounds every weekend of the season.

In the face of the continuing problem of football hooliganism in this country and when the England team travels abroad, the Government decided to introduce this Bill, and I regret that there have been repeated reminders of the continuing menace of violence at football matches during its passage. The Hillsborough disaster, of course, was not attributable to hooliganism, and we paused in proceedings on the Bill for a two-month interval following that tragedy. Unfortunately, however, the hooligans were unable to pause even for two months before resuming their activities. Less than a month after Hillsborough, on the last full Saturday league programme of the season—13 May—a series of violent incidents occurred inside football grounds and among travelling supporters throughout the country, and 300 people were arrested that weekend.

The opening months of this season have seen yet more incidents in, among other places, Stockholm on 6 September, in Manchester and other cities on 23 September, and in Blackpool on 30 September. I attended a game at Tottenham on that date.

The trouble at the Sweden v. England game in Stockholm, despite the efforts of the Football Association to deter the so-called England supporters from travelling, demonstrated the importance of part II of the Bill. The Manchester City v. Manchester United game showed how close violence can be to the surface of matches in this country if the strict segregation of rival spectators slips. The problems will be solved only if there is a fundamental change in the atmosphere among football crowds. We believe that the national membership scheme can bring about that change.

Mr. Orme: With regard to the England v. Sweden game, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the problem will not be resolved unless the hooligans are charged in the country where they have committed the offence? The Bill will not affect them if they are simply put on a train and sent home. What does the Secretary of State think about that?

Mr. Patten: I very much sympathise with the right hon. Gentleman's point. We made that clear at the time to the Swedish authorities and we must work through the Council of Europe and in other ways to ensure that if hooligans are responsible for violence they are taken to court and dealt with appropriately. It is extremely important that all countries where football is played and which love football should take tough action against hooligans wherever they come from. With regard to the particular events in Stockholm, hon. Members on both sides of the House were very much in agreement about ways in which we could deal with the people who bring not only the game of football in this country but England itself into such bad repute around Europe and beyond.

Mr. John Greenway: There is common agreement on both sides of the argument about this Bill that we must tackle the problem of football hooliganism abroad. What plans does my right hon. Friend have to discuss with other member states, whose international football clubs could be taking part in the World Cup in Italy next year, to ensure that any fans who besmirch the name of this country by behaving violently abroad will be prosecuted in Italy and not let free as happened in Stockholm? That is no help in the fight to defeat football hooliganism.

Mr. Patten: I know how much my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) knows about the issue and how concerned he is that we should find appropriate answers and solutions. I assure him that we are already discussing with the Italian authorities how best to cope with any hooliganism which might occur during the World Cup. My hon. Friend is entirely right to say that those discussions should be carried forward as soon and as vigorously as possible. As I said earlier, we must discuss these issues not only with the Italian authorities, with next year's World Cup in mind, but more broadly with the Council of Europe as well as through Interior Ministers of the European Community.

I shall deal with one recent statement before moving on to the precise terms of the Bill. I totally repudiate the allegation 10 days ago by the chairman of Crystal Palace football club that the Government need more hooligan problems in the next few weeks to help the Bill through Parliament. He also made the extraordinary request to supporters of his club to be on their best behaviour for the next few weeks so as to impede the passage of the Bill. The implication seems to be that once those few weeks are up the fighting can start. My information is that Crystal Palace supporters do not have a bad reputation, in which case they deserve considerably better of their chairman.

I have referred to the pause in proceedings on the Bill as a result of the Hillsborough disaster, but the continuing violence has demonstrated a continuing need for its provisions. The Bill has, however, been amended in a number of important ways following the Hillsborough disaster and will, I hope, become law very shortly—before we have seen the final report of Lord Justice Taylor's inquiry into the needs of crowd control and safety at sports events. Parliament will, however, have two opportunities to debate the scheme following receipt of the final report —first, before the Football Membership Authority is appointed and, secondly, when the scheme has been submitted and approved by me. We have provided also for the Football Licensing Authority to have powers in respect of safety at football grounds if Parliament should so decide in the light of Lord Justice Taylor's final report.

This is a relatively short Bill, but it contains a number of major elements. First, there is the national membership scheme, to which almost all those attending designated matches in future will have to belong. Secondly, there is power for the Secretary of State to require an increase in the proportion of seating as against standing accommodation at specified grounds. As the House knows, exercise of that power will be subject to detailed parliamentary approval. It is also a subject on which we look forward to Lord Justice Taylor's comments. Thirdly, there is power for the Football Licensing Authority to review local authorities' performance in relation to football grounds under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975. Finally, there is power for the courts to impose restriction orders on convicted hooligans to prevent them from travelling to designated matches abroad. I repeat that I take on board the point made by the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme).

These measures can have a major impact for good on the future of football in this country. I recognise that the membership scheme has aroused a great deal of controversy in football and elsewhere. It is, of course, the right of those who oppose the scheme to advance their arguments, although I deplore some of the disinformation that has been promoted. Nevertheless, the Bill will shortly be law and it is time for football to start to adopt a positive approach to the scheme.

I commend the way in which my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport has taken the Bill through the House. I commend also the helpful support of my hon. Friend the new Minister for Industry, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd). My hon. Friend the Minister for Sport has repeatedly stressed the positive benefits that the scheme can bring to clubs and to their supporters if they approach it in a positive light. Not only does it offer the prospect of an end to the ever-present threat of hooliganism but, as those clubs which have recently begun to develop their own membership schemes have seen, it can bring a club and its supporters very much closer together.

It is, above all, in the interests of football that those concerned should begin to take a positive rather than a negative approach to the scheme. That is the message that I shall give to the president of the Football League and the chairman of the Football Association when I see them shortly, and it is the message that I give to the House now. I am pleased to be able to commend the Bill to the House.

9.29 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I welcome the Secretary of State to the deliberations on the Bill. He has been brought off the substitutes' bench to strengthen the team. In football, they would refer to a fresh pair of legs, but what the legislation really needs is a fresh brain. My impression was that his obligatory speech on Third Reading was part of the price that he paid for getting the job in the first place. He would have been better advised to give this one a miss. I do not know whether he can confirm the story in the Lobby that there have been so many recent Cabinet changes that Cabinet Ministers, too, will be required to carry identity cards so that the security men in Whitehall can recognise them when they go to No. 10.

For all the Secretary of State's presentational skills, which he has again deployed at the Dispatch Box this evening, he is not going to convince the overwhelming majority of people that the legislation is right or likely to be effective. We said at the outset that this was the wrong Bill at the wrong time and that it was also the wrong Bill at any time. That remains our view. It remains the view of people involved in our national game—spectators and players alike, management, administrators, some important sections of the police and certainly the overwhelming majority of the British public, who remain unconvinced of the merits of compulsory identity cards for football spectators.

Petitions including the signatures of 2,000 professional footballers and over 430,000 football supporters have urged the Government to think again. We share those views. The long weeks of debate and discussion of the proposals in Committee have increased opposition, not just on this side of the House but in the country at large. We have opposed the proposals for compulsory identity cards for football spectators in part I of the Bill because they are irrelevant and will have serious implications in some circumstances for crowd safety.

The Under-Secretary of State has said several times that there may be a test of the technology involved in setting up the system. We would welcome such an experiment, provided that it was a proper test that was undertaken, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) has said, over a sufficient length of time—a season—and provided also that it covered all the various circumstances that arise throughout a season's fixtures. That would be a realistic and a reasonable test, but we remain deeply sceptical about the technical capability and efficiency of the proposed system.

With the growing number of Cabinet reshuffles, perhaps the best experiment for these ideas would be to test the technology at Cabinet meetings, to see how long it takes the ever-changing round of Ministers to get in and out of No. 10 Downing street. We read that the Prime Minister is erecting palace gates at the end of Downing street. Perhaps she should include a turnstile in them while she is at it and let Ministers experience what they are going to impose on thousands of law-abiding citizens every weekend as they go about their business of enjoying, or trying to enjoy, a lawful sport.

We know, however, that an experimental period would not be acceptable to the Prime Minister, who is the real force behind the legislation.

When I listened to the Under-Secretary of State talking about pensioners and violence, I came to the conclusion that he had probably been the victim of too many handbaggings by a woman pensioner with whom he spends a bit of time. Certainly there is no other evidence to support the Government's contention that women and pensioners should be subject to the provisions of the Bill. It beggars belief to hear the Minister for Sport say that Chelsea Pensioners decked out in brightest scarlet and visible like beacons for miles around could somehow commit some misdemeanour at a football match and slink away quietly into the crowd without being recognised—it does not bear examination.

It is not only nonsense to include women, pensioners and unaccompanied children over the age of 10: it is insulting to them. It is grotesquely insulting to say that somehow these people represent a threat to public order and good behaviour. The Secretary of State and Conservative Members are apparently cowed by the manic obsession of the Prime Minister, but whatever else the legislation will achieve it will not increase the gate for the Conservative party at the next general election: quite the contrary.

[Dr. John Cunningham]

Football identity cards appear to be one of the Prime Minister's pet projects; that is why the idea is being forced through the House and why all the evidence, all rational argument and sensible debate—I accept, like the Secretary of State, that it has been passionate at times, but always good-humoured and courteous—have been largely ignored by the Minister. He has not been allowed the latitude to accept even one reasonable amendment since the legislation first came before the House.

The signs are that, this season, league attendances are up by about 11 per cent. on the same period last year. If that continues, they could return to about 20 million for the first time since the early years of this decade—all without the imposition of the compulsory identity card scheme and the extra financial burdens that it will entail, particularly for small clubs, which are often hopelessly unable to bear such extra burdens.

A card scheme would work the other way, pushing attendances down by deterring many decent cut casual football supporters who attend several matches a season and who are estimated to account for about 20 per cent. of total attendances. We all know from personal experience that that is particularly so at bank holidays, Christmas and local derby games. I shall be at St. James's Park at Newcastle on Saturday when there is a derby game against Middlesbrough. There will be an extra large attendance——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): In the shape of my hon. Friend?

Dr. Cunningham: I shall indeed form part of the extra numbers. One of the regrettable aspects of being in Parliament is that I attend fewer football games than I would like to. Attendance will be swollen at that game because it is a popular local derby, and many thousands of casual supporters will come who were not there last Saturday and will not be at the subsequent home game.

I noticed that the Minister and supporters of the legislation shy away from the fact that the problem—and there is one—is no longer inside the grounds. Having an identity card will not stop people causing trouble in town and city centres and on trains and boats. The Secretary of State is aiming at the wrong target; so much has been apparent from the outset, but we have been unable to get Conservative Members to face up to the facts.

It is also worth reiterating that the 6,147 arrests related to football matches during the 1987-88 season represent a tiny proportion—0·03 per cent.—of the 18 million attendances at games in that season. Many of those offences also occurred away from grounds and were not related to violence or serious disorder. In that sense, too, the problem which has attached itself to football and which has been stuck to football by the Government's attitude has been exaggerated.

There is simply no guarantee that an ID card scheme will reduce the numbers of police required inside and around football grounds. In order to prevent potentially dangerous problems of fans arriving at computerised turnstiles just before kick-off, it is quite conceivable that in some cases we shall have to maintain, if not increase, existing levels of police at important games. We reject the underlying reason for these measures.

Mr. Burt: In relation to evidence about decreasing police charges, the hon. Gentleman could look at Luton Town and the way that it has managed. In the year prior to its scheme being introduced, there was a charge of £66,200 for the police. After three years of the scheme, the charge for the police had come down to £25,000. Does that not show the savings that can be made through the scheme?

Dr. Cunningham: Thanks to the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), I have looked at Luton Town a great deal. The hon. Gentleman is talking about a scheme which does not allow, at least in theory, away supporters. Are we suggesting that the future of the game will depend on a legal ban on away supporters and people travelling to the games? Are we to say that, on Saturday, people will not be allowed to travel from Tyneside to Teesside to watch a football match at St. James's park? That is the sort of scheme that operates at Luton Town.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman did not let me finish.

Dr. Cunningham: I did let the hon. Gentleman finish, but he is not letting me finish. It is like asking me to answer a question when I am already trying to do so. The hon. Gentleman should contain himself.

I do not think that outside Luton there is a scintilla of support in football for the kind of scheme that the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) is proposing. If he can mention any other club that is proposing to emulate that scheme, I should like to know about it.

Mr. John Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman said that in theory Luton Town bans away supporters, and he gave en example of supporters from Tyneside and Teeside. He will understand that, if Sunderland operated that scheme, there would be nothing to stop others joining it. The hon. Gentleman also said that he did not think that any other club supported the Luton Town scheme. If he looks at the records he will see that the Police Federation favours a no-away-supporters scheme such as that put forward by Luton Town.

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, but the Police Federation is not a football club. It may have a team, but the federation is not a club. I live between Tyneside and Wearside, where it is impossible to tell who are the home supporters and who are the away supporters. One week they go to Sunderland and the next week they go to St. James's park in Newcastle. We cannot look to the future of football on the basis of home supporters only. That is preposterous.

We reject the Government's arguments for these measures and their use. They are a smokescreen for the Government's failure properly to address the growing level of violence in all aspects of life in Britain. That is regrettable but true. The overwhelming majority of football fans in England and Wales, decent law-abiding citizens, are having their civil liberties infringed in an attempt to divert the public's attention from the growing levels of disorder under the Government.

We are extremely doubtful whether the last-minute substitution of the new Secretary of State for the Cabinet's own-goal specialist can prevent the Bill from turning into yet another Government own goal. As I have said, I hope that no Conservative Member who votes for this measure will think that that will resolve the problem or will increase support for them or their Government when the inevitable test of public opinion comes.

Since we support the principles of part II, as my right hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) and for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) have said, I say, more in regret than sorrow, that it will not work. Let us take the case of the match in Sweden, to which the Secretary of State referred. Six people were charged with offences on a cross-Channel ferry. No one was charged with any offence in or at the ground. What is the outcome of that to be? The people who were there—we may agree that they should not have been there—were not charged with an offence and subsequently could not have any action taken against them under this proposal.

In the recent game in Poland, no charges were levelled against British fans, because they did nothing wrong. Unless people can be charged with something in this country, part II simply will not work. I would like to see it work, because I agree with the Secretary of State that we simply cannot tolerate our name and reputation being damaged. My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes)—I have to get his constituency right in view of the shadow Cabinet elections this week—pointed out that the Bill does not apply to Scottish fans, and quite rightly. We cannot tolerate people from England and Wales besmirching the reputation and name of our country. We want action taken. However, I say with no pleasure that part II will not work, because it does not contain the right provisions.

The Under-Secretary said that safety is at the heart of the Bill. I do not know how he can say that, when the Government have insisted on proceeding with this legislation in advance of the conclusions of the Taylor report. I sincerely hope and believe that the Taylor report will be a watershed in these matters, and it will be disappointing if it is not. To legislate in advance of the report is extraordinary, to say the least. As I understand it, Taylor is due to report towards the end of the year, perhaps in December. We may have the chance to debate the report and its conclusions in the early part of next year, but on that time scale, we shall not be able to do anything about this legislation until the autumn of 1990 at the earliest, and that is ridiculous. It is rather like the Secretary of State responding to our request to produce a White Paper on environmental policies but introducing a Bill first. "Let's have the legislation before we see the evidence" seems to be the name of the game in the Department of the Environment. I thought that we were getting away from that with the arrival of the right hon. Gentleman, but apparently we are not.

In view of all the evidence, of all the public opposition, of the gaping holes in the legislation, and of the imminence of the Taylor report, one would have thought that some of these arguments would have got through to Ministers. Not a bit of it. They are driving ahead with manic obsession behind them. The momentum is not theirs but that of the Prime Minister. That is why we have this Bill. That is why the Secretary of State is making a speech in support of legislation that I believe, in his heart of hearts, he would prefer not to touch with a bargepole. We shall implacably oppose this legislation in the Lobby, because it merits our total opposition.

9.49 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I spoke against the Bill on Second Reading and I remain unconvinced that I was wrong to do so. I shall speak briefly tonight to support the arguments that I adduced at that stage.

I oppose the Bill as a soccer supporter and as a believer in law and order. We are faced with a national law-and-order issue which is not party political in its nature. There has been a breakdown of law and order among adolescents in our society, and if we keep them out of football grounds they will go somewhere else. They will not go home and read Aristotle, Socrates, Marx or Burke. Nor will they join the Workers Educational Association. They are likely to go steaming on trains, to use a modern term, to engage in muggings or to take part in robbery and the rest. Unless we tackle the problem of adolescents in revolt who are uncontrollable, our society is threatened by breakdown.

In a speech at a Conservative gathering on Saturday, I referred to three comprehensive schools in a reasonably well-run London borough. When attendances at those schools were checked over the spring term in 1987—the check covered 15 and 16-year-old boys—it was found that they were 47 per cent., 48 per cent. and 52 per cent. Half of the boys were not attending throughout the year, or they ran a rota system that determined the days when they did attend. If boys in that age group are not attending schools but are running loose for the last two years of their schooling, they will be uncontrollable for the rest of their lives. At some stage discipline has to be inflicted—I mean inflicted, if necessary—on all people.

In London, in 1977, a check was made when it was not known that there would be a test or examination in every school. The check was made in secondary schools in London and it was found that 28 per cent. of the pupils were missing. The check revealed that some 40 per cent. of 15 and 16-year-olds in London were not in attendance.

I do not think that many hon. Members are aware that there is a decline in competitive sport in our schools where there is proper refereeing and generally proper control. Rugby and soccer are collapsing. There are schools in our main cities where those sports are not played. The fighting in our playground spreads to fighting on the terraces and everywhere else. Responsibility lies with the Department of Education and Science. Unless soccer and rugby are played in our schools, with proper referees and the knowledge that the referee's whistle is final, we face a further breakdown in our society. If that takes place, football will become a riotous act, and the future will be even worse.

There will be difficulties for the police in patrolling outside football grounds. Unless there is a massive police presence, cards will be stolen. Photographs of all spectators will have to be checked, and that will lead to more fighting outside the ground. The idea that these people will behave properly to get into the ground is not realistic. They will find a way to get in. Many of them will have spent two years escaping from their schools, so they will seek to escape the law once they leave school. They will have been bred for that for some time.

When there is rioting outside a ground, the gate will be opened and the rioters will gain entry. The Bill will do nothing to improve behaviour outside football grounds.

Mr. Shersby: Does my right hon. Friend understand and accept that the police, in trying to implement the scheme if it comes about as a result of the Bill, will have to exercise the most ruthless scrutiny of supporters? They will have to ensure that if they are carrying membership cards the cards match the identity of the carriers. The police recognise that that will be a difficult task. Does my hon. Friend accept that that could have some benefit in controlling the difficult problems that occur outside grounds?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: My deduction is entirely different from that of my hon. Friend. If everyone is to be checked to that extent, we had better start getting the crowds outside the grounds on Friday night. If not, there will not be a kick-off at 3 pm. If the police have to check everyone before he or she enters the ground, there will be only four matches on a Saturday afternoon. There will not be enough constables to go round. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) intended to present me with the greatest argument against the Bill that I have ever heard. I am grateful to him for advancing it for me on my behalf. He adopted a clever and subtle approach.

I still do not understand why everyone should not have an identity card. One public house near where I live will not admit anyone unless they have a card issued by the licensed victuallers showing that they are over 18 years of age. We all need to carry cards for one purpose or another. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), who is a notable football supporter, shows me his own identity card.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that his proposal is for a card that proves the identity of the holder, whereas the scheme provides that a piece of plastic will become an electronic key allowing the holder to gain admission to a football ground? I suggest that we are not talking about identity cards or meaningful membership in the terms of Lord Justice Popplewell's report.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I agree with my hon. Friend. He reminds me that those of us who travel on the Underground will also be interested to see how long it is before the turnstile machinery breaks down. The automatic ticket barriers on the Underground serve to prepare ordinary people for all-in wrestling, or soldiers for assault courses.

It will then take one constable or two constables per man to ensure that everyone behaves, which will make the situation even more like something out of Gilbert and Sullivan than I previously imagined. However, I must not make too many rash statements—[HON. MEMBERS: "More."] I claim your protection, Mr. Speaker, from the pressure being put on me to attack the Bill even more. I want to be as impartial as I can.

What is needed in our society is compulsory school attendance between the ages of 15 and 16 and courses in secondary schools that are meaningful for those who attend them and which offer a job at the end. Young people will then know that it is worth attending school because there will be a job at the end of it. We must also pull together the extended family, which is breaking up in our society, and rebuild local loyalties. Today, loyalties are being built up against us. The little platoons of Edmund Burke are being broken up and in their place are being formed little warrior platoons against society.

Unless all those things are achieved, there will need to be Bill after Bill in an attempt to control our young people, which should be both unnecessary and unsatisfactory. I shall vote against the Bill, not because I do not want law and order—I do—or soccer to be run properly—I do—but because it deals with symptoms and not causes.

9.57 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell: There has never been any dispute about the desirability of eliminating football hooliganism in England and Wales. Nor has there been any dispute, since the Bill began its progress in this House, about part II. However, there has been a substantial dispute about the principle which lies behind part I, and in Committee and on Report there was substantial dispute about the practicality of the proposals enshrined in the Bill.

One issue that has to a large extend been brushed aside is civil liberty. The Bill requires that an activity which until now has been entirely lawful will be unlawful unless a person wishing to indulge in it takes the step and overcomes the obstacle of obtaining an identity card. It is that, among many features of the Bill, which makes it so unacceptable to many right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House.

The principle of universality is more offensive than almost anything else that the Bill requires. The absurdity of including pensioners in the football supporters scheme has already been eloquently demonstrated. Earlier this evening, we witnessed the absurdity of hon. Members arguing that women should be included in the scheme lest supporters anxious to evade their responsibilities visit charity shops and clothe themselves in dresses before returning to present themselves at the turnstiles. When such an example has to be prayed in aid, the absurdity of the principle that the Government are seeking to apply is surely proved beyond question.

For me, and I suspect that I am not alone, this evening marks a sad and sorry end to the progress of an unhappy and ill-conceived piece of legislation. The Bill could have been a memorial to those who died at Hillsborough rather than a monument to Government intransigence and insensitivity.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Brunei (Appeals) Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Football Spectators Bill *[Lords]*

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Mr. Campbell: I well remember the atmosphere in the House the Monday after Hillsborough, and the disbelief felt by many of us when the then Home Secretary came to the Dispatch Box and told us that, after a period of reconsideration, the Bill was to continue its progress through Parliament.

This should not be a partisan measure. The elimination of hooliganism should be a matter of agreement throughout the House. I suspect that few Bills could be shown, on critical examination, to be as devoid of merit as this Bill has been, perhaps by the unforeseen but illuminating events that have taken place outside. Hillsborough should have provided an opportunity, but instead it has been used to demonstrate the Government's determination to ignore the obvious. The Government would have commanded great support and respect if they had come to the House after Hillsborough and said that they would wait for Lord Justice Taylor's final report. I suspect—recent events may confirm my judgment—that the doctrine of infallibility pervades all the attitudes of the present Government. No argument in principle, and few arguments in detail, have deflected them from their predetermined course, as was demonstrated by the publication of the Bill in its original form.

Football is the poorer for this measure but, unhappily, football will have to live with it. The Football League and the Football Association will have to make the measure work, but responsibility for it will rest with those who have promoted it so enthusiastically, and I believe that they will come to regret that enthusiasm.

10.2 pm

Mr. Lester: I shall speak only briefly, as I have had a big say on Second Reading and in Committee.

I agree with everything said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). It was not so much the technical objections to the Bill that we paraded in Committee; our opposition comes down to a matter of principle. I believe that it is a gross infringement of personal liberty to impose the Bill on so many law-abiding citizens. It challenges the lawless to try to defeat it, and we shall certainly see such action.

I can tell my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the Bill is causing great distress to those who have supported their teams for many years. Season-ticket holders who are committed to their teams will be required to join the scheme, as will those who are already members of their club schemes, young reds or blues—depending on their team colours—and under-10s accompanied by adults. I cannot imagine even East Germany trying to impose a scheme with such draconian requirements on so many in order to isolate so few.

We have debated the anomalies and the omissions. We have discussed the fact that Scotland, which has a greater record of arrests than many clubs in England, is to be excluded, and that we are including all the member states of the European Community which may wish to cross the Channel to watch a football game. We are not even satisfied with that: the legislation will also apply to American tourists. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) mentioned football in America. I assure him that if he goes around the stores in the United States he will find many tee-shirts inscribed with the names of such famous teams as Liverpool, Manchester United and Arsenal.

It is so unreasonable that someone who comes to Britain for a fortnight as a tourist cannot watch a football match unless he joins the scheme. One hopes that there is still time for reason to prevail, and that when the FMA looks at the scheme it will build on everything good that has happened in football in recent years, such as the way Millwall has turned around from a club which was condemned to one which, through universal membership, has dealt with the problems of away supporters by putting big screens at the Den so that people who cannot go to away matches can watch the match from their own ground.

The final principle I wish to mention, and the reason why I shall continue to oppose the Bill, is that one cannot impose a law without the consent of the majority of people who will be affected by it. The majority of people who provide the sport—the players—are against it; as are 91 of the 92 chairmen who run the clubs. About 300,000 regular football supporters have signed a petition which has been presented to the House individually by club and by the total membership of the Football Supporters Association. One cannot impose a law on an industry to that extent and hope to succeed. For those reasons I shall oppose the Third Reading.

10.5 pm

Mr. Rowlands: I have agreed with the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on many issues. I wholeheartedly agree with his denunciation of the Bill.

As a Welshman approaching soccer, one has to be modest, to say the least. There are now only three Welsh league teams in the third and fourth divisions. Rugby is our national sport, so I approach the Bill from a rather different angle. My worry and concern is that the Bill will not stop where it is planned to stop—within league football.

The hon. Member for Broxtowe and others have demonstrated the absurdity of including women and old-age pensioners in the scheme. Another absurdity is the way in which the scheme would treat the Liverpool v. Spurs match that we saw yesterday on television in the same way as the Rochdale v. Scarborough match attended by 1,400 people last Saturday. Rochdale and Scarborough will have to have the same membership scheme with its plastic cards for a match watched by perhaps 1,500 to 2,500 people.

The argument why that is necessary, repeatedly produced by the Minister, is that, if we do not have a comprehensive scheme that includes teams such as Rochdale and Scarborough as well as Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur, the thugs will go up the road to clubs not covered by the scheme.

In south Wales the growing non-league sides have got into the Vauxhall League, and, by a marvellous rapid promotion through three leagues Merthyr has even played a European Cup tie, beating a first division Italian side. There was an amazing, wonderful sense of community spirit. My worry and concern is that the next league in which the scheme will intrude will be the Vauxhall league. Already many clubs such as Merthyr are drawing crowds bigger than those at third and fourth division matches. The Government plan to draw the line at the fourth division. But the Bill does not draw the line.

Another body that has emerged from our discussions is a huge new quango called the Football Licensing Authority. Ministers, the Football Licensing Authority and the Football Membership Authority will not only become involved in league football, but will have to decide when to designate matches involving non-league clubs versus league clubs. I suggest that when the Secretary of State leaves the Chamber he watches the first round draw of the FA Cup today. Twenty of the matches are between non-league and league sides. We discussed that issue

[Mr. Rowlands]

throughout our discussions in Committee. One of my functions was to identify the interface between non-league and league football.

If the Bill were enacted, it would have to be decided which of those 20 matches would be designated matches. What consequences would flow from their becoming designated matches? I think that the Secretary of State may have made a factual error when he said that every designated match will be covered by the comprehensive membership scheme. I hope that that is not true, because I believe that many matches will be designated but will not be subject to the membership scheme. If they are subject to it, half the clubs competing in the first round of the cup will be dragged into the scheme, making it difficult, if not impossible, for many fans of non-league clubs to support their team.

Anyone who has followed the debates on the Bill will be aware of, first, its gross absurdity and, secondly, its creeping bureaucracy. The new and elaborate Football Licensing Authority and the Football Membership Authority—two new quangos—have been established to handle the problem of hooliganism.

Yesterday, we watched magnificent football being played at the Liverpool-Spurs match. People who were unable to attend that match saw it on television yesterday afternoon. As a casual football spectator, one is shaken by the fact that teams such as Liverpool and Spurs cannot play in Europe, and by the fact that Ministers are ensuring that they cannot do so, which is disgraceful. The actions of a mindless group of hooligans mean that great clubs such as Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur cannot play in Europe. The day that this awful Bill becomes an Act, I trust that Ministers will say to the European football authorities, "This is our solution. We support the inclusion of our great clubs in European football." Whether it be Merthyr Tydfil playing Atalanta or Liverpool playing Real Madrid, there is no excuse for the way that Ministers have behaved to football fans over the past 12 months, as represented and signified by the Bill.

10.12 pm

Mr. Burt: Listening to the debates on Second Reading, in Committee and now on Third Reading has been an enormously enjoyable experience. For many hon. Members, it has been one of those rare occasion when something that has been a hobby for many years has been discussed on the Floor of the Chamber. Most hon. Members were football supporters long before we knew anything about politics. An attachment to and love of a football club is deeper than an attachment to or love of a political party or Government.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Shame.

Mr. Burt: It is no shame at all. It is a subject which goes very deep. That is why the emotions aroused inside and outside the House have been so great. The argument is all about romance and the differing views of the game, both past and future.

Conservative Members and the Bill, but not Labour Members, have seriously addressed the state of football today. We have asked whether it is good enough, and if there are problems what to do about them. Currently, the game is not in a good state, and has suffered decline for many years for various reasons. Most football clubs are in debt not because of a football membership scheme or the Prime Minister but because insufficient people watch the game.

A public perception of violence has surrounded the game for the past 20 years, some of that has been based on truth, but much has also been based on media myth. The media have blown up incidents and suggested that they happen all the time. Most hon. Members who attend football regularly know that violence does not occur everywhere. However, if one asks the mums and dads who used to take their children whether they think that it happens, or ask a mother whether she is prepared to let her children go to a game alone, or whether those who grew up standing on the terraces with their dads would let their children go, they say "No, we dare not take the risk." That perception of the game, which has helped its decline, has been tackled by the Bill. It is important to change people's attitudes. The Bill, with other measures, will do that.

The romance that I mentioned is a romantic attachment to the belief that the way in which people carried on in the past should continue, without any need of legislative change. I do not believe that that can happen.

Mr. Lester: Is my hon. Friend aware that on Saturday last at the Nottingham Forest match a great part of the ground was full of children under 10 on their own, called Young Reds? They thoroughly enjoyed the game, to which they had gone because they had been encouraged to join that scheme. Does my hon. Friend realise that his efforts to encourage the attendance of young people who do not go to football matches by imposing this new scheme will mean that the people who already go to football matches will not go? They do not want to be members of this scheme in addition to being Young Reds. My hon. Friend is pitching for people who may or may not understand what is happening in football at the expense of those who do.

Mr. Burt: I understand what my hon. Friend says. It has been a feature of his contributions, like those of many Opposition Members. I do not believe that that is true. The attachment that those young people already show to football and their desire to watch the game will not be affected by their becoming members of another scheme. The fact that they are already loyal to a club and want to take part in its activities suggests that they will happily take part in this scheme, especially if there are associated benefits—for example, if it is fitted into the activities of their junior members' clubs. It will not act as an extra barrier.

A number of hon. Members have mentioned the tragic events at Hillsborough. Hon. Members should be reminded that, on page 55, Lord Justice Taylor's report states:

> "Regrettably, only a month after Hillsborough, there were incidents that showed that violence and hooliganism are still liable to erupt at football grounds."

Lord Justice Taylor went on to detail the events on 13 May at Selhurst Park and on 20 May at the Cup final. He said that such incidents were still happening.

Hillsborough was not caused by hooliganism. Alas, we cannot say that it was a watershed for football hooliganism. I hope that it was a watershed for public safety, but hooligans are still causing trouble. Although we acknowledge that Hillsborough was not the fault of hooligans, I stress that it is the hooligan shadow of the

1960s that caused those deaths, in three ways. First, the police fear of fans moving across Sheffield led them to decide to place the fans at the wrong ends of the ground in terms of space. Secondly, the existence of perimeter fencing was a legacy of the fear of pitch invasion, and it contributed to deaths. The third spillover from the past was the police perception at the time the problems arose. They feared an invasion of the pitch more than any great disaster not caused by hooliganism. That is why the shadow of hooliganism of the 1960s caused the deaths at Hillsborough and why we cannot exclude those factors from our thinking.

Mr. Waring: The hon. Gentleman referred to the FA cup final on 20 May. All the evidence from that cup final shows that the crowd was able to see the match unsegregated—there was no evidence of widespread hooliganism—and that is always a feature of derby matches, wherever they are played, between the Everton and Liverpool clubs. In the season before last, there were only 24 arrests at matches associated with Everton and 33 at Liverpool, but 452 at Glasgow Rangers.

Mr. Burt: I make no comment about supporters of Everton and Liverpool. The hon. Gentleman knows more about that than I do, but he also knows, because he was at the cup final, about the pitch invasions and other incidents that took place. They were not major, but they happened. I am afraid that the atmosphere which may exist between Liverpool and Everton did not exist recently when Manchester City met Manchester United, when there was a problem because opposing supporters were mixed in together.

Mr. David Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that at this year's FA cup final, for the first time in the history of the competition, the cup could not be taken round the ground and paraded to the fans simply because the players were nervous of what might happen to them?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend makes his own point. The point that I seek to make is that all is not well with the state of our game. The Bill has been an attempt to try to do something about that.

What have we heard from the Opposition about what they or others would do? I am pleased to answer now the point raised by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). He knows enough about my attitude to the game and the Bill to know that I do not support the Luton scheme strictly. Earlier in the debate, I raised a point about the decrease in policing costs to show that the changing nature of the crowd and the atmosphere at Luton had led to a reduction in policing costs. I genuinely believe that, although away supporters must continue to be part of the football scene, a change in atmosphere produced by the membership scheme can achieve that and can assist in lowering costs.

I hope that the segregated grounds, the closed circuit televisions and the police escorts to and from the station, which are a common feature of first division matches today, will not remain a feature of the game when people realise that they cannot go on like that. We talk about civil liberties here. We should consider the civil liberties of supporters kept penned in after the game against their will to allow the rest of the crowd to disappear, thus enabling them to return to the station safely. That is the status quo in some grounds today. We do not want that to be part of football and we must do something else. I do not support the Luton scheme or the Police Federation's view that the only future for football is to abandon away supporters. The Bill is football's last opportunity to ensure that that does not come to pass.

The Opposition have presented a negative approach to the scheme. I understand the reasons for that and why keen football supporters and the Professional Footballers Association have adopted the same approach. However, now comes the point of change. Once the Bill becomes an Act, we shall all have a vested interest in ensuring that as many people as possible join the national membership scheme. If we do not do that, it will not be my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister or the Government who suffer. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes it will."] No, it will not. The first to suffer will be the clubs which we want to protect and support by going to matches.

It will be necessary for people to work and to promote schemes in their areas. I bet that most hon. Members will be among the first queuing at their clubs at the start of the appropriate season to pick up their membership tickets because they want to be associated with their clubs and their local areas, and they want to do something to help. The scheme offers the opportunity to raise money for football and to put it back into the stadium and the fans, as we have been asking all along. This is a positive opportunity for football, which football can grasp.

We can be positive about the Bill. If we speak privately to supporters or to executives of the PFA, we realise that they know that football's future, when the Bill is enacted, will be dependent on the membership scheme becoming a success. I want to quote from an important article by David Miller, the sports writer for *The Times*, which he wrote in January this year. I quote this article in response to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who raised the question of civil liberties. He should take note of David Miller's words:

> "speaking as one who has watched nearly 4,000 matches, I am convinced that a marginal loss in liberty for the general spectator is worth the saving of a beautiful game for future generations and worth the restoration of a decent society. The framework is capable of bringing back to a fine sport some of the dignity and sportsmanship among spectators which has been foully corrupted and of preventing known criminals from attending overseas matches."

If membership is made attractive and the Football Membership Authority has the opportunity, the game will be able to rid itself of its present image and will have a great future. Football should not see itself as being picked upon. Football will be seen as the game that began the great community fight-back against hooliganism and violence in which the football supporter finally shed the unfair image which the violent offender had cast round him. At last our great national game will recover its self-respect.

10.23 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): I do not know whether it was the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) who had a public meeting in his constituency—perhaps he will confirm that—where all the football supporters turned up and took a vote and the hon. Member lost by 300 votes to 10.

Mr. Burt: It was 256 votes to three.

Mr. Ashton: That is a little less than the majority that the hon. Gentleman won, and I can safely say that there will be a Labour gain in Bury next time.

The Bill has nothing to do with football. It has to do with politics, law and order and votes. After the 1983 and 1987 victories, the Prime Minister decided that there were many working-class votes to be gained by emphasising law and order. She may have had a point in the case of some of the inner cities where crime and unemployment were growing and where people living in tower blocks were scared of being mugged or burgled. The Prime Minister associated football with the crime problem. She looked at the figures and found that 450,000 people went to a football match one week and perhaps a different 450,000 people the next week—given that clubs only play at home in alternate weeks. She realised that there were 900,000 regular spectators, and the opinion polls showed that about 70 per cent. were in favour of something being done —or something being seen to be done.

I suspect that the Prime Minister sat there one night with Denis over a glass of whisky and asked, "What can we do?" and Denis said, "Why don't you do what our golf club does? Everyone has to be a member and that is how we keep the riff-raff out. That is the only way to run it."

We have seen the Prime Minister's attitude to the Chancellor and to Ministers of Sport, the previous two of whom she sacked, probably because they had the integrity and honesty to tell her that the scheme will not work and is impracticable. It may be a wonderful theory, just as prohibition, prices and incomes policies and other policies over which Governments have made mistakes may be wonderful theories.

The Government think that the scheme can be imposed on a section of the community, but people have to volunteer to accept the law. People may say, "Okay: we don't agree with the breathalyser"—or the highway code or code of conduct—"but we shall go along with it." In this case, however, 98 per cent. of those connected with football—Conservative directors, the fans who stand behind the goal, the players and even the police—say that the scheme will not work. They know that the scheme is impracticable and will cause more trouble than it is worth.

The Prime Minister is a very determined woman and she refuses to accept that fact, just as she refuses to accept arguments at a higher level—about the economy, perhaps —or to take the advice of the Chancellor. When she has rows with the Home Secretary and the Foreign Secretary, exactly the same thing applies. In this case she has plucked an idea out of the sky and seeks to impose it on almost a million people, saying, "This is the way that it will be done."

The Prime Minister has not realised that in every society there needs to be some outlet for violence. I did two years of national service. When we had national service, there was a natural outlet for young people's aggression. Wars, too, have provided an outlet—although not, perhaps, a satisfactory one. There has to be some release of high spirits and tension. We need something to get rid of the natural macho over-enthusiasm of young people, and if football did not exist, something would have to be invented to take its place. If young people can go to football matches and indulge in a spot of harmless tribalism and shout their heads off or wave rattles as they used to in the old days, or chant or sing songs, that prevents crime.

The reason for the terrible crime problem in America is that there is no collective sports outlet. I was recently in Washington with other members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs and we saw the effect of crack on black teenagers, who have no such outlet. They cannot go along and support a football team, because a ticket for a football match in America costs $40. Baseball is much cheaper, but in America football is a middle-class sport.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Is the hon. Gentleman seriously saying that football should be a cathartic experience for hooligans and that either working-class kids should be allowed to vent their spleen —if they are in the small category who are yobs—through the sport or we must invent another outlet for their problems?

Mr. Ashton: There must be an opium for the people. In Spain, Italy, Holland or South America or in the inner cities in England, in Liverpool or at Arsenal, there are huge masses of young people who do not have much hope or expectation. They may have miserable jobs and have to stand by conveyor belts all day. They may even be unemployed. They need something to believe in and it is better that they believe in their football team than in the IRA, or in peddling drugs, muggings, stick-ups or heists and everything else that they have in America. I am not defending the hooligans, but there would be much more hooliganism if football did not exist.

There are problems on new year's eve and at the Notting Hill carnival. There are problems in towns like Aylesbury and Stroud which do not have football teams. Those are lager lout areas where there is no football team to provide a safety valve.

Mr. Carrington: I think that I must be misunderstanding the hon. Gentleman. He seems to be implying that not only should violence at football matches be tolerated for the greater good of society, but it should be encouraged for the greater good of society. I hope that I am wrong, because if that is what the hon. Gentleman is saying, that is the greatest justification for the Bill that I have heard.

Mr. Ashton: The hon. Gentleman is deliberately distorting what I have said. There used to be national service for young people aged 18, 19 or 20. I did national service and it tamed us. However, it does not exist any more. There used to be wars, but they do not exist any more either. The public schools produced the Hooray Henrys, for want of a better word. There will always be a surplus of energy among 18, 19 and 20-year-old males. That will always exist. If there is a natural safety valve for that whether it be playing football or standing on the Spion Kop linking arms and singing songs to get rid of that tribalism, that is a very good and necessary safety valve.

Mr. Butcher: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashton: No, I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman will just distort what I have said. he has not been listening carefully. *[Interruption.]* It is no good the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown), interjecting from a sedentary position; he is far too fat to have played any sport in his life.

Bombs were set off at football matches in Holland. The Dutch introduced a membership card scheme, but only for the five worst clubs. However, they have had to drop that scheme because it does not work. The hooligans laughed at it, the police said that they could not impose it and the Dutch Government had to drop it. The Dutch Government are a laughing stock.

Never let it be said—but it has been said—that the Opposition support the hooligans. We do not, because we go to the matches. There is no way that I can support the hooligans when I have been involved—innocently—in punch-ups in the past. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may laugh, but they have never been on the Spion Kop. I doubt whether any Conservative Member has paid to go and stand up at a football match on the Spion Kop over the past five or 10 years.

Mr. David Lightbown (Staffordshire, South-East): Which Spion Kop?

Mr. Ashton: The Government Whip, the fat guy at the front there, has never paid to stand on the Spion Kop. If he had, he would understand the problems with hooliganism. Anybody who has paid to go and stand on the Spion Kop knows that the hooligans must be eradicated. Several things are being done to eradicate the hooligans.

The Football Trust, which the Opposition have supported, is putting £9 million into football every year. For example, I refer to video cameras. It has been proved possible to arrest a hooligan within 30 seconds. If Conservative Members went to football matches they would see video cameras around the grounds. Hon. Members have seen the video cameras in the Chamber —*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members have all had a drink. I am quite prepared to let them have a laugh. It is half-past 10. They have been in the bar, studying the affairs of the world. As in the Chamber, video cameras at football grounds can zoom in and pin-point a hooligan inside 30 seconds. The man in the control box simply phones down to the policeman who is nearest to section C1, C2, AB or AB2 and so on, and the hooligan is immediately arrested. That is done time and again. That proves that policing works to a great extent inside football grounds.

As the Minister said, the system has fallen down at Crystal Palace—not at Blackpool, because the trouble was outside the ground. There has been one instance inside a ground, and that was at the Birmingham City v. Crystal Palace match at the end of last season. Information was passed on to the police that the average Birmingham away crowd of 3,000 or 4,000 would be doubled or tripled. Thousands of people travelled to Crystal Palace. They went to the wrong ground—the running track—but the police directed them to the right ground. The police took no notice of the advance information that the fans were travelling overnight, and they were caught unawares. That is why, if the supporters were allowed to sit on the Football Membership Authority and add their intelligence to the authority, such instances could be prevented in future.

The obvious, chronic lack of understanding means that we will get no further. The Conservative scoffers never pay to go to a match, never stand in a queue in the rain, and never see the way in which crowds are ripped off. They never get off a tube at Wembley to be forced into a tunnel in exactly the same way as happened at Hillsborough—the tunnels are still there. The authorities know that the tunnel is a death trap. The authorities at Wembley have said that they will put up £1 million so that fans can go straight to the entrance to Wembley. Brent council and London Transport have offered to put up £1 million each, but the Government will not put up their quota. No doubt, when there is a disaster at Wembley and people are killed, it will be the fault of the fans.

Time after time, when people such as myself who stand behind the goal tell the authorities what is wrong, we are jeered at, laughed at and scoffed at until another 95 people are killed. Suddenly, when another 95 people are killed, the scoffers are all experts. This House has 300 or 400 experts who know exactly what is wrong, but none of them was at the match. None of them will pay for a ticket or travel to support a club. None of them has stood in the rain. None of them has been like the kids who go on the Kop and pay two days' pay to stand and watch their favourite team. We have to listen to the scoffs, the jeers and the experts until the next disaster or punch-up happens. Once again, it will be the fault of the people behind the goal and not the fault of the authorities.

[Mr. Ashton]

10.38 pm

Mr. John Carlisle: The speech by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) will have been enjoyed by members of the Committee and others in the final say of this great game that we have been playing over the past few months. The hon. Gentleman made some remarkable statements. The romantic side of the story which he normally portrays to the House was overwhelmed by some of his strange theories. None the less, he is not the only one who pays to go to a football match. He is not the only one who stands behind the goal. He is not the greatest living expert on football. Many Conservative Members share his sentiments and experiences as youngsters or even as adults. I remember that, as a small boy, I went to Kenilworth road at a time when small boys could go and watch the great games at Luton.

Many of us understand the problems that the hon. Member for Bassetlaw has put before the House. He is right to say that there are several experts—*[Interruption.]* There are several who are sitting behind him now who have made a late appearance, perhaps because they have nowhere else to go at this time of night; they are probably now experts on something that we have been considering in detail over the last few months. I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt): it was an extremely good Committee. We discussed the many real problems. Regrettably, as I think the hon. Member for Bassetlaw knows, we shall have to discuss them again, because this scheme is not the ultimate answer.

I do not believe that we shall see the end of football hooliganism as a result of the legislation that we are about to pass. However, we have gone a long way down the road towards arresting a problem that has been the scourge of the game for so long. What amazes Conservative Members, and also many people outside football, is that, when the Government make an attempt—in the opinion of Opposition Members and some of my hon. Friends, a somewhat lame and misguided attempt—to try to remove from football the very problem from which football has suffered, which has had a devastating effect on the game in terms of its public support, by cleaning up the game and pushing hooliganism elsewhere—many of us accept that it will go elsewhere—they are derided and told that they are misguided and that basically all is well. If all were well with football, there would have been no need for the legislation that has taken up a lot of the time of the House.

I regret the need for the Bill. I said that many years ago, and I think that many of my hon. Friends agreed with me. However, something had to be done to save the game as well as to save those who are, regrettably, afflicted by football hooliganism. That is why I was proud to be a member of the Committee. I was also very proud that my right hon. and hon. Friends have brought the legislation before the House, framed, as it has been, by the experience of my own club at Luton.

There was no doubt in the minds of those of my constituents and myself who were at Kenilworth road on that very dark night in March 1985 and who saw the type of havoc that was wrought—some hon. Members on both sides of the House saw it for themselves, either first hand or on television—that something had to be done. Fortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) was chairman of the club. He and his fellow directors decided that something had to be done.

We could not sit by and watch our town be desecrated by hooligans. We could not sit by and see the support for our club suffer because of a few mindless yobs who decided that night to break up the turnstiles, the pitch, the seating and the benches and to damage my constituents' homes, their garden walls and their cars. Everyone knows the picture that football hooligans paint as they whip through a town and the damage that they inflict upon its residents. That is why the scheme was introduced in the town. It has brought with it a variety of benefits, which I shall outline to the House.

The scheme has brought peace to the town, something that not many towns and cities can claim on Saturday afternoons. It has also brought peace for the residents who live around the ground, for the members who live in and outside the town and for those who come into the town to shop or to visit relatives. As my hon. Friend for Bury, North rightly pointed out to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), it has meant the deployment of police away from the ground to other areas of the town and county. We in Luton regrettably suffer from a high crime rate, but it has been arrested. At least we can now direct the police to areas where they are needed, instead of having to herd fans to and from the ground.

The scheme has also brought my town a sense of safety. People can travel on public transport—trains, buses and taxis—or in their own cars in and around the town in the sure knowledge that they will reach their journey's end unscathed. That cannot be boasted by many of our towns and cities.

The scheme has brought peace to those who want to shop in and around the ground, where the shops now stay open right up to kick-off time—and are open when the fans come out. It has brought peace to the pubs, which now stay open and whose takings have risen. We do not have to shut our pubs in Luton just because there is a match on a Saturday.

The scheme has brought commercial advantages to the town centre, where people have returned to shop. Shopkeepers in and around the centre of the town will testify that, since the scheme came into force, people have flocked to shop in Luton, because they know that they will not be interrupted in their shopping by gangs of marauding fans getting off trains and buses on the way to the ground.

The scheme has attracted business men to the town, in the sure knowledge that they can set up their businesses without the thought that every other Saturday they will have to shut them when the fans come through. More than anything, it has brought a pride to our town that we did not possess before. We have become an example to the nation—our arrests are the fewest in the league. That is remarkable for a first division club. Granted its gate is moderate, but it is considerably more than that of many other clubs in the country.

Mr. David Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that the seven arrests at Luton Town football club last year were of people deliberately trying to break the system?

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend, to whom I am grateful, will know that in the two previous years there was only one arrest, and that, even with the seven, we have fewer arrests than any other club in the League—including the third and fourth division clubs.

Luton supporters have not complained about many of the things that Opposition Members think they should. They have had to go and buy a membership card, at a pound a year, and about 20,000 of them have done so. No one has complained to me, or to my hon. Friends the Members for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) or for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) that his civil liberties have been eroded by this. It is nonsense to say that people will not buy tickets. If they are keen football supporters, it is a small sacrifice to make for the benefits that have been well paraded this evening and in Committee.

People have not complained, either, about the fact that they can now watch football in peace. They can go to a game with their children, or their children can go on their own. I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) that people will not allow their children to go to matches at many clubs because of the history of hooliganism—or worse, the fear of it. At Luton, they do not complain about that, because they know that they can watch the game in comfort and peace.

People do not complain about the commercial advantage that the scheme has brought their club. The books are now balanced and we are attracting more sponsors than ever before. Luton fans do not complain about that, although the Opposition think they should.

Luton people also do not complain about being shouted at and abused by a load of youths, or about hearing racial chants and obscenities. The Opposition say that that will not be eradicated by the scheme. They do not complain about being able to walk to the ground without having been herded in by police horses or dogs. Residents do complain of having to be escorted to their homes by the police at night, as they are at Highbury on big match days. That does not happen at Luton. Fans can go to the ground in peace and comfort in the full knowledge that they will not be attacked as they approach. No longer do they complain when they return to their cars that they have been scratched and damaged, because they are intact now. When they get home their garden walls are still standing——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlisle: No.

They do not complain that some yob has pushed down their walls or jumped into their garden.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is a latecomer to these proceedings. Many hon. Members in the Chamber and in Committee have thought long and hard about this subject and have discussed it at great length and with great seriousness. The levity that he tries to bring to the debate is to be regretted. I shall not give way to him because he is a late comer and knows little about our proceedings. Perhaps he had better make a contribution somewhere else.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Member, who did not give way to me, was clearly referring to an incident that occurred in my constituency last week. Common courtesy suggests that he should give way to me to allow me to explain.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The Chair has many responsibilities, but they do not extend to incidents in constituencies.

Mr. Carlisle: I do not even know the constituency that the hon. Member represents, nor do many of my hon. Friends. Probably his own constituents do not know about him.

The Bill and the scheme will mean that everybody will be able to enjoy what we enjoy in Luton. As the Minister has said many times, people travelling abroad will be able to do so with a degree of safety and, hopefully, in the knowledge that when they go to a match abroad they will not find the games interrupted by fans who go to wreck matches and not to watch them.

Mr. Pendry: We have heard a great deal about the virtues of the Luton scheme. The hon. Gentleman says that there have been very few arrests at Luton during the last two seasons. We know that, when the scheme was introduced, the former secretary of Luton Town said that it was to save visiting supporters from the Luton hooligans. May I remind the hon. Gentleman of a reply that I received from a Home Office Minister last year? He said that 52 Luton Town supporters were arrested following a match with Ipswich Town the season before last. The hon. Gentleman should correct the record.

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Member knows that I always try to be helpful to him, because I know that he has ambitions. With departures impending on the Opposition Front Bench, he will need my help and the help of some of his hon. Friends to put forward his point of view. He should have listened to the extensive replies in Committee which showed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield will confirm, that those 52 so-called Luton supporters merely came from the Luton area and were not travelling on a coach approved by Luton Town football club. That shows the strength of the Luton scheme. We know and can approve certain carriers for our fans and we know that the fans will behave.

Mr. David Evans: Not one of the 52 people arrested was a member of the Luton Town scheme.

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield and I have paraded the Luton scheme and will continue to do so, because it forms the basis of this excellent Bill. We look forward to hon. Members enjoying the advantages of the membership scheme, as we have done over the last three years. In more ways than one, this is a momentous night for football. At the end of the day, when crowds begin to flock back to our national game, a great deal of gratitude will be extended not only to my hon. Friend the Minister, who has led us splendidly over the last few months, but to the Government, who have had the courage to tackle a problem that was ignored by the Opposition.

10.53 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Luton Town is a shattering irrelevancy. It is the reason behind the Bill that the hon. Members for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) have been forcefully pushing from behind the scenes. However, the provisions of the Bill will not apply to Luton Town, because clause 1(10) allows the exclusion of people from grounds even if they have national identity cards. That will

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

apply at Luton, because the police in Luton are asking for that. The scheme at Luton will continue, and it will not be the scheme that will be applied elsewhere. All the detail, discussions, statistics and information about the changed nature of life in Luton will be irrelevant to the rest of the universe.

The Bill is inside out, the wrong way round. It is a procedural mess. It went first to the other place, rather than coming here. Any measure of such great significance to the interests of our constituents should come to this House before going to the other place, which can examine, revise and make suggestions for change; rather than the other place setting the scene before the Bill is brought to us. Then, in Committee, we tried to open up the discussion and have a logical debate on the Bill. We wanted to look first at part II, which deals with exclusion orders, making people attend police stations or perhaps do community service during match times. That is a way to tackle the problem of hooliganism in that they are targeted, and then action is taken against them. However, we were not allowed the privilege of a sensible debate on that before going on to debate identity cards. That provision was steamrollered through.

All the Committee's debate took place before Taylor's interim report. It was available when we discussed the ways and means resolution, and for Report and Third Reading, but it has not been debated, except when the Opposition have initiated a debate, and there has been no response to the problems with which it deals. It is a disgrace that passage of the Bill was not delayed until Taylor had reported fully. In his interim report, Taylor says that he will not discuss ID cards because he wants to deal with them in the full report.

On Friday, we discussed the ways and means motion and the money resolution before we discussed the Bill itself. The Government's timetable was in a mess, and they had to deal with the Companies Bill and the Children Bill. Therefore, they decided to squash the remaining stages of this Bill by dealing with the Children Bill once they had the timetable motion for this Bill. They forced the closure of the debate, thus preventing Labour Members from participating in the debate.

The guillotines that have fallen on our debates have made a nonsense of them. We dealt first with six groups of Government amendments, and they had only two non-Government groups of amendments, one from the Opposition and one from rebel Tories. That left 12 groups, including those dealing with some important measures—for example, the exclusion of third and fourth division clubs from the scheme—which were never discussed.

Furthermore, we are involved in a great act of hypocrisy in that we are establishing a system of ID cards that will be collected and paid for by about 1 million people, and will be responsible for 400,000 people attending matches each week. This will be done by a Division being called in which 500 of us will go through one or the other Lobby, and in 15 minutes we shall decide how many Members are here. If there is any need for "smart cards" it might be in this place, because the match played out here has involved no more than one tenth of the hon. Members who will vote.

We witnessed a timetabling disgrace in Committee, which meant that we had only 16 sittings. The timetable motion was introduced before we reached some of the more important items in the Bill. There has not been full and proper discussion of part II and the developments that could flow from it.

The Government have used the most dubious statistics in trying to establish their position. They have been selective and have used specific examples—serious ones, to which we should respond—for universal application. The result is that their conclusions are irrelevant.

We need to know what is happening at the grounds in terms of violence and arrests. We must know also where the arrests take place and of the arrests and charges that ensue. That information has not been made available to us. A written question of mine was answered on 19 December, which was reproduced in many newspapers and described as a league of shame. The figures showed that there were certain areas where problems needed to be targeted, but the average number of arrests—not convictions—was five per match. At the average club, there were three arrests per 10,000 spectators, and there were 22 clubs between Manchester and Colchester where there was one arrest per 10,000 or less. At Colchester, there were in fact no arrests at all. That is better than the much-vaunted Luton record.

The details supplied by the Arsenal football club include nine cases of theft, eight of ticket touting and 12 drug cases. What are the offences that lead to arrests throughout the country? Let us have that information, so that we can respond with the appropriate targeting.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that last week, in advance of the scheme being introduced, there was a capacity crowd at the Arsenal ground? The police decided to throw a quarter-mile cordon around the ground. No one could break the cordon unless he had a ticket for the match or could prove that he lived within the area enclosed by the cordon. In effect, there was an identity scheme for the match and for the residents in the area. There have been no problems at Arsenal during the past year.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) will return to the Third Reading of the Bill.

Mr. Barnes: The Arsenal problem will develop and expand with the introduction of the identification scheme. The police will seek to stop people as they arpproach the ground to ascertain whether they are entitled to be in the vicinity, and that will lead to potential danger.

The ID scheme will lead to considerable dangers, including a breakdown of order, confusion and financial loss. The card system will prove difficult to implement. The Minister has told us that at each ground the names—and numbers, presumably—of those who have been excluded will be supplied by means of a telephone computer, for example, so that thos responsible will know exactly who has been excluded. We have been told, however, that it will be possible to purchase new cards on the day at post offices and grounds, and that at the Halifax and Hartlepool sheds, for example, it will be possible to obtain information to enable people to get new cards. It will be possible for hooligans who are the subject of an exclusion order to obtain extra cards so that they can enter the ground. The system will not prevent that.

There will be crushes at the grounds. The crush that developed at Hillsborough will be seen at other grounds, and to an even greater degree. It is likely that the scheme will not reflect the halcyon dream of the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt). Instead, there will be greater problems and greater trouble. Hooligans will be encouraged to beat the system by snatching cards, in the way that they snatch tickets now from people as they arrive at matches. They will even engage in games, challenging people to present their cards. Supporters will find themselves in trouble if their identity cards reveals that they do not belong to the "right" club. The House should instead be developing the provisions in part II and amend the Bill accordingly.

The scheme will interfere with freedom of access to grounds. The Government are introducing internal passport systems for football matches at about the same time that barriers between European countries are being removed to allow the individual more freedom of movement. The Government will criminalise fans while still being unable to contain hooliganism.

I shall be among those who will not seek to obtain an identity card. Two weeks ago, I attended a match at Upton park, to watch West Ham play Sunderland, which I support. I decided to dash out to Upton park only about an hour before the game, which I watched from the terraces behind West Ham's goal. Under the scheme, I would not have been able to do that—which might have been just as well, given that my team was beaten 5:0, which did not make it a particularly enjoyable occasion. However, on other occasions I might want very much to gain admission to a match at the last moment.

Identity cards have massive civil liberty implications. Plastic cards are not only used by burglars and others but can be stolen by hooligans, and even used as weapons—especially if they are cut up. In certain circumstances, even being in possession of a plastic card could be said by the police to be possessing an offensive weapon.

Not only can identity cards set off security systems such as those found in the House of Commons: they may also be imprinted with confidential information about their holders. That aspect has not been hemmed in by the Bill. Cards can hold information that is irrelevant to the claimed purposes of the Bill, which has been given as the need to curb hooliganism—but another reason for the legislation is commercial.

Conservative Members have stressed different aspects of the Bill, with some being much keener on its commercial potential than on its value in containing hooliganism. The scheme will allow information to be collected about the matches one attends, the turnstiles one enters, one's creditworthiness, and information provided by other organisations. The cards could even hold information about the holder's non-payment of the poll tax and any problems he might have in that connection.

In Committee, stress was placed only on the scheme's commercial value and not on improving the situation on terraces in the future. The hon. Member for Bury, North suggested that the identity card scheme will change the face of football. In fact, it will restrict attendances, push up prices and sanitise soccer to make it fit for the credit card-carrying classes. The Bill will provide a vehicle for all kinds of advertising material and junk mail. The consequence will be, as at Luton, that people will carry a plastic card enabling them to watch plastic football played on a plastic pitch.

11.8 pm

Mr. Carrington: We have heard a great deal about the problems that face football, and there can be no doubt that what we have heard exemplifies the violence from which it has suffered over the past few years. We have heard much about violence inside the ground, and my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) has described the difficulties that Luton used to experience from violence outside the ground.

We have heard, too, about the problems inherent in estimating the size of the violence problem from the number of arrests made at matches. I suggest that the number of arrests is no gauge of the degree of violence. The problem is not the spectators who are arrested, but inherent hooliganism which is not bad enough for the police to take direct action—or, indeed, which happens away from the police presence.

One of the great benefits that the Bill will bring is an overall reduction in the level of violence. Violence outside the ground is the most pernicious. That is the violence that has earned football the worst name that it has had for perhaps 50 years. It is often claimed that the Bill would not address such violence, but I suggest that once a full membership scheme is brought in and people intending to go to a match who behave in an anti-social manner find that if they are identified—not just by the police, but by the club—they will be prevented from going to future matches, they will no longer visit that club or congregate outside because there will be no purpose in doing so if they know that they will not be allowed in. Away supporters will not catch the train from their home town to see the match and local supporters will stay at home, and perhaps watch "Match of the Day" on television—they will not stand in the street outside the ground creating mayhem.

The Bill constitutes a major benefit for those living near football grounds. It will remove from them the Saturday afternoon threat, not of being beaten up or otherwise assaulted, but of racial abuse, sexual harassment, urination in their front gardens and vandalism of their motor cars, the threat of not being able to go out and do the shopping, and lead a normal, active life on a Saturday afternoon.

That, I feel, is the negative side of the Bill. The positive side is much more exciting for the clubs themselves. As one whose constituency contains two league clubs, I can see the advantages that the Bill will bring to both of them. For the first time they will know who their supporters are, and will be able to identify not only paid-up members and those who have bought season tickets, but everyone who claims to have allegiance to them.

I understand that Luton regularly has gates of some 10,000 for a home match. Its present membership scheme comprises 20,000, and is closed. The membership scheme could well increase that number. If we assume a doubling of the average gate as the number who will identify themselves as supporters—the small clubs will, of course, benefit particularly—we can take that to be the number who, having been identified by name and address, will be available to those clubs, which will be able to solicit financial support from them. More important, the clubs will be able to find out why those people do not attend on a regular basis to watch their teams play.

That will help clubs such as Fulham which, regrettably, has fallen on rather hard times, with the average gate below 4,000 for a home match. It will enable the club to

[Mr. Carrington]

find out why it is attracting such a small number, and to find ways of increasing support, to become financially viable and to bring about a resurgence in football's popularity.

The ability of the Secretary of State to license grounds will do much to see that managements, at League and club level, live up to their responsibilities. Throughout these debates we have heard how it has not been possible to ensure that managements run their clubs in a safe and proper manner. If, once the Bill becomes law, a management runs a club in a way which seems to encourage violence or with a lack of safe procedures, the Secretary of State will have power to threaten and, in extreme cases, to withdraw the club's licence. That will oblige managements to come more into the 20th century and be fit to run clubs in the 21st century.

The problem that hon. Members have highlighted with part II is that it excludes from attending overseas matches only those who have been identified as having committed an offence here or abroad. The success of that provision will depend on our convincing Governments abroad to prosecute British fans who misbehave at matches overseas, and I feel sure that we shall do that.

In general, the Bill is greatly to be welcomed and its passage will help to make football the popular family sport that it once was.

11.16 pm

Mr. Pike: It is a pity that after the many hours that hon. Members have debated the Bill—I regret that I was not a member of the Standing Committee, much though I should like to have been—the Government remain determined to press ahead with it. The Bill should have been given a red card long ago and consigned to the rubbish bin, and I hope that even at this late stage, the vote soon will result in it having that fate.

The Government made the basic mistake at the start of identifying hooliganism as a football problem, when it is clearly a general problem of society. Hooliganism is occurring throughout Britain, not only in cities and towns but in villages, on Fridays and Saturdays, and often it has nothing to do with football. The present trend to hooliganism must be examined in a different way. It will not be tackled by this measure.

The Government were also wrong to call hooliganism an English football problem. One need only examine the problems that are associated with the game in other countries. In any event, the Government have a responsibility to prove that their legislation will deal with the problem that they claim exists. Or has the Prime Minister alone decreed that it exists? They have failed to show that it will tackle the problem effectively. Having studied what was said on Second Reading and in Committee, nowhere can I find proof that, had the Bill been law, the problems that the Government have identified would have been avoided. Our fear is that the measure will create more problems than we already have.

Nobody connected with football wants hooliganism to continue. The trouble is that the hooligans, who are certainly not football fans, will find a way through the system and into the grounds. The Bill will create more problems at gates and outside grounds and will not help to reduce the numbers required to police matches.

Burnley football club invited local Members of Parliament to visit its ground, meet its directors and watch a match. Its policy is that anyone who is convicted of a football-related offence is barred from Turf Moor for life. Only the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) and the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) accepted the invitation. The right hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) and the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) chose not to attend, but they will support the Bill tonight. The hon. Member for Pendle has not been convinced that the Bill will deal with the problems that the Government have identified and has chosen to abstain. The hon. Member for Hyndburn will be voting against his party and the Bill. Other hon. Members should recognise that the Bill will not tackle the problem of football hooliganism.

If the Bill is forced through, it will lead to the destruction of many football clubs. The financial implications of installing and running the system, and the Bill's effects on attendances, will cause drastic problems for clubs that are currently experiencing financial difficulties. That will be regretted by many people such as myself who have been football supporters for many years.

As Labour Members have said, football depends not only on regular supporters but on casual supporters, such as those who are visiting relatives at Christmas and want to see a match. Often, when a team starts a successful run, casual supporters follow that team at further matches, but the membership scheme will deter that. The Bill is bad for football, and it will be a bad Act, if it receives Royal Assent, because it will not deal with football's problems but will cause more difficulties.

Unfortunately, after the Hillsborough tragedy the Government continued to press forward with the Bill. Local government, the police, football management and football supporters should have awaited the final report of Lord Justice Taylor in order to achieve a solution that is better than the Bill for football.

The Government must recognise that the Bill has not commended itself to anyone who supports football. It is opposed by all but one of the football clubs, by the Football League and by the Football Association. Everyone who has the interests of football at heart recognises that if the Government persist with the Bill they are once again being foolish. I hope that the Minister will recognise that and, even at this late stage, be prepared to withdraw this nonsensical Bill.

11.23 pm

Mr. Shersby: When the Bill was first published, the Police Federation had reservations about it, which I expressed on Second Reading. To a large extent, those reservations were concerned with the ability of legislation such as this to deal with the problems that occur outside grounds in addition to those that occur inside them.

The federation takes the view that something must be done to deal with the serious problems that face Britain. We must face the fact that many hundreds of people have been killed or injured attending football matches over the past couple of years. That must be addressed by the House, by the police and by the country.

Since the Second Reading, I have spent a day with officers of the South Yorkshire police, who were intimately involved with the policing of the Hillsborough stadium disaster. I have seen and studied with the greatest possible care the police films of that match and of the identical match that took place between the same teams 12 months earlier. I hope shortly to have an opportunity of showing those films to colleagues in the House. I was struck by the fact that at the match 12 months earlier there were very few problems outside the perimeter fence a short time before the kick off. However, at the match at which the disaster occurred 3,500 individuals were determined to get into the ground at short notice. Unfortunately, some of them had been drinking too much and 1,111 police officers had to deal with that robust crowd. We shall be dealing with that matter when the Taylor report is debated in the House.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shersby: I do not have much time. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I know that the Front-Bench spokesmen want time to reply. We will have an opportunity to deal with that when the Taylor report is published.

The police take the view that although the legislation may not be perfect, it should be given a chance to work. The identity cards which have been the subject of our debate today will carry a photograph of the individual who belongs to the membership scheme. That will be a considerable advance. As my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) pointed out in his excellent speech, that will deter individuals who go to matches simply to disrupt them. There will be no point in their attending because they will not be able to gain admission.

The acid test will come when the football membership scheme is published and the House has an opportunity to decide whether to support the action of my right hon. Friend if he approves the scheme. The scheme will result from the Bill, which is merely a framework to make possible a membership scheme that has the force of law. The police will judge the scheme when it is devised, published and submitted and if it is approved by my right hon. Friend. The scheme will be subject to the most careful scrutiny, and a decision on its viability will be taken by the House in a few months.

When the scheme is published, the police will want to consider the precise way in which it is proposed that it should operate. They will want to be sure that the FMA is well constituted and capable of supervising the scheme properly. They will want to be certain that the chairman of the FMA, whether a man or a woman, is an individual who commands the respect of the House, all those who enjoy football, the police and all those who have to ensure that supporters can go to football matches and return home safely. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister, in considering that appointment, will realise the importance of appointing an individual of great stature.

Until the scheme is published and until we know who is to be the chairman and who are to be members of the Football Membership Authority, the Police Federation will suspend judgment. In the meantime it is right to proceed with the Bill. Also, I will reserve judgment, on behalf of my constituents who are football supporters and enjoy attending matches in London and elsewhere in the country. A final judgment will be made by the House when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State brings the scheme before us to consider.

The debates on Second Reading, in Committee, on Report and on Third Reading have dealt with the framework and generalities of the scheme. We need to see the detail of the scheme and to be convinced beyond doubt that it can and will work. When that day comes, every hon. Member will have a much better opportunity to make an informed decision than he or she can in supporting the Third Reading.

11.29 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Although the Bill deals specifically with England and Wales, there is legitimate Scottish interest and concern in what is going on. We are only too aware that, with a stroke of a zealot's pen, the same sort of provisions could be introduced in Scotland. We are citizens of a part of the United Kingdom with a great interest in football. I object on my constituents' behalf because, when they are travelling through the rest of Britain, they will be deprived of the ability to attend football matches as and when they wish.

I speak from a United Kingdom basis. Since its start, this misbegotten exercise has been based on a misunderstanding of the problem. The assumption, which is wrong and which has been the foundation of the Prime Minister's whim, is that the problem of so-called football hooliganism depends on attaching itself to football. That is not the case. All that the legislation will do, if it achieves anything, is move the problem from football grounds into town centres and on to transport. The people who are responsible for the core of the trouble at football grounds in England and abroad have nothing meaningful to do with football. They can attach themselves at any time, in any way, to another branch of society. The weakness of the legislation lies in the idea that legislating specifically for football will reduce the problems which have wrongly been identified as football hooliganism.

That the Government should produce this legislation is an admission of defeat. In 1979, after their electoral humiliation, the ultra-Right in Britain made it known through its publications that it was going to attach its efforts to football, with the specific aim of causing trouble and exactly the kinds of problems abroad which have now become so commonplace. Instead of weeding out that social and political problem, the Government have branded 1 million football supporters—a generic category of society—in this unique way. That is entirely wrong.

If the Government wished to approach this problem seriously, they would weed out the few hundred people at its core. Their conspicuous failure to do so has led them into this crazy situation tonight. To brand football supporters in this way and to set them apart as a category of society that uniquely needs to carry identity cards and to be subject to these controls is an affront to 1 million people.

I do not expect Conservative Members to appreciate that point, because they are not in the same category as those people. The 500,000 people who signed the petition and those who realise that they have been singled out in this way because football is the object of their enthusiasms, know where the legislation comes from and why football supporters have been picked out. For the sake of nailing a tiny proportion of their number, 1 million people are to be subjected to this indignity.

The bottom line of the legislation lies in this question, which has never been satisfactorily answered in my

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hearing: what happens on a wet Wednesday night in November when, 10 minutes before kick-off, the system goes down and 40,000 people are pressing forward to get into a ground? If Ministers cannot answer that question, their responsibility for introducing this legislation is even heavier than it might otherwise be. If the Minister for Sport cannot give a guarantee—I believe that he cannot —that the problems created will not be infinitely worse than they are at present, he should withdraw the legislation, or there will be a heavy weight on his conscience if things go wrong.

Memorably, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said that the poll tax would become known as the Tory tax. I forecast that the football ID cards will, and should, become known as "Tory cards", and may they be another nail in their coffin.

11.34 pm

Mr. Denis Howell: After a long and sometimes tortuous examination of these measures, many Labour Members, myself included, continue to believe that the Bill amounts to a massive irrelevancy in dealing with the problems of football and the social problems that give rise to them.

The Government have panicked, for many reasons. It was no accident that when they came into office, Ministers immediately disbanded the working party that had been operating successfully for a number of years, which included not only those connected with football, but representatives of the police, the traffic and coastal authorities, British Rail and others. The working party had got on top of the problem to the extent that in 1979 we were able to lift the restrictions that we had had to impose on Leeds and Chelsea. Thereafter, the problem ceased to be under constant review. Because we are dealing with the ills of society, we need to be permanently vigilant; we should target matches and target groups of people who one knows will cause disturbances. But none of that has been happening.

Having come to office on a promise of eliminating violence in society and having faced an increase in that violence throughout her 10 years in office the Prime Minister decided that the one area of activity where she might be able to isolate the problem and take some action was football. She was wrong about it, but that was her logic.

As I said, we are discussing the nature of society, and we must not forget that a football team is a focus for the public pride of the community of which it is part. That is why millions of people who have left these shores have continued to wonder how their teams are doing.

I was very taken with what the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said earlier—[HON. MEMBERS: "The right hon. Member?"] Yes, and so he should be. We need to consider the problems of our society and what we are doing about them, and I echo what the right hon. Gentleman said in that regard. He said that there was a crisis of adolescence in our society, and whether that description is accurate or not, there is not the slightest doubt that the demise of school sport and the playing of games at school—a demise which is being actively encouraged by the Government—is having an extremely detrimental effect on young people. I say this constructively to the new Secretary of State—the Minister knows it, too—that we have fewer and fewer teachers of physical education. When PE teachers come out of our colleges, incidentally, most of them believe that there is something wrong with team sports. They believe that we should encourage people in recreation at the expense of teams sports, when in fact we should be encouraging both. The new changes in the curriculum, brought about by the former Secretary of State for Education and Science—the downgrading of physical education and team games—are also having a catastrophic effect.

Under Rab Butler's Education Act, the two compulsory subjects in the schools curriculum were PE and religious instruction, both of which have now been downgraded. I passionately believe that one cannot make such changes without reaping a damaged harvest. To add to all that, at a time when we should be encouraging youngsters to play games, we are also telling local authorities to sell school playing fields and to privatise sports centres where possible, thus prising out of those sports facilities the very youngsters whom we should be encouraging to play if we wish to prevent problems from arising.

We have a new Secretary of State for the Environment and we hope that he will look at these matters with a fresh mind. We hope that he will not be hidebound by too much tradition—as he should not be—and by the policies that he has inherited. We hope that he and his colleages will relate what they are trying to achieve in environment and sport to what is happening in education.

The Opposition oppose the Bill on the grounds of practicality. The major source of the problems with football occur outside football grounds. They lie with hooliganism at motorway service stations and the problems in our town centres and shopping centres. We know from what has happened abroad this summer that the people we are trying to catch will not register under the scheme. They will not say, "I'm a good boy so I'll register under the Government's scheme." The people who try to force the doors open at football grounds and who go to Sweden without tickets when they know that the match is all-ticket, are there simply to defy authority. Unless the Government start to tackle that problem, they will find no solutions.

John Williams from Leicester university wrote about these problems in his excellent book "Hooligans Abroad" in 1982. Seven years ago Leicester university—the only university researching the problem at the time, I believe —drew our attention to the matter, but the Government have largely ignored what was said. Quite properly, the Secretary of State asked us to consider what has happened this summer. This summer we have seen the growth of this challenge to society which, I have to say, comes from very Right-wing organisations.

I was grateful to the Minister for Sport condemning in forthright terms in an earlier debate the evil of the National Front and other Right-wing organisations—and, worse, the British National party. An excellent article with photographs appeared in *The Mail on Sunday* recently and I have had reports to confirm what it said. Apparently those people who should not even have been in Poland went to that country for the England match and also visited Auschwitz to have their pictures taken outside the gas chambers while they gave the National Front salute. That is the vile level to which some of those people have sunk.

Those people constantly desecrate our national flag. No other country in the world would stand for its national flag being continually contaminated in the way those people contaminate ours. They give the Fascist salute while they sing the national anthem. We must deal with those problems. They also disseminate Fascist propaganda.

It is no wonder why other European countries ask us why they should have our problems thrust onto them. They say that it is our task to stop those people going abroad. We support part II of the Bill in the hope that it will do that. However, we do not have a lot of confidence that it will.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, the net result of this summer's troubles —if the six people who have been charged are convicted —is that six names will be removed from the list of agreeable supporters. That is ludicrous. After the hundreds who misbehaved in Sweden, Iceland, Poland and on the ferries, only six people are to be charged. That suggests a tremendous breakdown in our relations in the Council of Europe on these matters. We must have a little sympathy with European Governments who say, "All we want to do is to collect the hooligans and get them out of our country as fast as we can. We must have a strategy for doing with that."

The Opposition have been accused of not producing any firm proposals, but time and again we have said that the only thing that will work is to target the matches where trouble will take place and target the groups that will cause that trouble or social evil.

I now refer to the lunatic decision not to wait for Lord Jusice Taylor's report before we put the Bill on the statute book. All hon. Members wish Lord Justice Taylor well. He must report not only on the horrific deaths of more than 90 people but on the competence of the Sheffield inspectors, the city council and the competence of and possible mismanagement by the Sheffield police. We cannot amend the Bill when we hear his findings. We must accept the Bill or turn it down. It is not good enough for the Government to continue to say that the Football Membership Authority will produce a scheme which will take account of that—it may do so; we hope that it will. However, we cannot duck responsibility. The buck stops here. The responsibility for getting this legislation right rests with Parliament. It does not rest with the Football Membership Authority that we are establishing. That is the Opposition's serious objection to the scheme.

Hon. Members know perfectly well that within a quarter of an hour of an important kick-off in the middle of winter, when people must examine photographs on cards and put them through some system, they will be totally overwhelmed if the computer breaks down. When about 15,000 people are trying to get into the ground, what on earth will anybody do? There will be total chaos and people will try to solve their own problems because the police will be unable to do so.

Police costs will be high. The only people who can arrest offenders will be the police. As the Minister said in Committee, that means that there will be at least one policeman on every turnstile. That will not reduce police costs. Of course there must be a policeman on every turnstile because nobody else can do the arresting.

The principle of civil liberties was put extremely well by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). He is the most distinguished athlete present in the House. *[Interruption.]* I am reminded of my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey). In a moment of generosity, I include the Minister for Sport. As the House well knows, his sporting proficiency consists of sitting in the back of a boat and being pulled over the finishing line by eight other people. No doubt he steered the boat very well, as occasion demanded. He steered the boat much better than he has steered the Bill through Parliament.

Grave civil liberty issues are involved in this matter. I sum them up in one sentence. It is absolutely monstrous that the Government have targeted this Bill against all decent football supporters. Impositions are being made on them. The reason for that is that the Government have abdicated their responsibility to deal with the evildoers in society whom they pledged to deal with when they came to office. For all those reasons, and because we know that the Bill will not work and that it will be an expensive imposition on football and our communities, we shall vote against Third Reading.

11.50 pm

Mr. Moynihan: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell). Everyone is delighted that he has been restored to good health. He handled admirably his leadership of the Opposition in Committee and of this evening's proceedings. I thank him and his Committee colleagues across the parties for their forthright but constructive and helpful contributions. The measure has been debated at great length. I am indebted to them for the tone and content of the proceedings both in Committee and on the Floor of the House. I am also deeply indebted to my hon. Friends for their diligent and invaluable support.

The number of amendments that were tabled for consideration demonstrate the constructive nature of the debate. As the right hon. Member for Small Heath knows, we have accepted many of the Opposition amendments. He rightly concentrated, as did many other speakers in the debate, on part II and the international dimension. To suggest that the Government regard football hooliganism purely as an English problem is to be blind to reality. Hooliganism is a major international problem. During the last year, the Dutch Government have had to face it in far greater and increasing terms than we have. In many respects, we have begun to contain the problem, but we have not cured it. Hooliganism is increasing fast in many European countries, not least in Italy. It is a cause of major concern in the lead-up to the World Cup in June and July of next year.

It is important to work through the Council of Ministers and to have international co-operation, but it does not help to solve the problem if hooligans know that they can travel to a match in another country and be let in without tickets if they cause sufficient trouble outside the ground, that they can fight down town after the game and be arrested and locked up in gaol and then kicked out of that country the following morning without being charged. One understands the instinctive reaction of any country to wish to be rid of hooligans from another country, but unless hooligans know that tough action will be taken against them in those countries, the problem will not be solved internationally. That is why it is so important to work through the Council of Ministers, not

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just with regard to the international dimension but with regard to bringing the hooligans to book so that we can implement part II.

Government are already trying to identify with the Italian authorities what the relevant offences are. People brought before the Italian courts and convicted will be subject to a five-year mandatory ban from travelling abroad to matches that are likely to be a focus for violence. That is a very important part of part II. It is another reason why it is so important to work together internationally.

There are examples of improved co-operation. I cite the recent Polish match where there were no incidents. There were problems away from the ground that resulted in sickening and appalling scenes, but the behaviour at the match was without incident, despite great provocation by the Polish fans.

I welcome the fact that the Polish Government took the decision to use the Football Association's list of known trouble makers as the basis for accepting or rejecting visas. International co-operation of that sort is to be welcomed. We need to ensure that, wherever possible, international co-operation and the implementation of part II is put in place.

Many hon. Members on both sides initially hoped that the Government would take action on passport control. It is impractical. Under current arrangements, anyone can go to a Post Office, and then to another on the same morning, on to another, to get British visitors' documentation to travel anywhere in Europe. All hon. Members know that cross-boundary movements in mainland Europe often involve no more than holding up a passport to a car window, let alone having it checked. So the Government needed in part II to find an alternative way of stopping known hooligans travelling to matches and the best and most effective way was to allow courts the opportunity as part of a sentence to determine that a convicted hooligan had to report to a police station on the day of a match which was likely to be the case of trouble abroad. That has exactly the same effect as withdrawing a passport, but it is foolproof.

Civil liberties will be safeguarded; the scheme will not interfere with them. Not everyone has the right to enter a football ground now: clubs refuse entry to thousands of unwanted spectators. Hooliganism infringes the civil liberties of others—shopkeepers, shoppers, the general public and property owners in town centres and near grounds—and, not least, the genuine football supporter.

We have taken careful note of the vital importance, when developing the commercial potential of the scheme, of the FMA and the clubs having to act in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1984. Members would have the right to see and challenge the accuracy of any computerised information held about them, and appropriate security precautions would be taken to safeguard that information. No details of convictions will be held on the cards.

The right hon. Member for Small Heath said some words about the working party to which he referred, with which I believe all hon. Members would agree:

> "I know that most of its supporters will understand how important it is in the long-term interest of their own club and for its supporters personally, that we eliminate these disorders and make the support of our national sport the pleasure that it ought to be.
>
> Football clubs might also suffer some financial disadvantage, but again my working party believes that this is a price that must be paid in order to overcome the problem."—[*Official Report*, 6 April 1977; Vol. 929, c. 1324-25.]

The Government wholly endorse that. Our only regret is that the problem is not only outside the grounds. In the past 12 months, there has been a pitch invasion at Southend, there have been 54 arrests at Portsmouth, 23 police were injured after stone-throwing inside the ground at Stockport, 34 people were ejected from inside the ground at Millwall last November, and there were 16 arrests inside the ground at Aldershot. Week in, week out, to my regret, incidents continue to occur inside as well as outside grounds.

The point about the discretionary powers of the FMA is that the authority will be able to ban for two years renewable anyone who brings the game into disrepute, inside or away from the grounds, in the vicinity of a match or at a service station on a motorway. That will create a real deterrent. Louts who think that they can indulge in one-off thuggish behaviour will suddenly remember that they can be reported to the FMA or come to its notice by any other means, without being brought before the courts, and they can face the possibility of a discretionary ban, in addition to the mandatory ban that the courts can impose.

This discretionary ban is vital. At present, anyone can be banned for life from any ground on the whim of the club, but we believe that civil liberties need protection, so there will be a right of appeal against these discretionary bans—a right that does not exist now. Such a ban would allow anyone to be banned from any ground at any time and for any length of time.

It is clearly important for us to have a framework within which we can respond to the recommendations of Lord Justice Taylor. It must also allow us to respond swiftly to safety issues and to recommendations about ground configuration and the membership scheme. It is equally important that the Football Licensing Authority should put safety first and make sure that the safety of individuals is at the top of the list. Those are all part and parcel of an effective and comprehensive package of measures to keep hooligans away from football matches. I strongly commend it to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 204.

Division No. 362] **[12 midnight**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair

Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fineberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Alastair Goodlad.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.

Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wells, John
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendment.

Brunei (Appeals) Bill *[Lords]*

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

12.13 am

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The Opposition concur with the Bill.

12.14 am

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): As I understand it, Brunei is now an independent sovereign state. It was formerly a British protectorate. It is appropriate that appeals from the courts of Brunei should be heard ultimately by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as a sort of ad hoc measure. As Brunei is an independent sovereign state, what provision is there for the enforcement of the judgments that may be announced by the Judicial Committee in a case which comes to it on appeal from Brunei? There cannot be any legal authority in the Bill for the enforcement of any such judgment. Have arrangements been entered into with the Sultan of Brunei to ensure that such judgments will be enforced? If not, the role of the Judicial Committee is without any substance. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with that matter when he responds to the debate.

12.15 am

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Our country has enjoyed friendly relations with Brunei for more than 150 years, and last year I had the privilege of attending His Majesty's birthday celebrations. To those of us who know Brunei, it seems particularly appropriate that in future, the Judicial Committee's advice should go to the Sultan rather than to the Queen. It seems appropriate also that the minimum value of any civil dispute should be raised to 200,000 Brunei dollars.

However, it is not entirely clear to me who is to define what is or is not a constitutional matter, or what will or will not be referred to the Privy Council's Judicial Committee. Nevertheless, the Bill appears to be an extremely flexible document and, given the developing and changing nature of that part of that ASEAN region, with which I have close associations, it can only help Brunei to develop its judicial processes.

12.16 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I am glad to receive support for the Bill from both sides of the House. I hesitate to reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on a technical and legal point, but my understanding is that the Sultan is bound to take the advice of the Judicial Committee.

I welcome the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris). His question concerning the nature of matters that will be referred to the Judicial Committee is answered by the papers that have been placed in the Library, but if he remains in any doubt, I shall be pleased to write to him.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendments.

Orpington Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

12.16 am

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I have been privileged to represent the electors of Orpington in this House for almost 20 years. During the whole of that time I have had to fight for the retention of Orpington hospital's status as a general hospital. I have seen administrators come and go, each in his time having wanted to downgrade or close the hospital with preference for the building of an enlarged hospital with centralised services six miles away in Bromley.

Hitherto, all such challenges to the agreed status of Orpington as a second district general hospital serving the faster-growing southern half of the London borough of Bromley have been defeated. Local public opinion has been aroused, the obvious advantages of Orpington as the site of a district general hospital have been demonstrated and my right hon. and hon. Friends the Ministers concerned have always rejected such proposals on their merits.

I hope that tonight my hon. Friend the Minister will once again come to the aid of Orpington because the latest attack on the agreed existing plans for the hospital is more menacing.

Orpington hospital was built by the Canadian army for its own use during the first world war. Since then, as a result of serving a big and growing population, the original buildings have been gradually replaced and the services multiplied. It is to the credit of the Conservative Government of 1970 to 1974 and the then Minister of Health, Sir Keith Joseph, that a plan was devised, and funds allocated, for Orpington's development to the status of a medium-sized modern general hospital.

Stage one, involving new buildings and staff accommodation, was completed in the 1970s. Stage two, which included a large new modern block known as the Canada wing, and costing £9 million, was completed more recently. The original plan was to complete the whole rebuilding programme by 1992. Funds were available and the site, covering nearly 40 acres—much of it green fields —was ideal. It is on the fringe of urban London, close to the M25 and to the notorious southern sector, scene of so many accidents since the M25 was completed. It is plain stupid to put a big new hospital complex on a congested site in the middle of an urban area where the traffic is densest. Yet that is what the regional and the district health authorities are proposing to do in Bromley.

The excuse for this gigantic planning and medical folly is, as one might expect, money. The health authorities reckon that, by concentrating all acute services at one huge new hospital at Bromley, they can do better for the district than by spreading the resources between the two existing general hospitals at Bromley and Orpington. Moreover, they think that they can raise extra money for the project from the private sector, by formal sharing and co-operation services. For the same purpose—the unkindest cut of all—they propose to sell off the surplus land at Orpington hospital, thus preventing it for ever from becoming a fully fledged district general hospital providing acute services and a round-the-clock accident and emergency service, which is the ultimate object of the present and adopted plan.

The fact that the new plan has already got so far is no surprise to me. The protagonists of a bigger and better hospital in Bromley, lay and professional, have continually tried to grab the major share of resources available for the district, despite the small size of their existing site, and of the proposed site, in congested Bromley. Dominating the district authority, they have succeeded in closing the accident and emergency services at Orpington hospital—using the expedient of "temporary" closure, which does not need ministerial authority, but which drives down morale locally and professionally—so that the Royal College of Surgeons, noticing the fall-off in professional resources at Orpington, has already withdrawn its recognition of Orpington hospital for training purposes. Indeed, the hospital is no longer regarded as a major casualty centre for the purposes of major emergencies such as might occur on the M25, just a little way down the road.

It is significant that the prime mover in the latest scheme—the general manager of Bromley district health authority—has recently been promoted to the regional managership, so there is little chance of help for Orpington from the bureaucrats. The community health council for the district, dominated as it is by representatives from the other parts of Bromley borough, and even some of the professional staff at Orpington are impressed by the idea of a super-hospital at Bromley with the resources to provide high standards of professional expertise—which, no doubt, will be of great assistance in professional terms to the people concerned—on one site for acute services, using Orpington and other buildings for ancillary purposes.

I stand for the rights of my constituents, whom the plan will rob of their own local general hospital and for whom the level of services available at Bromley will never match the acute and casualty services that were on their doorstep. That is primarily why I am against the plan, and it explains why my hon. Friends the Members for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt)—all of whose constituencies are within the London borough and medical district of Bromley—are not supporting me on this occasion.

I am also concerned, however, about the possibility that the Minister will make a terrible mistake if he agrees to locate a new super-hospital to provide all the district's acute services on one site in Bromley town, rather than continuing the present duopoly. If there has to be one site, let it be Orpington—which is much larger and has better road and air communications, is nearer the M25 and has no traffic congestion—rather than the comparatively small site at Elmfield which is on only 21 acres and well into urban Bromley, where traffic conditions are notoriously bad. Imagine the difficulties involved in ambulances reaching the proposed new hospital at Elmfield during the day when the traffic is extremely heavy around Bromley town.

If it makes sense to keep acute services at Orpington, let it develop in accordance with the existing plan, even if, for financial reasons, they have to be spread over a longer period. Let us have our full-time accident and emergency services back, along with the professional staff needed to restore standards to the required level. Let us give Orpington self-governing status, as in the Secretary of State's proposals for the reorganisation of the health services, to show what Orpington can do with its great reserves of professional talent, land and good will among

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

the local community. We are fortunate in that the notable philanthropist, Sir Philip Harris, has donated vast sums for the benefit of Orpington hospital and the services that it provides. The hospital is well served and is held in high regard by the local community.

A super-hospital in Bromley may be only pie in the sky in view of the current economic downturn and the difficulties involved in financing and finding the necessary space for such a giant plan. Let us not destroy our existing plans and resources or sell off the land at Orpington until the planners and bureaucrats have at least proved that their hospital, when built and operating, is even better for the residents of Orpington than the one on their own doorstep.

12.26 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): Although the hour is late, my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) has demonstrated yet again his commitment to Orpington hospital and to the health care of his constituents. His interest in both goes back over 20 years, and I know that he has raised the question of the future of Orpington hospital several times on occasions such as this.

To put the debate in context, I will explain the responsibilities of district health authorities. The local district health authority has responsibility for developing plans and consulting on the future arrangement of services within its district. That is not something that central Government can or should do. District health authorities have the necessary local knowledge of the health needs of their residents. Bromley health authority's plans have not yet been formally submitted to Ministers. We shall have to consider in due course any proposals for a new district general hospital, as Ministers must consider and approve any new major capital project.

The district's planning responsibility must be borne in mind when considering comments made to my hon. Friend in the previous Adjournment debate in 1986 and in subsequent correspondence. My hon. Friend reminded me that there were Adjournment debates on the subject even before that date. I am well aware of the assurances given by at least two of my predecessors that acute services would remain at Orpington hospital and that it would be developed as a district general hospital for the south of the district, while Bromley hospital would be developed as the district general for the north. As my hon. Friend will know, the best laid plans can be affected by factors outside one's control.

In August 1987, the local planning authority raised objections about development on the Bromley site—the northern site—and the following month the London borough of Bromley offered to sell the health authority a 21-acre green field site, known as Elmfield, at the centre of the district. In those circumstances, it was essential that the health authority review its plans, which it did by appraising a number of different options, including the new Elmfield site. It concluded that its preferred option was to build a new, single district general hospital of about 800 beds on the Elmfield site. This hospital would include most of the acute in-patient care for the district, with a number of acute rehabilitation beds at Orpington. There would remain a very important role for Orpington hospital in providing in-patient and day care for elderly and mentally ill people, as well as a wide range of out-patient clinics.

I emphasise that point because, quite properly, my hon. Friend will wish to draw to my attention commitments given by my predecessors in past Adjournment debates. I have read the record carefully, and their comments were made in the context of a two-site district general hospital —one in the north of Bromley, and the other in the south at Orpington. Enhancements of facilities in Bromley have been prevented by local planning decisions. To that extent alone, I invite my hon. Friend to consider that there has been a change in circumstances since those commitments were given.

I know that Bromley health authority consulted widely on its new plans at the end of 1988. As well as inviting comments from a number of organisations, it issued a leaflet to every household in the borough, and two public meetings were held. I am advised that the majority of those who responded, including the community health council, local medical and nursing committees, the London borough of Bromley and others supported the proposal.

Under these plans, Orpington hospital would not remain a district general hospital, as the description is commonly understood, so I fully understand why my hon. Friend is opposed to the new plan. He has lobbied strongly for the development of acute services at Orpington hospital, and he has made his views known very strongly tonight.

The building of the new district general hospital will be subject to not only planning approval—my hon. Friend is aware of the complications of securing planning approval for such a major proposal—but to the approval of the Department for this £100 million project. As my hon. Friend will know, the financing elements of that proposal involve what we call unconventional finance—the facility whereby the developers constructing the new hospital will in part, or ideally in whole, be financed from the capital value of sites released from the other hospitals.

In any unconventional finance project, the Department of Health must ensure, as the Treasury would wish, that it represents the best value for money—that is to say, that it is a better deal for the taxpayer than if the health authority had spent taxpayers' money initially on constructing the hospital and subsequently receiving receipts from the vacated sites. I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate that there is some way to go before the proposal is completed.

Although services at Bromley hospital might change, the health authority still sees it as having a very positive role, because 164 in-patient beds would be provided for the younger chronic sick—a service which the district does not currently have—and for elderly and mentally ill patients, including terminal and respite care. The range of out-patient clinics for all the main acute specialties would be increased and improved and would include for the first time an antenatal clinic.

Many new developments in the National Health Service are in community care. Orpington hospital already has a day hospital for the elderly, a day centre for people with Alzheimer's disease and a voluntarily managed hospice. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State hopes shortly to visit the hospice project. The plans for Orpington hospital would build on these community developments by providing day hospitals for the mentally ill and the elderly mentally infirm. The prefabricated wards on the site would be demolished and there would be extensive new developments to supplement services from the modern Canada wing. The health authority feels that these developments would provide the local community with a range of services, particularly out-patient services, within easy access and in modern buildings. As my hon. Friend will know, about 85 per cent. of hospital visits are paid for out-patient services.

My hon. Friend refers to Orpington hospital seeking NHS trust status. He will know that Bromley's managers have expressed interest in forming an acute services trust which would encompass the whole of the district acute services and associated community services. That would eventually comprise the proposed Elmfield site, together with the Orpington and Beckenham sites. This reflects the district's plans, which we have already discussed. I understand that the sponsors of the proposed Bromley trust are now preparing an application to form an NHS trust. They will decide in due course whether formally to apply to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

I fully understand the reasons why my hon. Friend may wish to seek NHS trust status for Orpington hospital in its own right. It is open to any unit to apply for trust status. If a bid is to be successful, it must meet a number of criteria. It must first show how the proposed trust will benefit patients and the local community of the particular unit. If the sponsors decide formally to apply to set up a trust for Orpington hospital, they should demonstrate that the quality of services to the people of Orpington would be enhanced.

An application must also demonstrate that it has suitable leadership and management arrangements and the commitment of key staff. Equally importantly, it must demonstrate that it has the capacity to win and deliver contracts with purchasers of health care; in other words, it must be able to offer quality health care and remain financially viable.

Clearly, it is Bromley's view that the proposed Bromley acute services trust—that is, a trust including the Elmfield site and Orpington hospital—can best achieve those goals and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has agreed that it should prepare an application. However, it would be possible for Orpington hospital to seek trust status separately if there were sufficient support within the unit and the local population, and if it could meet the criteria I have described. My right hon. and learned Friend would then have to decide between the two proposals on their merits as he saw them.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing his views and the views of those whom he represents so clearly to the attention of the House and the Department of Health. I will give him an assurance that if—I stress the word "if" —and when a submission is made to Ministers for the proposed new district general hospital, I or a Minister from the Department of Health will visit Orpington hospital and Bromley health authority specifically on this issue before a final ministerial decision is made.

I am sure that, in the meantime, my hon. Friend will wish to continue his discussions about these matters with the health authority. I hope that he receives an excellent turnout at the public meeting that he has arranged for 10 November to discuss the future of the hospital, and that this debate will help to inform those discussions.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 31 October 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.

To be considered on Thursday 2 November.

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Wednesday 1 November.

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Wednesday 1 November.

NOTTINGHAM PARK ESTATE BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office no later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That the Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[Miss Betty Boothroyd.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 2 November.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

That the Petitions against the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[Miss Betty Boothroyd.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 2 November.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL *[LORDS]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Birmingham City Council (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave, except as provided by these Orders, to suspend further proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration, signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

That, notwithstanding the suspension of other proceedings on the Bill, Standing Order 171A(1) shall apply to the presenting of Petitions against the Bill brought from the Lords in the present Session and only Petitions presented under this Order shall be received as Petitions presented under Standing Order 171A(1);

That any Petitions presented under the foregoing Order shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[Miss Betty Boothroyd.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 2 November.

British Railways Bill

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the British Railways Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[Miss Betty Boothroyd.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 2 November.

Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Bill

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Place) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[Miss Betty Boothroyd.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 2 November.

Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration, signed by them, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office that such a declaration had been so deposited has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

That, no petitions against the Bill having been presented within the time limited within the present Session, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the committee;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[Miss Betty Boothroyd.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 2 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Factory Inspections

1. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to his answer of 28 July, *Official Report*, column *1043*, he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures on factory inspections contained in the letter.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): Yes, Sir.

Mr. Bennett: I congratulate the Minister on trying to hide the figures. Does he accept that the figures show that 20 per cent. of factories and other industrial premises have not been inspected for more than five years? Is that not a disgrace, especially when two people are killed every working day? Under the present Government, the Health and Safety Executive has been cut by about 20 per cent. Is it not high time that the Government gave safety in industry a higher priority, informed management of the existence of the Health and Safety Executive and made the executive really effective?

Mr. Nicholls: Far from being disgraceful, the hon. Gentleman has shown that he does not know the facts which lie behind his supplementary question. He makes the assumption that all premises should be inspected the same number of times. That seems to assume that the dangers inherent in a chemical engineering factory will be same as those in a dressmaking concern. There is a rating system which ensures that inspectors look for trouble to the greatest extent where they are most likely to find it. Far from trying to hide the figures, I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not draw attention to the fact that a letter that I sent to him, containing the information which is to be placed in the Library, showed that the number of preventive inspections had risen by about 20 per cent. since 1985-86.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best inspectors of any factory are the employees, and that the inspectorate always responds to a complaint by employees at a work place so as to ensure that safety is paramount? Surely the responsibility should be on employees to alert inspectors.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is right. The primary responsibility for ensuring proper health and safety in the work force lies with employers and employees. Just as we could not solve crime by putting a policeman on every corner, there is no evidence that we could eliminate accidents by putting an inspector in every work place.

Mr. Strang: Now that I have received a letter from the Secretary of State which it took him three months to write, in which he admits that he has failed to keep his promise to the House to increase the factory and agriculture inspectorates by 40 inspectors by 31 March, will the Minister take the opportunity on behalf of the Government to apologise to the House for failing to keep that promise? When will the Government increase the strength of the factory and agriculture inspectorates by the 40 inspectors promised by 31 March?

Mr. Nicholls: The only apology due to the House arising from the question would be from the hon. Gentleman for the distorted way in which he has presented the figures. The target was 590 factory inspectors in post by April 1990. That has already been achieved, which is hardly surprising as in the past two years the HSE has received all the money for which it bid from central Government. The only point at issue is why the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) have persisted in choosing not to understand the figures.

Mr. Strang: Does the Minister deny what he said?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Following is the information:—

The number of preventive inspection visits paid by the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Factory Inspectorate (FI) to fixed premises in each of the last four planning years is as follows:

Year	*Numbers of Preventive Inspection Visits*
1985-86	50,434
1986-87	54,876
1987-88	59,437
1988-89	60,708

In addition, a substantial number of inspections of transient activities were carried out and visits were also paid to all types of workplaces for other purposes such as accident and complaint investigations, to give advice and to check on shortcomings previously identified.

The HSE records show that of the fixed premises registered with FI in April 1989, 36,234 last had a preventive inspection visit five years ago, 47,974 seven years ago, 17,230 nine years ago and 23,606 11 or more years ago.

YTS

3. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently participating in YTS in Greater London.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Tim Eggar): The latest available figures show that there were 21,500 young people participating in YTS in Greater London.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. What proportion of YTS completers in London go on to full-time employment? Does my hon. Friend agree that YTS provides valuable training for young people?

Mr. Eggar: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. YTS provides extremely valuable training. Some 90 per cent. of all YTS completers in London go on to full-time employment and no fewer than 98 per cent. of all trainees entering the Bexley youth training group in my hon. Friend's constituency have found full-time employment.

Mr. Clelland: How many youngsters suffer from accidents during their training? Will the Minister confirm that the number of accidents among YTS trainees has risen in the past few years and that as many as seven are killed and 500 injured every year under that scheme?

Mr. Eggar: It is true that the number of accidents among YTS employees has risen, but that is because the number of youngsters on YTS has risen significantly. It is clear that young people on YTS are at least as safe, if not more so, as young people in employment generally.

Pay Increases

4. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the trend of pay increases for *(a)* chairs of major companies and *(b)* work forces in major manufacturing companies since 1980.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government do not produce information about pay increases for individual chairmen or work forces of companies. Average earnings of all employees in manufacturing increased by 120 per cent. between August 1980 and August 1989. No reliable information on directors' earnings is readily available. Pay is a matter for businesses to determine in the light of all the relevant circumstances.

Mr. Cousins: In that case, does the Minister accept that it was unfortunate to publish an article in October's Department of Employment *Gazette* which appeared to criticise the justification for some of the large salary increases for individual company chairmen, in particular singling out Lord King of British Airways and FKI Babcock who receives more than £550,000 from his two part-time jobs with those companies? Is not that an entirely unwarranted attack on an honest worker doing his best in the marketplace?

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that Lord King will take great comfort from what the hon. Gentleman says. The Government, including my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, have constantly made it clear that we are against unjustified pay increases. If, in the circumstances, a pay rise can be justified, so be it.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that far too many in the British work force from top to bottom, are besotted with the desire to receive unearned pay increases? Would they not be better employed trying to close the productivity gap which still exists between Britain and some of our major competitors?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend has it exactly. It is remarkable that even after 10 years of a Conservative Government it is still possible for Opposition Members to indulge in a sterile class war every time high salaries are mentioned. If a pay rise can be justified in all the circumstances, that pay rise is a proper one.

Mr. Fatchett: But is it not true that many company directors have this year given themselves increases often running into three figures in percentage points? How can that be justified at a time when the Government insist that ambulance staff, who contribute so much to our society, should have forced upon them an increase below the level of inflation? Why should they take a cut in real wages while the top people are getting such large increases?

Mr. Nicholls: Any company making a decision about what its directors will be paid has to take into account a number of factors. It will have to consider whether a pay rise is necessary to attract staff of the correct calibre and whether the person will make a contribution which will justify his salary. The hon. Gentleman cannot get to grips with the fact that many of the lowly or lower paid employees, whose interests he claims to represent, are better served by having companies run efficiently, and that that costs money at the highest level.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest unemployment figures for the constituency of Basildon and for the same period in each of the last six years.

Mr. Eggar: In September 1983 there were 6,532 unemployed claimants in the parliamentary constituency of Basildon compared with 2,439 in September this year. With permission, I will publish the detailed figures in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Amess: Is my hon. Friend aware that the sign displaying the number of people without work in Basildon has been taken down, although the local Labour party claimed that it fell down as a result of rusty screws? Does he agree that the downward trend of unemployment in Basildon reflects the successes of local businesses, the availability of a willing work force and the underlying strength of the British economy?

Mr. Eggar: I am pleased to congratulate employers and employees in Basildon on the considerable increase in economic activity that has led to many new jobs. If I may dare to make a recommendation to my hon. Friend, I suggest that he offers the council some new screws so that it can publicise the fact that unemployment in Basildon has fallen by more than 30 per cent. in the past year alone.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that the Secretary of State recently advised young people in Basildon and other areas who are presently in receipt of income support or unemployment benefit to refuse offers of jobs if they did not contain a significant training element leading to a qualification? The Secretary of State seems to agree that that is accurate. Is the Minister further aware that under the present regulations if young people refuse jobs they will have their benefit suspended? Did the Secretary of State not think through his comments or was he announcing that the regulations would be changed to allow people to refuse jobs on that basis?

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made it clear that in the 1990s we expect that youngsters will have the choice of moving into full-time education or jobs with training. That is the desire of the Government and of employers.

Following is the information:

In September 1989 there were 2,439 unemployed claimants in the parliamentary constituency of Basildon. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the constituency of Basildon for each September from 1983 to 1988. The figures are affected by the change in the compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording and by the change in the coverage of the count from September 1988 due to the introduction of new benefit regulations for young people aged under 18.

Unemployment in Parliamentary Constituency of Basildon

September	*Number of unemployed claimants*
1983	6,532
1984	7,050
1985	6,634
1986	6,157
1987	5,032
1988	3,495

School-Industry Compacts

6. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of school-industry compacts.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): Forty compacts are being supported by the Training Agency. To date, some 230 schools and more than 30,000 young people are participating in compact arrangements, actively supported by more than 1,000 employers and training providers. By any standards, the initiative has made a very impressive start.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for those encouraging figures. Will he confirm that they apply to urban programme authorities, not to authorities in general, and that there is also merit in compact-like arrangements in other local education authorities, from which employers, schools and businesses may profit?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, Sir. My hon. Friend makes a good point. Compact arrangements, which were introduced only last year, have been targeted at inner-city areas. That is where the priority is, but I believe that such arrangements can be extended elsewhere.

Mr. Morley: I welcome compact agreements, but does the Minister agree that they come nowhere near meeting the increasing skills shortage? Is he aware that more and more industries are saying that the Government are not doing enough to provide support in tackling skills shortages? In particular, employment training does not offer the specialised and relevant training that we need in a modern society.

Mr. Fowler: The question has nothing to do with employment training for the long-term unemployed. We are talking about young people. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support compact arrangements, which have taken off dramatically and provide good training and, above all, opportunities for young people in inner-city areas.

Training and Enterprise Councils

7. **Mr. Coachman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have received development lending; and if he will make a statement.

16. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the progress of the establishement of training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Fowler: Thirty-five prospective training and enterprise councils from all parts of England and Wales have now received development funding, and the first TECs will become operational early next year. When we launched TECs in March, we expected that it would take three to four years to complete the network. We are now far ahead of that schedule—the applications received so far already cover half the working population of England and Wales and the network will be in place by September 1990.

Mr. Coachman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his answer. Will he give every consideration to an application, which I believe is currently before him, for a TEC to be set up in my constituency—or, at least, in the area that covers it? Will he ensure that the scheme places every possible emphasis on long-term retraining for the future and does not become merely a "make-work" scheme? I understand that there is a felicitous partnership between the local authority, the Department and leading employers in the area.

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I think that there is a unity among employers, local authorities and all the other groups involved, and I hope that that unity can be maintained. TECs are there to help with training for both the unemployed and those in employment.

The Kent application to which my hon. Friend has referred was received at the end of October. Our initial reaction is that the proposal is of very high quality, demonstrating a real partnership in the county between leading employers, the local authority and the Training Agency.

Mr. Cran: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that senior industrialists are contributing time to make the concept of TECs a success? I note that although there are four TECs in Yorkshire, there are none in Humberside. Can my right hon. Friend give me some comfort by telling me that Humberside may have one in the future?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I believe that one is in preparation. We certainly hope that that will come about, and we look forward to receiving an application from Humberside.

My hon. Friend is entirely right—TECs are composed of senior industrialists and there is no question about the quality and commitment that those industrialists are showing.

Mr. Madden: Can the Secretary of State tell us whether the TECs, or any other such arrangements, are available to help a group of apprentices in Bradford facing redundancy with a year or more of their apprenticeships to go? They are anxious to complete their training and find themselves in very difficult circumstances. Can the Secretary of State do anything to help those young people?

Mr. Fowler: I shall look into that. Certainly, in principle, there is everything that a TEC can do in such circumstances. That is one of their advantages—they deal essentially with the local labour market. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to study the specific circumstances and come back to him.

Mr. McAllion: The Secretary of State will be aware that the success of bodies such as the Dundee project in turning around the economy of our city in the 1980s has been based on the granting of representation to local authorities, trade unions, central Government and the business community. Why has the hon. Gentleman departed from that successful formula in the establishment of the new training bodies throughout the country?

Mr. Fowler: The Scottish arrangements are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and separate legislation will be needed for that country. I have been describing the position in England and Wales. Overall, however, we want a partnership between all interests at local level.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the training and enterprise initiative. Will he ensure that all the other Government employment services such as jobcentres and training schemes are put fully at the disposal of 200 of my constituents employed at Quality Parts at Fylde who, sadly, have been made redundant and could well benefit from the many services available to enable them to become employed again?

Mr. Fowler: I will certainly ask the employment service to examine the position, and we shall seek to do what we can to alleviate or, indeed, solve the problem.

Ms. Short: Has the Secretary of State seen the CBI report, published this morning, which says that Britain's training is way behind that of the rest of Europe and holding back the progress of the economy? Will he review all the rotten training initiatives that the Government have launched and then give us a proper structure of training so that British people can develop proper skills and the economy can flourish?

Mr. Fowler: It for exactly that kind of reason that the TEC initiative has been launched. I realise that the hon. Lady has been critical of a number of other proposals, but I hope that she will recognise that the TECs involve cross-party agreement and agreement by most people at literally local level. I hope that she will not undertake the kind of activities that she undertook in regard to employment training, which do no service to training or to the unemployed.

Mr. Hind: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the employers, who are in partnership in the training and enterprise councils, are investing about £15 billion in training? Does he agree that the Government's agreement to implement the social contract, the acceptance of minimum wages and no restriction on strikes would result in a loss of jobs and a cut in the budgets which those employers put into training, to the detriment of British industry and British jobs?

Mr. Fowler: I very much agree with all that my hon. Friend has said, but I must point out that there is a later question on the Order Paper on that point.

Creche Facilities

8. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research his Department has carried out regarding the impact of the lack of creche and similar facilities for children aged under five years on female unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Department has funded a number of research projects which have looked into child care and female unemployment. We are currently sponsoring research into the many issues that surround women's decisions to return to work after childbirth.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that this country has an appalling record and that of the 12 European Community countries we have the lowest level of provision apart from Portugal? Is he aware that a survey of 100 industrial companies carried out last month by *The Daily Telegraph*, showed that only six provided child care facilities? By 1992, when the Single European Act comes into force, we shall be unable to meet the target.

Mr. Eggar: I certainly do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. We have the second highest level of female participation in the work force throughout the European Community and 85 per cent. of all children under five have some kind of pre-school provision such as creches, play schools or nursery schools. That is a record of which we can and should be proud.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend accept that I believe, as do many other hon. Members, that it was entirely wise for the Department to wait and see what private sector initiatives would be called into being to provide creche and other facilities for women wishing to enter the employment market? Does he also accept that in view of the wide range of perks and tax-deductible expenses which operate for a large number of other purposes the Department should look closely at the tax position of facilities which make it possible for women to return to the labour market?

Mr. Eggar: I understand my hon. Friend's concern, but he should not underestimate the considerable amount of child care provision of one kind or another that is already available. I will refer his comments to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Ms. Primarolo: When will the Minister accept that we have the worst child care provision for under-fives in the European Community? Why do the Government persist in pretending that they wish women to return to the paid labour market when the biggest barrier to their return is the lack of provision for the under-fives? When will the Minister stop thinking about it and start providing those facilities?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Lady obviously was not listening. We have the second highest level of female participation in the work force in the European Community. Almost one in three women with children under five have jobs because they want to have jobs. Other women decide that they do not want to work when they have children under five. They should be free to make that choice.

Mrs. Peacock: Will my hon. Friend congratulate companies which already provide creche facilities and those which are embarking on the provision of even further creche facilities to welcome back women who wish to return to work, especially the big banks which are very active in this area?

Mr. Eggar: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. There have been a number of important initiatives. The Civil Service is also seeking to lead the way with a number of imaginative schemes. It is important that employers should provide facilities for child care for their women employees.

Wages Councils

9. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what initiatives he plans to take to strengthen the work of the wages councils in relation to the enforcement of wage levels.

Mr. Nicholls: The level of compliance with wages orders is very high and no new initiatives are contemplated.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister accept that increasing numbers of people are now unprotected and working for a pittance? Does he not accept that the work of wages councils is supported by responsible employers and responsible employers' organisations? Will he not extend the work of wages councils to deal with irresponsible employers, including those who seem to have the ear of the Government?

Mr. Nicholls: No. Obviously that is one of the views that has been put to the Government in the review of the wages councils. There is also a substantial body of evidence that the effect of organisations such as the wages councils is to destroy jobs. At the end of the day, the hon. Gentleman has to consider whether low pay is better than no job.

Mr. Marlow: What effect would the social charter, aptly named in one of today's newspapers as the strikers' charter, have on the bureaucratic interventions which my hon. Friend has done so much to do away with?

Mr. Nicholls: Its effect would certainly not be beneficial.

Labour Mobility

10. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the measures he has introduced to encourage mobility of labour.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department is active in encouraging mobility of labour. We are working at improving the supply of information about job vacancies in other areas, for instance with the initiative announced the week before last to publish vacancies on ITV's teletext service. In addition, the travel-to-interview scheme provides assistance to unemployed people who apply for jobs outside their home area.

Mr. French: What initiatives is my hon. Friend's Department taking to seek to synchronise employment opportunity with housing availability? Is he aware that job applicants from other parts of the country for vacancies in Gloucester are unable to fill those vacancies because of the lack of housing at a price that they can afford?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend draws attention to a very real concern. I certainly would not undervalue the travel-to-interview scheme. However, my hon. Friend is right that housing plays a very important part in the disincentive to mobility. My hon. Friend may be aware of the national mobility scheme and the tenants exchange scheme which are operated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Furthermore, the business expansion scheme introduced in the last Budget was used as a vehicle to encourage people to provide more rented accommodation. There are a number of initiatives and my hon. Friend was entirely right to draw attention to the fact that there is no single solution.

Mr. Beggs: I notice that the Minister accepts no responsibility for encouraging the 45,000 to 50,000 citizens of the Irish Republic who move to Great Britain and elsewhere annually to come over here. Can he tell us what analysis is being carried out of such large numbers of citizens of the Irish Republic moving to the mainland, and their impact, if any, on the unemployment registers?

Mr. Nicholls: The mobility to which the hon. Gentleman draws attention has been going on for many years. The question concerns the initiatives being taken by the Government to encourage mobility, and that is what we have addressed.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Has not the Government's extremely successful right-to-buy policy been very helpful in assisting mobility of labour? Was not that policy specifically resisted, root and branch, by the Opposition who were converted only very late in the day?

Mr. Nicholls: Of course my hon. Friend is right, but obviously any sensible initiative on these matters will be opposed by the Opposition. I do not think that my hon. Friend should be too surprised about that.

Mr. Cryer: Is not the Minister presented with a credibility gap when he tries to claim that the Government are increasing mobility of labour when they cancelled the grant aid system some three years ago so that poor families who want to get off the dole and get a job outside their areas have to depend on money from charity, as a constituent of mine did to cover the costs of removal? When will the Government do something about that?

Mr. Nicholls: As I have already said to the House, the travel-to-interview scheme provides assistance for those people who need help with interview expenses, including overnight accommodation if that is what they need to take up a particular job possibility. If the hon. Gentleman has a specific case where he feels that the scheme is not working, obviously he can contact me and I shall be more than happy to look into it.

EC Social Charter

11. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding the progress of the European social charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: I have received a number of representations.

At the European Council in Madrid, it was agreed unanimously that the top priority of the Community in the social area should be job creation and development. In addition, any proposals should take full account of different national practice. Action should be taken at national level unless there are demonstrable benefits to be gained from action at Community level. The Government do not believe that the present draft charter takes sufficient account of those agreements.

Mr. Colvin: Has my right hon. Friend seen the headlines in today's newspapers which say that Britain is isolated over the social charter? Does he agree that that is hardly surprising given that we are so far ahead of our European partners—*[Interruption.]*—in creating new jobs and reducing unemployment? Should not our European partners be following our lead in not increasing but reducing burdens on employers who want to expand and create new jobs?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is correct. At the meeting of the Social Affairs Council yesterday, there was no doubt that a range of countries had reservations about the social charter. There is no question but that unemployment has fallen faster in Britain than in any other European country. It currently stands below the European average, and below that in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Ireland, Greece and Italy. We believe that the social dimension should be about jobs and that the social charter simply does not live up to that. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a background of chatter this afternoon. It is very difficult to hear questions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is there not a strange inconsistency in the position of Cabinet Ministers, who parade their Euro-virility and credentials around the country while they stand aside and watch the Secretary of State sabotage and undermine the perfectly excellent principles behind the social charter? Is it not about time that some of them developed a little backbone and vision?

Mr. Fowler: For good reason, the social charter is opposed by the entire Government on the ground that it simply does not live up to the aspirations that it puts forward. The Government are certainly in favour of a social dimension, by which we mean new jobs and the reduction of unemployment. The social charter will not achieve either of those objectives.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that since the end of the second world war we have had enough of this nonsense about signing pieces of paper and charters, most of which came from the last Labour Government but produced little? They resulted in inflation, unemployment and ghastly problems. We do not want such problems from Europe. More people are in work now than under the regime of the last Labour Government.

Mr. Fowler: The charter covers a range of subjects, such as minimum wages, holiday periods and the unqualified right to strike, all of which will have detrimental effects on employment in Britain. That has not been denied by the European Commissioner in Brussels. The only question is how many jobs it will cost, not whether it will cost jobs.

Mr. Wallace: Although the social charter may not be entirely perfect, why does not the Secretary of State try to build on its many good aspects and make constructive criticism rather than being negative? He recently made points about provision for young people, so will he explain what is wrong with the prohibition of full-time work for people under 15, the special health and safety regulations for people in work under the age of 18 and the establishing of quotas for employing people with handicaps?

Mr. Fowler: There are a range of measures, of which health and safety is one, with which we agree. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to say that we have not played a constructive role in the debate. We have played a constructive role, and talks will continue. I should not wish to deceive the House because I believe that there are a number of fundamental defects in the charter, which I hope can be solved.

Mr. Knapman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that most matters are better left to market forces rather than any social or Socialist charter?

Mr. Fowler: The regulations set out in the charter will not achieve what all hon. Members want. The House deceives itself if it believes that the social charter will be good for employment or will reduce unemployment in Britain. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I again appeal to the House to listen to employment questions, which are important, and are of some concern to other hon. Members.

Mr. Meacher: Does the right hon. Gentleman still think, like the Prime Minister, that the Euro social charter is the product of Marxism and the class struggle? If so, why has it now been agreed by every other Right-wing Government in Europe? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that under this Government British workers now have the worst industrial conditions in Europe, with no minimum wage, no protection against arbitrary dismissal and no right to participate in decisions at the workplace? After Madrid and Kuala Lumpur, is this not yet another example of the Government and the Prime Minister being completely isolated and manifestly out of touch with public opinion here and abroad?

Mr. Fowler: I must point out that only a couple of years ago the hon. Gentleman was running for office by supporting a proposal for Britain to come out of the Common Market altogether. *[Interruption.]* Yes, he was. If the hon. Gentleman disagrees with that, I shall give him the reference. In the *Labour Herald* of 24 September 1982, the hon. Gentleman said—*[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Gentleman change his principles every five years? The fact —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister has a right to reply, but I hope that he will be brief.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the social charter will not create jobs. It will destroy jobs and create unemployment. The hon. Gentleman should be opposed to the charter as it stands.

Mr. Raison: Although I accept that there is much in the social charter as it stands that is questionable, are there not other elements in it that are rather good, for instance, the right not to join a trade union?

Mr. Fowler: Indeed. There is a basis of proposals which we believe could be used for a social charter. Our objection is not to a social charter in all circumstances but to this kind of social charter.

Manifold Industries, Leyton

12. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will review current employment laws as they relate to the threatened dismissal of staff without compensation in the light of the dispute at Manifold Industries, Leyton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: There is no obligation on any party in an industrial dispute to inform the Government about the dipute, or action which may be taken in connection with it. On the basis of such information as is available about this particular dispute, however, there appears to be no reason to change any aspect of current industrial relations law.

Mr. Cohen: Does the Minister agree that the management of Manifold Industries has treated its workers shabbily? After its initial intimidatory action, the management has avoided all negotiations, including those via the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. The management is using Tory industrial relations law to avoid paying proper compensation, while it clears the decks to make a fortune in a future, speculative sell-out. Is not sacking workers without compensation an appalling use of Tory industrial relations law, which should be changed?

Mr. Nicholls: It is not up to me to pass judgment on any of the matters which the hon. Gentleman raises. If his allegations are true, the workers have remedies open to them for unfair dismissal, when they may go before an industrial tribunal, or for breach of contract, when they may go before a civil court.

Training

14. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how his Department intends to increase the training of workers in the private sector.

Mr. Eggar: Training and enterprise councils in England and Wales and local enterprise companies in Scotland will ensure that private sector employers lead Britain's training effort into the 1990s. They will increase employer commitment to training and will use private and public resources. In particular, they will support employers through business growth training.

Mr. McAvoy: That answer is astounding. Given that private sector employers are spending less than £4 billion a year directly on training, is it wise for the Government to hand over the control and direction of training to the very people who have shown no interest in training?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is taking a blinkered and inaccurate view. Employers are spending £18 billion on training, not the amount that the hon. Gentleman quoted. The move towards TECs in England and Wales and LECs in Scotland has been widely supported by all sectors of the community.

Tourism

15. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate for the numbers employed in the Yorkshire tourism industry and the value generated for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the form requested, but it is estimated that in June 1989 the number of employees in employment in the hotel and catering industry in Yorkshire and Humberside was 96,000. It is estimated that overseas and domestic visitors staying in the Yorkshire and Humberside tourist board region for one night or more spent a total of £654 million in 1988.

Mr. Gregory: Will my hon. Friend confirm that this is Britain's fastest growth industry and that it is not enhanced by Socialist smears about it being a Mickey Mouse industry? Will he hold urgent discussions with the Secretary of State for Education and Science about the possibility of having more training programmes to enable more youngsters to enter this great industry?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely right in what he says. A sector which can produce £19 billion and 38,000 jobs a year does not justify the description given to it by the Labour party.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 October.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Latham: While continuing to implement the policies which have been approved by the electorate on three occasions, will my right hon. Friend confirm that successful Governments must always be responding and listening to the real aspirations of the people?

The Prime Minister: Yes. That is why under the 10-year policies of Conservative Governments we have created more wealth than ever before, have spread it more widely than ever before, have a higher standard of living than ever before, have higher standards of social services than ever before and have a higher reputation abroad than ever before. Yes, we have indeed been listening. I believe that those are the real aspirations of the British people.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister now explain why she did not do the one thing that would have kept her Chancellor—sack her adviser?

The Prime Minister: As I said last week, advisers are there to advise and must advise honestly and freely. Ministers are there to decide. That is the way this Government do things.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister is being less than frank with the House and the country—*[Interruption.]* Does she recall that she said that she did everything possible to dissuade the Chancellor? Is not the real truth that she deliberately refused to do the one thing that would have kept him in office, which was to sack the man who, with her concurrence, was constantly undermining the Chancellor and his policy position on managing the currency?

The Prime Minister: The Chancellor's position is unassailable—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: In this party, Ministers decide and advisers only advise.

Mr. Kinnock: If what the Prime Minister has said is really true, may I ask her to explain why the former Chancellor had to write:

> "Recent events have confirmed that this essential requirement cannot be satisfied so long as Alan Walters remains your personal adviser."

Did he make that up after he had spoken to the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: Nonsense. The position is precisely as I have set it out many times. Advisers are free to advise honestly. Ministers decide—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman will remember that neither Mr. Kaldor nor Mr. Balogh were exactly shrinking violets.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to confirm that although high interest rates are a temporary agony, to have savings destroyed and the financial working capital of every small company destroyed by inflation is a permanent and not a temporary destruction of their ability to live on trade reasonably?

The Prime Minister: Yes. My hon. Friend has put it perfectly. It was a destruction of savings and investment under the Labour Government that lost them the complete confidence of this country. Under us, savings have kept their value. That is why we put the diminution of inflation as our top priority and we shall continue to do so.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister realise that her lonely hostility to Europe has cost her four Cabinet Ministers and will cost Britain lost opportunities, lost wealth and lost prosperity in the future? How much more are we all going to have to pay for the triumph of a personal obsession over the national interest?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will read the Bruges speech properly, when he will see that half the history of this country has been bound up with Europe. It is not hostility to Europe. We believe in Europe, but a Europe based on a free economy—a deregulated Europe with freedom under a rule of law, not a regulated bureaucracy dictating to this House from Brussels.

Mr. Gale: Has my right hon. Friend noticed the underlying confidence of the money markets in her Government's economic policy? Has she had time to contrast that with the best efforts of the Leader of the Opposition to talk sterling down?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The money markets have remained stable in spite of the efforts of the Leader of the Opposition to talk the pound down. He did not succeed. Confidence in this Government was sufficient to hold the markets.

Q2. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Redmond: Following the disclosure in the leaked documents about the devastating effects of the privatisation of the electricity industry on the mining industry, will the right hon. Lady reconsider her attitude and not use the payroll vote to force the Bill through?

The Prime Minister: The contracts between the electricity industry and the coal industry are still under negotiation. The hon. Gentleman is aware that in the past 10 years, we have spent about £2 million every working day on investment in the coal mines. That should enable many of them to be highly competitive in the coal that they produce and to supply highly competitive coal to the electricity industry. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not wish to pay more for electricity than necessary and will be keen for coal to be competitive.

Mr. Butcher: Further to the point made by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), does my right hon. Friend agree that if Britain were prematurely to join the exchange rate mechanism at a time when German interest rates are 7 per cent. below our own, British borrowers might avoid the domestic constraints and borrow with impunity from Germany, thus increasing the money supply and frustrating the fight against inflation?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The conditions under which we shall join the exchange rate mechanism—we already belong to the European monetary system, of course—were laid down and agreed at Madrid. They are specified in stage I of the Delors report—*[Interruption.]* Of course the Opposition do not want the truth. It gets in their way. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must have an opportunity to reply.

The Prime Minister: The conditions are specified in stage I of the Delors report which provides for completion of the internal market, abolition of all foreign exchange controls, full implementation of a free market in financial services and the strengthening of the Community's competition policy. In those circumstances and provided that inflation in Britain has been brought down significantly, as we intend, the conditions would clearly exist for sterling to join the exchange rate mechanism. That is precisely what was laid down at Madrid and agreed by everyone.

Q3. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McFall: Despite the traumatic events of last week and the removal of her most formidable opponent from the Cabinet, the Prime Minister has declared business as usual. Can we take it therefore that she will not be recommending to her Cabinet the advice of Mayor Ed Koch of New York who said, "If you agree with me on nine out of 12 issues, support me, but if you agree with me on 12 out of 12 issues, see your psychiatrist"?

The Prime Minister: We do things rather differently this side of the Atlantic.

Q4. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. King: Can my right hon. Friend cast her mind back to 1979 when after five years of Socialism the Chrysler car business was sold to Peugeot-Talbot for 66p after 700 strikes in 1978? Is my right hon. Friend aware that after the past eight or nine years Peugeot is now making a profit of £100 million a year and producing more cars than ever? Does that not say more for Conservative Governments and nothing at all for Socialism?

The Prime Minister: Yes. As I said in reply to the first question this afternoon, under this Government wealth has been created and spread ever more widely. Under the last Labour Government, the Labour party took us to the IMF—bankrupt.

Mr. Healey: Does the Prime Minister agree with Lord Hailsham who said this weekend, speaking with all the authority of a former Lord Chancellor who had served for many years in the Prime Minister's Cabinet, that for the Prime Minister to use her press officers to undermine her colleagues was not only disloyal, but dishonourable? Will she now stop that?

The Prime Minister: This was a comment from my noble Friend. I was surprised at it and I was very surprised that he made it. It is totally untrue and in any case, I would never take it from the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), whose only adviser was the IMF.

Q5. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. MacKay: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be a cruel deception to suggest that there is some painless way to bring down inflation and that if credit controls were introduced today, they would prove to be quite ineffective due to the international nature of the banking and financial markets?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The point was made effectively in the last debate on economic affairs when my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) dealt very well with the issue of credit controls. They will not work in the modern world with a free and open banking system. In an earlier debate, a former Treasury Minister in a Labour Government said:

"The Labour Party idea that you can have credit controls is rubbish. There is no way you can control credit except by controlling the price of credit, and the price of credit is Bank Rate."

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Prime Minister aware that in a tragic car accident last week in Coventry, the firefighters cut the cars apart, the police directed the traffic and an ambulance worker was upside down for two hours in that car infusing blood to the victim? How then this morning can Duncan Nichol say that the ambulance workers do not deserve parity with the other services? When will the Prime Minister stop chasing ambulances down to places like Clapham and King's Cross and praising ambulance workers and then treating them like dirt as she does now?

The Prime Minister: We all praise ambulance workers for their work and do not use them cheaply as the hon. Gentleman has done. Their pay claim, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, is being negotiated and I most earnestly hope that they will keep emergency cover until the negotiations are complete.

Q7. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the valuable contribution that is made to environmental protection by recycling—*[Interruption.]* Will she ensure that, under the forthcoming environmental protection Bill the work of the recycler is not interrupted by misleading definitions of waste?

The Prime Minister: Yes. Recycling, in all its forms, makes a great contribution to the economy, and we at No. 10 Downing street have introduced recycled paper.

Jaguar PLC

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Ridley.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order after the statement.

Mr. Ashton: It is on this matter, Mr. Speaker.

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on Jaguar PLC.

Jaguar's articles of association contain clauses preventing any individual or concert party from holding an interest in more than 15 per cent. of the company's shares. This is backed by the Government's special share which requires my written consent for changes in certain parts of the articles until they lapse on 31 December 1990 when the special share itself is due to be redeemed. Any such change in the articles would, besides my consent, also require the passing of a special resolution by shareholders in general meeting.

These provisions of the company's articles were put into place to preserve Jaguar's independence in its formative years as a free-standing company and so allow its management to concentrate on developing the business without the constant distraction of unwelcome takeover bids. In recent months, however, I understand that the chairman of Jaguar has been talking to a number of companies that are interested in forming links with Jaguar. There is a widespread perception that the company's financial and technological base needs strengthening in this way.

The restrictions on shareholdings entrenched by the Government's special share are now clearly causing uncertainties about the company's future by prompting speculation over how my powers may be exercised, so distorting the basis on which all parties involved have to reach their decisions. I have accordingly told the Jaguar management that, if shareholders pass a special resolution by the requisite 75 per cent. majority amending the ownership provisions of the articles, I shall be ready also to give my consent.

I am clear that it is in the best interests of Jaguar's management, shareholders and work force for the company's future to be assured and the present climate of uncertainty resolved as quickly as possible. I have no doubt that the Jaguar board will continue to pursue its discussions with interested parties, and assess proposals, with the aim of recommending to the shareholders the solution that it believes to be in the best interests of the company as a whole.

This statement paves the way for shareholders, with the advice of the board, to reach their own view on the options which may be available. The Government's role will henceforth be confined to consideration in the normal way of the competition policy aspects of any change in Jaguar's ownership.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I begin by welcoming the Secretary of State to the Dispatch Box and to his new responsibilities, but may I link that welcome with an expression of concern that, at his first appearance, he may well have lent himself to what looks suspiciously like a tactical device designed to delay the beginning of the important debate which is about to start? I commiserate with him that his first task is to announce the dispatch of yet another major British company—another victim of the Government's destructive policy towards manufacturing. His task is also to signal the disappearance of the last vestige of what had remained of the independent British car industry.

Does the Secretary of State agree that Jaguar remains and must remain a vital centre of engineering excellence of huge importance to the west midlands and that it is essential that it should remain a west midlands-based car manufacturing company with as much operational independence as possible?

Why, then, has the right hon. Gentleman so evidently abdicated his responsibilities in making this statement today? Who asked him to give up the golden share? What does it mean for other golden shares in other privatised companies? Is there now to be an open season on all golden shares? Does he not recognise that the end result of the market free-for-all which, in effect, he has announced will be that the Jaguar badge will be placed on cars designed and engineered elsewhere and that Jaguar will simply be swallowed up by one or other multinational with no guarantees or assurances whatsoever? Why did the Secretary of State not use his golden share to negotiate proper assurances from General Motors, Ford, Daimler or whomever else may be bidding while he still had a negotiating card in his hand? What is the point of putting a golden share into place if he dispenses with it as soon as it might serve a useful purpose?

Does the Secretary of State accept that his statement offers the clearest possible contrast between the irresponsibility of his Government and the proper concern that the next Labour Government will show for Britain's manufacturing base? Does he accept that his statement is a signal that, once again, market forces, for ideological reasons, will be allowed to deliver an important British enterprise to foreign predators? Does he further accept that the golden share is a charade, and that this is a black day for the west midlands and for the British car industry?

Mr. Ridley: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks. He wrote to me on 20 September, stating:

> "If Jaguar do indeed need the financial and investment assistance to be obtained from becoming part of a larger group, does the Government have any other (and better) solution to offer? If not, may it not be better to help to bring the matter to a conclusion as soon as is reasonably possible, rather than insisting on prolonging the uncertainty until the expiry of the golden share?"

Even when I try to respond to the hon. Gentleman's request to bring the uncertainty to an end, he is grudging in his acceptance. The hon. Gentleman also seemed to say that he understands the need for a strong group to go into some form of partnership with Jaguar, which is what I said in my statement. All that I am doing now is to clear the way so that the playing field is level betweeen all contestants and so that there is no doubt or confusion about what the Government might do in the event of a takeover bid or of other proposals being put to the shareholders.

I agree that Jaguar has done remarkably well and that it is a vital centre of engineering in the west midlands. However, I believe that it will continue to do much better still if it is allowed to find its future with a strong partner, which is what the board is now discussing with various people. I believe that that is therefore in the interests of the company.

No one has asked me to make this statement. I have made it because I want to make it quite clear what the ground rules are as the board begins to discuss the options before it. It would not be either right or possible for me to use the golden share to negotiate assurances of the sort that the hon. Gentleman has suggested—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] First, because it is for the board to decide the best way to safeguard the interests of the company and to recommend that to shareholders; secondly, because the golden share comes to an end at the end of next year and I would then be in no position whatsoever if a bid developed in a year or even two months from now.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): As one who has a fair number of Jaguar workers in his constituency, may I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement? However, although the company needs extra finance—and this is a realistic approach—will my right hon. Friend always bear in mind the need to maintain the integrity of a major name in the British car industry?

Mr. Ridley: I very much agree with what my hon. Friend says. The statement will clear the way for the management to advise its shareholders on the best long-term future for the continued expansion and prosperity of this excellent company.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Does the Secretary of State remember, at an earlier stage in his successful career, when it was said at the time of the privatisation of Jaguar that such a course was necessary to free the company from the embrace of a large conglomerate? In the light of today's announcement, how can such an objective be met? Will anyone other than Sir John Egan and his board benefit from this latest betrayal of British manufacturing industry?

Mr. Ridley: I have no memory of what I said then. I would have thought that the large conglomerate to which the hon. Gentleman referred was the highly unsuccessful and bankrupt British Leyland that the Government inherited. Perhaps to fall into partnership with a strong and prosperous company might be much more helpful for the company than its association with its previous partners.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): Does my right hon. Friend genuinely believe—I seek his reassurance—that this co-operation with another company will lead to more jobs both at Jaguar and, with the knock-on effect, at components manufacturers?

Mr. Ridley: I would be guided by the board in that matter, but I think that the board is talking with several people, all of whom would wish to expand and to improve the company, and to make sure that the company has in future the stability that the board evidently thinks it does not have, and will not have unless some solution is found.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Does the Secretary of State not understand that, by abandoning the independence of Jaguar, he is putting at risk jobs in the car body plant in my constituency, as well as up to 50,000 jobs among the 2,000 local suppliers to the Castle Bromwich plant? Does he not understand that, unless this country retains a strong, large and independent car sector, our economy, long term, cannot prosper?

Mr. Ridley: First, nothing that I have said means that the company will not remain independent if that is what the board and the shareholders decide. It is up to them. They have perfectly respectable options that will leave them independent, but it is for them to decide, not me. Secondly I do not agree that this statement does anything to put jobs at risk, as the hon. Gentleman suggests. The statement safeguards existing jobs, and gives the possibility that there will be many more jobs if a successful agreement is reached.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Are not the Opposition ignoring the facts that the Jaguar board was engaged in negotiation with other companies, and that it could not possibly be in the interests of any purchaser to do other than keep Jaguar as a separate marque and to expand its production to compete with BMW and Mercedes?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right. I quote again from the second letter from the hon. Member for Dagenham, of 18 October, when he said:

> "The worst thing that could happen would be to create the maximum uncertainty through a Government refusal to express a view, with the result that the situation was put on ice until the end of 1990, but was then followed by a free-for-all in which the outcome would be uncertain and no assurances would be obtained."

That seems to me to be exactly what we are doing and exactly what my hon. Friend asked us to do.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Secretary of State not aware of the heightened insecurity among many of thousands of my constituents who work for Jaguar and associated component suppliers, that will result from his announcement? Does he not realise the danger of the starting pistol that he has just fired for an auction among Ford, General Motors, Daimler-Benz and possibly other companies, which means that the higher the share price to the eventual victor, the higher the rate of return that it will want to squeeze out of the Jaguar work force, in order to make a profit? If the Secretary of State does not want the golden share, why does he not give it to the work force so that the workers can decide if, with whom or when they want a merger to take place?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is misinformed. The Jaguar trade unions came to see my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and pressed on him the importance of clearing up the uncertainty so that they could see the company's future.

Mr. Nellist: They wanted the extension of the golden share.

Mr. Ridley: No, they said the uncertainty was what was worrying them. Today I have removed that uncertainty, so the matter can now be resolved.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the period of uncertainty has been unsettling for my constituents, and that they will support his intention to reduce it or eliminate it? Is he aware also that, far from this being a black day, it is a day on which we know that each of the two bidders is prepared to put hundreds of millions of pounds of new investment into Coventry? Is he further aware that each has given

[Mr. John Butcher]

commitments that research and development, part development and corporate control will remain in Coventry? Will he play his hand to reassure my constituents that the company management's objectives are also his objectives?

Mr. Ridley: When we had a Labour Government, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had to come to the House to announce closures, cuts and major setbacks in our industrial life. The House should be pleased that I am able to report that a highly successful privatised company is making arrangements to provide extra investment and extra jobs for the benefit of the west midlands and the country as a whole. I believe that to be the position, and I am sure that the Jaguar board does too.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Will the Secretary of State elaborate on his lack of consultation with the board? Did he consult the board and management of Jaguar before taking this decision? He must be aware that they have been attempting to preserve the independence of the Jaguar car company, and that the signal that he will give to the market today will be a go-ahead for a full attempt to achieve a takeover? Does he not recognise the difference between being the best man at a wedding and throwing a car company to the jackals on the stock market?

Mr. Ridley: No, Sir, it would have been wrong for the Government to consult the management. The ultimate decision is for the shareholders. I informed the management so that the statement did not take it by surprise. It is for the Government to decide what it should do in relation to the golden share and to make it clear to all who might be interested in Jaguar what the rules of the game are. I was asked to clear up the uncertainty, and that is what I have done. I do not believe that what I have announced precludes a solution which leaves Jaguar in the hands of its present shareholders. If that is the solution which the board recommends, and the shareholders accept it, it should be adopted.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware that General Motors has been in this country for nigh on 65 years, that Ford has been here for over 75 years, and that both companies are excellent United Kingdom citizens that have maintained a steady rate of investment in the United Kingdom? Is he further aware that Ford owns Aston Martin and that General Motors owns Lotus? Both British companies have retained their independence, and Lotus has a brand new sports car that is attracting orders from throughout the world, thus ensuring increased output at its factory in Norfolk. Is this not the way forward in an increasingly world-dominated motor industry? The only way in which Jaguar can gain the resources that are necessary to double and treble production is to work in partnership with some of the large companies.

Mr. Ridley: I believe that my hon. Friend has the spirit of the next decade absolutely right. I do not believe that a narrow xenophobic attitude is the way for the United Kingdom to prosper, especially when it is entering the single market of Europe, when competitiveness will be the key to success. I agree that both Ford and General Motors have had an excellent investment record in Britain over many years. Indeed, they kept many jobs going during the difficult years when we had a Labour Government, who brought the country to the brink of bankruptcy.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Given that a few years ago the Prime Minister was trying to take the credit for the success of Jaguar, does the Secretary of State accept now that the Prime Minister's economic policies are responsible for the company's difficulties?

Mr. Ridley: No, Sir, I do not. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in the Chamber to take the credit for the next stage in the success of Jaguar.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that most of us realise that Jaguar need many hundreds of millions of pounds for the next generation of cars? Does he accept also that Jaguar is one of those names that is tremendously important to the United Kingdom, as Rolls-Royce was, which had to be helped at one time? Will he assure the House that, when a bid is made, which seems highly likely, by one of three people, he will consider when he calls it in what is for the long-term benefit of manufacturing capacity and not only investment in this country?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend says, but I do not think that I am in a position to call in any bid, let alone all the bids. It will be for the majority of shareholders—75 per cent.—to make any final decision. However, I assure my hon. Friend that I agree entirely with what he said about the importance of the Jaguar badge. Anybody who seeks to buy or to make a partnership with that company will want to preserve that unique asset and to make the most of it and its reputation as a major midlands engineering company.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Does the right hon. Gentleman think that it is proper for him as Secretary of State to express any views at all on the matter as requested by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)? For example, would he express the view that the integrity of Jaguar cannot be maintained if ultimate corporate ownership disappears 3,000 to 5,000 miles away? Now that Jaguar is into play and up for sale, is it right, when he is writing the rules of the game—"the game", as he said—that he should express a view that Jaquar should maintain all its current purchases within the United Kingdom as a percentage, with no further imports from any multinational being brought in to put British workers out of a job?

On a technical point, bearing in mind the fact that the right hon. Gentleman was not asked to make the statement, and so that we know to whom to direct our complaints about what has happened in the past half hour, who gave him permission to take up Opposition day time for the statement?

Mr. Ridley: I am happy to venture a view, as I was asked to do by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), and my view is that I do not agree. I do not agree that control of the company will necessarily go overseas and, if control of the company does go overseas, it is in the best interests of those who control it to expand and to improve its performance here in Britain.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that enormous credit should go to the management and work force of Jaguar for the great progress that they have made since the company was privatised? A company only wants to co-operate with a successful firm, not an unsuccessful one, and the fact that Jaguar is now being courted by two big groups is good for its future. My right hon. Friend is right to remove the uncertainty and let them know what their future is, and I am sure that it will be more secure within a big firm.

Mr. Ridley: I entirely join with my hon. Friend in paying credit to the management and work force for a magnificent revival since they were freed from the shackles of public ownership by privatisation. It is perfectly possible that in the near future some company could make a bid for Jaguar. If that went to general meeting, as it would have to do, and 75 per cent. of the shareholders voted in favour of that bid, the question whether we would waive the golden share would arise in an acute form at that moment. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that it is better to make the announcement now, before that happens, rather than to leave everybody in a state of uncertainty, even up to the last minute when the company meets in general meeting.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does the Secretary of State appreciate that all those who said at the time that Jaguar was privatised that it was too small to stand on its own have been proved right? Does he also understand that today he has shown loyalty to market forces rather than to the British motor industry and its employees? Having taken away the golden share, he now has no control over whether research and development stay in Britain, and the employees have no voice. Is he not giving a disgraceful first performance at the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Ridley: The golden share never gave any Government control over matters such as the location of plants, research and development and the development of new models, and it would have been quite wrong to use the golden share, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, to try to achieve such a result. That is not at all the case. In any event, the golden share would have expired in a year's time. As the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) suggested, it was pointless to let that year go on with uncertainty and confusion reigning until the Government showed their hand. I am sure that I have done a service in doing that now.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): May a Back Bencher who was once an engineer ask the Secretary of State who is an experienced qualified engineer whether the truth of the matter is not that the Japanese have moved into the market that Jaguar once shared with Porsche and BMW and that it needs the capital which only an enormous American firm can supply if it is not only to hold its position for a few years but to dominate the market that it created by the development of new engines and new models year after year?

Mr. Ridley: As one engineer to another, I strongly agree with my hon. Friend that in this highly competitive world it is necessary to make massive investments to stay ahead of the game. If Jaguar finds a solution which does that, it will be to its advantage.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to have regard to the business on the Order Paper, which, as the House knows, is an Opposition day debate. I shall call two more hon. Members from each side before the Front Bench spokesman, but then we must move on.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does not potential foreign ownership inevitably raise the possibility that manufacturing will move away from the United Kingdom, whether from Coventry or elsewhere? What safeguards have been provided or obtained for components suppliers, such as Hepworth and Grandage in Bradford, which is a major piston supplier to Jaguar? Do not all such questions arise from the ownership of the golden share? Is not to abandon the golden share to abandon all safeguards on investment, employment, model development and the retention of jobs in the United Kingdom? Does not the Secretary of State at the Dispatch Box today represent the funeral directors of motor manufacturing in Britain?

Mr. Ridley: No, the golden share does not allow any Government to take account of the matters that the hon. Gentleman has raised. I am convinced that the best prospect for the many components suppliers, including the one he mentioned, will be to have a strong, prosperous and expanding Jaguar. To allow Jaguar to find a solution is the best way of helping it.

Mr. Graham Bright (Luton, South): Although I accept that the decision can be made only in the free market by shareholders, will my right hon. Friend actively consider encouraging shareholders and other people involved in the decision to take into account the components market—many components are supplied to Jaguar by General Motors—and the prospect of General Motors bringing a brand new engine plant to this country which would work with Jaguar and Vauxhall in Luton?

Mr. Ridley: I share my hon. Friend's anxiety that suppliers to Jaguar everywhere should expand and have opportunities to increase sales. That is far more likely to be assured by allowing Jaguar to strengthen itself, if it can find a way of doing so, than by pursuing a narrow, restrictive policy which could not help the company in future.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Despite his insulting remarks about British Leyland, does the Secretary of State recall that, in June 1984, the Trade and Industry Select Committee unanimously recommended against hiving off Jaguar? In the light of all that has happened since then, does he think that the decision to push that small company into the hard competitive world without the resources of a large organisation behind it, has proved to be in the best long-term interests either of Jaguar or of Britain?

Mr. Ridley: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman preferred the position in the 1970s, when British Leyland owned Jaguar in the public sector. If his memory stretches that far, does he remember the gloom and demoralisation then, compared with the good news brought to the House today?

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will my right hon Friend compare the Jaguar company of today with the moribund organisation that existed 10 years ago and tell us what lessons he draws from the comparison?

Mr. Ridley: I am certain that the disciplines of the private sector are the disciplines in which Jaguar has thriven. It has benefited from separation from a parent

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that, far from putting money into investment and research, was dragging it down through debts and burdens that resulted from its other activities.

Mr. Gould: I am sure that the Secretary of State would not wish to mislead the House. Will he therefore confirm that in my correspondence with him I urged him to use the golden share—indeed, possibly extend it—in order to negotiate with it, not to dispense with it without obtaining any guarantees or assurances? Will he also tell the House what is the point of a golden share if it is to be abandoned just when it is most needed?

Mr. Ridley: I quoted the entire sentence in order not to traduce the hon. Gentleman, but I shall quote it again. It reads:

> "If Jaguar do indeed need the financial and investment assistance to be obtained from becoming part of a larger group, does the Government have any other (and better) solution to offer?"

It is probably not possible to extend the golden share. That would require a 75 per cent. vote by the shareholders, which might or might not be obtained; it would probably also require clearance from the European Commission, which is by no means a certainty, and from the stock exchange. Grave risks would be involved in any attempt to surmount all those hurdles, and it would be unlikely to succeed.

Moreover, I see no point in pretending that a golden share that expires in just over a year could be used to impose conditions on any purchaser. The purchaser would have the simple alternative of waiting until the golden share had expired before doing what he considered to be in his own interests.

Mr. Speaker: I call the Leader of the House to move the motion on the statutory instrument.

Mr. Rooker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I distinctly heard, and hope that the rest of the House did as well, the Secretary of State openly admit that no one had asked him to make his statement today. We may have a new Government Chief Whip and Leader of the House, but the same sneaky tactics are still being used.

In future, Mr. Speaker, when a Minister asks your permission to make a statement on an Opposition day, can we have a debate and a vote on whether the House should give such permission? It is our time that is being taken, and nothing in today's statement could not have been said yesterday, or be said tomorrow. The statement has been made today for one simple reason—the debate that is to follow.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Let me draw the attention of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and the House to the new 21st edition of "Erskine May", on page 297 of which can be found the sentence that the question whether a statement is made is not a matter for the Chair. It is merely a tradition that the Minister who makes the statement begins it with the words "With permission"; Government statements are not made with my permission.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is it not a fact that, when the House is televised, there will be nothing to prevent the Government from issuing two or three statements every day to hog the 6 o'clock news broadcasts and to delay the Opposition's time with any propaganda material that the Government are prepared to give out? Surely either you, Mr. Speaker, should make a ruling, or the Procedure Committee should examine what is plainly a deliberate and gross abuse of Opposition time. We look to you, Mr. Speaker, to protect our interests by preventing Ministers from standing up and saying, "With permission" when clearly no permission is necessary, and the statement has been designed and organised solely by Mr. Bernard Ingham to run as a spoiler. You really should put a stop to it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on the same matter? I have already said, and the House knows, that today is an Opposition day, and all this takes time.

Mr. Maxton: Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), Mr. Speaker. May I draw your attention to the Questions for Written Answer on today's Order Paper? Question No. 89, from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), reads:

> "To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, whether he will make a statement on Jaguar plc."

It is not obvious that, until he realised that he could make the statement in the House, the Secretary of State intended to make a written statement?

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I personally have no objecion to the Secretary of State making statements, but he should make honest statements. The fact of the matter is that the private enterprise system has failed. The Labour Government had to take over from a private enterprise system; we had to take Jaguar into public ownership to defend the jobs of those people. When the Secretary of State makes statements——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is really a matter for debate, not a point of order for me.

May I say to the House again that it is not a matter for the Chair whether statements are made, but it is very much a matter for the usual channels to ensure that this sort of thing is treated with some consideration.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Further to what you accepted as three points of order running from the Opposition Benches, Mr. Speaker. Since it was claimed that the Secretary of State's statement had nothing to do with the debate coming today—*[Interruption.]* Yes, it was. May I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that the Secretary of State's statement about a very important company in the engineering industry today is indeed appropriate and that the whole of his answer was appropriate to the economy of this country, which we are about to debate?

Mr. Speaker: I say again that statements are not made with my permission. I have already drawn the attention of the House to that point.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not going to take any more points of order.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Hotel and Catering) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Fuel and Energy Provision

4.6 pm

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require the provision of essential fuel and energy to each home, to guarantee appliances, to prevent the entry to premises without prior recorded legally authorised notice; to prevent the unauthorised removal of a fuel measuring device; to abolish standing charges; to establish local authority monitoring committees; and for connected purposes.

After disasters such as Lockerbie, Piper Alpha and King's Cross, hon. Members from all parties demanded inquiries and measures that would prevent further unnecessary loss of life. My Fuel and Energy Provision Bill incorporates the values that those hon. Members profess. it sets out to save lives by providing a number of statutory rights. It would spread a safety net for the disadvantaged members of the community—the 39,000 elderly citizens who die annually from hypothermia or diseases of the respiratory system, which will be the major killers in the cold winter months ahead.

On the occasion when I have brought the Fuel and Energy Provision Bill before the House I have wondered why those who sit on the Government Benches so resolutely oppose its progress through the House. Is there some strange logic or formula, of which I am not aware, which determines that the lives of the Hillsborough [illegible]edy victims, or those who are dropped from hijacked airliners, are more precious than those of elderly citizens whose ignominious deaths rate merely a statistical reference or classification as "poor old souls"?

Having assessed the reaction of the House, I have to come to that conclusion, as the unnecessarily astronomical death toll of elderly citizens—39,000 each year—has failed to concern the Government or and the Prime Minister. The right hon. Lady has not been induced to dash with alacrity to the bedsides of the elderly that she has made to the hospital bedsides of tragedy victims. Yet the loss of life among the elderly is a national disaster. It is, however, one which fails to move the Government. Their indifference was demonstrated last week when the Secretary of State for Social Security refused to restore pensions immediately to their index-linked value, which would have given an increase of £12 to a single pensioner and £20 to a couple. Pensioners would not then have had to worry about the never-attainable severe weather payment in the cold winter months ahead.

The elderly are not the only people to suffer. The disabled, single mothers, young children and the unemployed also suffer from fuel poverty which an uncaring Government, the unconcerned British Gas and the uncaring electricity industry fail to address. I received a letter from the managing director, finance, at British Gas, Mr. A. Sutcliffe, who attempted to convey the company's concern for the welfare of the customer. The letter concluded:

> "I believe our record demonstrates that we are fully committed to excellent service and this includes operating in an open and fair manner."

That statement is in stark contrast with the reality suffered by Mrs. O'Hanlon of 17 Coronation road, Coventry, who, having arranged for British Gas to visit her home to install a token meter, was forced to visit her doctor because her 18-month-old child was ill. When she returned home, she found that in her absence a British Gas

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official had forced entry to her property without a warrant and disconnected her meter, leaving her and her child without any source of heat.

The same kind of indifference and lack of concern for the welfare of customers is shown by the electricity industry, which, in the process of clawing back arrears from low-income groups, requires them to feed between £5 and £7 per week into a meter before they receive any electricity for heating or cooking. A recent survey showed that, in more than 90 per cent. of the cases examined, the electricity boards did not know whether the customer's household included pensioners, benefit recipients, sick or disabled persons or young children. The survey concluded that such information has not been sought by the boards.

Because of the lack of time, my Bill will fail to address those problems in this Session of Parliament. In the meantime, local authorities can demonstrate their concern for the many people who spend most of every 24 hours trapped in homes which they cannot heat because they are too poor, because they fear the bill that the postman may bring or because in their desperation they lose sight of what they are doing and an equally sightless bureaucracy disconnects them. Perhaps those homes with ill-fitting windows and doors and poor insulation, which were designed when fuel was cheap, simply will not hold the heat. The heating appliances used may be old or inefficient or require too much of the wrong fuel. Some people are just too poor. Whatever the reason, I believe that more can be done.

Sometimes it is simply a question of knowing what can be done to help. The labyrinth of social services departments, social security officers and advice centres is simply too much for someone who is struggling to keep warm. It is easier to huddle in front of the warm gas fire radiant or the bars of an electric fire than to face the queues and the smug-faced young people who seem to be too busy and who talk too quickly when they explain that it is not really a matter for their department.

I believe that councils across the country can help to resolve that problem. I suggest that councils, under the auspices of the Lord Mayor should form watchdog committees with representatives from the local offices of the Department of Social Security, the gas board, the electricity supply services, welfare workers and a general practitioner. The committee's purpose would primarily be to examine individual cases to see what assistance could be given to people in need. To do that job properly, a freephone helpline would be necessary, so that immediate advice could be sought and so that watchful neighbours could report their worries and be sure of a prompt investigation. I imagine that the committee would need to meet once a week during the critical months. To give the issue the full weight that it deserves, I suggest that the committee should be chaired by the chairman of the local authority, the mayor or his deputy.

Such a service would need publicity, and I am certain that the local media would be only too willing to help. Publicity would have a dual purpose. It would serve people in their homes by involving politicians and local council officials, and it would offer them advice. The advice could be of a general nature, such as stating the principles which govern the help that is available—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: It is 4.16 pm. Will the hon. Gentleman bring now his remarks to a close?

Mr. Hughes: I think that we need the assistance of Dr. Dolittle.

I am not excepting myself from the amount of work that the committees would generate. I shall be available at any time to assist with their development and work.

The Fuel and Energy Provision Bill will offer a life certificate rather than a death certificate to the elderly. I request that while we are in the process of using or examining the use——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall now put the Question.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John Hughes, Mr. Dave Nellist, Mr. Ronnie Campbell, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mrs. Audrey Wise, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Pat Wall, Mr. Terry Fields, Mr. Bob Cryer, Ms. Mildred Gordon, Mr. Harry Barnes and Mr. Tony Banks.

FUEL AND ENERGY PROVISION

Mr. John Hughes accordingly presented a Bill to require the provision of essential fuel and energy to each home, to guarantee appliances, to prevent the entry to premises without prior recorded legally authorised notice; to prevent the unauthorised removal of a fuel measuring device; to abolish standing charges; to establish local authority monitoring committees; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 November and to be printed. [Bill 210.]

Opposition Day

[20TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Economic Policy

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. In view of the number of right hon. and hon. Members who wish to participate, I propose to put a limit on speeches of 10 minutes between 7 and 9 o'clock.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hesitate to interrupt the flow of remarks, but when you impose that stricture, will you take cognisance of the fact that on recent occasions Front Bench spokesmen have consumed large proportions of the time allocated? Therefore, if Back Benchers are properly to be constrained by your ruling, Mr. Speaker, the same strictures should apply to Front Bench spokesmen.

Mr. Speaker: As the House knows, I have no authority at the moment to limit the length of speeches made by Front Bench spokesmen. Nevertheless, I hope that what the hon. Gentleman has said will be borne in mind today.

4.19 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move,

> "That this House condemns the continuing confusion and disarray in the content and conduct of government economic policy; notes with deep concern the absence of full agreement on economic policy between the Prime Minister and the former Chancellor of the Exchequer; and deplores the continuing commitment to high interest rates which are causing such harm to industry and to the people of Britain."

Since we last discussed economic policy in the House only a week ago, there have been some changes—some changes in the team. It was only a few weeks ago that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—the chairman of the Conservative party—gave us the theme for the period to the next election. In his speech—the speech before Agincourt—he said:

> "We must work together as a team. A team in the Cabinet: a team in Government."

That was at the beginning of his speech. More attention appears to have been taken of an ominously prophetic quotation towards the end of his speech—in his peroration. He said:

> "He which hath no stomach to this fight,
> Let him depart."

We know that there has been a departure—the departure of the former Chancellor. He departed because he found it impossible to work in a team in which the captain does not support the leading player. In his resignation letter, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) said:

> "The successful conduct of economic policy is possible only if there is, and is seen to be, full agreement between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer."

We should do the right hon. Gentleman the credit of accepting completely what he said. Although his letter was short, it contained a terse but electric message: no Chancellor can carry out his arduous duties without the full support of the Prime Minister. In the case of the right hon. Gentleman, that support was withheld because of a preference for a part-time unelected adviser who spent only a minority of his time in this country. We are invited to believe—if we are to accept some of the curious answers given in the Prime Minister's Walden interview on Sunday—that the right hon. Member for Blaby resigned because his head had apparently been turned by tittle-tattle got up by the press and that in that confused condition he had unaccountably and quite irrationally abandoned an unassailable position to leave the Government for no good reason.

The truth—as the former Chancellor told us—was that he was entitled to expect "full agreement" on economic policy and proper support. In this curious Government, he neither got it nor was seen to receive it, and not unnaturally he went—a victim of the confusion and disarray which is, in my submission, the inevitable consequence of the subversion of Cabinet government in which the Prime Minister has been engaged for the past 10 years.

There are two crucial areas of economic policy in which the acute divisions of policy are all too sadly evident and destructive of the public interest. Those are the approach to the possible accession of Britain to the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS and domestic economic policy, particularly in relation to the management of the exchange rate. For some time, the official stance has been that the Government would join the ERM when the time was right.

The Deputy Prime Minister restated that in an important speech on Saturday night. He said:

> "Thus the position that we took in Madrid—one which the Prime Minister, Nigel Lawson and I all agreed—was the right one. We said 'yes' we want the existing EMS to be strengthened, 'yes' Britain should join and will join the exchange rate mechanism. We defined the conditions that would make the time right: Liberalisation of capital movements in the Community, headway in the battle against inflation—itself the crucial objective—and substantial progress on the single market."

He added:

> "We committed ourselves to stage one of the Delors report."

As we all know, that envisages all member states participating in the exchange rate mechanism.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman went on:

> "That was the position in June. As the Prime Minister, Nigel Lawson and I have repeatedly stressed in the House of Commons, it remains the position now. It is of the highest importance that Her Majesty's Government is seen to remain committed to that position, clearly and in good faith."

He added for emphasis:

> "It is important—not just for the credibility of our common European commitment but for the economic health and political strength of Britain".

Note how important he envisages good faith—crucial to our economic health and our political strength.

I dare say that that speech in any normal situation would not have attracted as much notice as it did, as many observers would have believed it to be a perhaps enthusiastic, but certainly not inaccurate, statement of what Government policy was thought to be. The Deputy Prime Minister, however, must have felt some twinge that it might be more significant. He apparently consulted the new Foreign Secretary and the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, but he did not consult the Prime Minister; nor did he issue the speech through his Government office or even through the Conservative party news service. He issued it on plain, unheaded notepaper.

I hazard the guess that the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not consult the Prime Minister or use official or party channels because he did not wish there to be any impediment to the delivery of his message. His

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instincts were probably correct because, not long before he had spoken the words at 9 pm on Saturday night, on Saturday afternoon the Prime Minister had recorded the interview on the Walden programme, which we saw on television on Sunday.

As we all know, that interview was an event of enormous political significance, a revelation of the Prime Minister's style and approach to the problems of government, as an example of which it could not be bettered. It will be as indispensable to historians as it is to those of us who view these matters in a more contemporary frame. But it is also acutely relevant to the Prime Minister's, and therefore the Government's approach to accession to the exchange rate mechanism.

At first the Prime Minister appeared to take the normal line:

> "We shall join the European Monetary System on the conditions we laid down in Madrid. There was nothing fudged about them"—

curiously, no one alleged that there was anything fudged about them—

> "they were quite clear."

Let us recollect that the Deputy Prime Minister had told us —and he was Foreign Secretary at the time—that there were three conditions: liberalisation of capital movements, progress on reducing inflation and substantial progress —no more than that—on the single market.

That was not enough for the Prime Minister. On she went, throughout almost the entire second section of her interview, expanding conditions and extending time scales with gay abandon. Not only are exchange controls to be removed, but investment requirements on pension funds and insurance funds in all member states have to go. What is called—*[Interruption.]* Hold on. What is called liberal economics—with a small "l"; I suppose that we might call it Manchester school liberal economics—must be practised in all countries. A "higgledy-piggledy" system in which no one else plays by the rules must be transformed.

It can all be summed up by saying that, if all the other member states have adopted Thatcherite policies and the Prime Minister has personally inspected them all, looked to see that all the economic fingernails are clean, we might, just might, consider joining the exchange rate mechanism.

I observe in passing that the Prime Minister has noticed that Thatcherism has not crossed the English channel—how fortunate they are—and nor is it likely to do so. Why on earth would the other Community countries want to import the equivalent of a £20 billion balance of payments deficit and rates of inflation and interest rates much higher than obtain in their countries? But the clear message that the Prime Minister is giving is that, so long as she is Prime Minister—and that is until the next general election—Britain will not join the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The right hon. and learned Gentleman deservedly has a high reputation. Would he care to enhance that reputation by putting on one side the humour and tittle-tattle and telling the House which of the Government's conditions precedent to joining the ERM—conditions that have been set out at various times by the Government and on Sunday by the Prime Minister—the Labour party accepts and with which it disagrees?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman knows well that we have repeatedly set out the conditions—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] He knows perfectly well that time and again we have proposed that Britain should join the ERM on certain prudent conditions which the Labour party—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] The difference between the two sides of the House is that we are clear about what those conditions are, whereas the Government side—*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose—[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is clearly not giving way.

Mr. Smith: We do not know, on the Government side, what the conditions are, or what time scales are in operation.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Answer the question.

Mr. Smith: I can understand why the Conservative party wants to—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is great pressure to speak in the debate. Hon. Members should allow the right hon. and learned Gentleman to get on with his speech.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton) *rose*——

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: The fundamental problem—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows the rules.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the Government Benches that if the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not give way, hon. Members who are attempting to intervene must resume their seats.

Mr Maxwell-Hyslop: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There was no point of order. I was reinforcing a ruling.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Further to the point that was raised with you, Mr. Speaker. May I ask if it is not a fact——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No point of order was raised with me. I rose to say, and I repeat, that if the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East does not give way, hon. Members who are standing must resume their seats.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands East (Mr. Smith) gave way. Questions were asked and certain answers were given—*[Interruption.]* You know as well as I do, Mr. Speaker, that if a Front Bench spokesman—[HON. MEMBERS: "Sit Down."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) has been in the House for a long time and knows as well as I do that I am not responsible for questions that are asked, provided they are in order, and answers that are given, provided they also are in order.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Further to my point of order, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. [HON. MEMBERS: "Name him."] I will hear what the hon. Gentleman has to say if it is a point order, but not if it is a point of argument.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I assure you that I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I will continue when you can hear me, Mr. Speaker. We are all aware that if an hon. Member is speaking and gives way and is asked a question —*[Interruption.]* I will wait until you can hear me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I get the drift of the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. It does not appear to be a matter of order for me. I suggest that we get on now.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to sit down.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. For the final time, I ask the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) to resume his seat.

Mr. Smith: It is a great pity that the House is not currently being televised, so that the whole nation could observe the organised wrecking tactics used by the Conservative party against the Opposition. *[Interruption.]*

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I repeat to the House—*[Interruption.]* Leave it to me, please. There is great pressure to speak today. I ask the House to listen without interruption. to what the right hon. Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is saying.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) asked me about our conditions. Perhaps I may be allowed the opportunity which I have been trying to take for some time, of addressing that question, despite deliberate wrecking tactics from Conservative Members. The conditions applied by the Government will frustrate our efforts to join the exchange rate mechanism. The conditions that the Labour party attaches, apart from the important question of joining at the effective rate, are that there should be adequate swap arrangements between the central banks, that there must be a well-organised regional policy within the Community, and that the thrust of the economic policies within the Community should be for growth and not for deflation.

That approach has not only been approved by the other countries in Europe, but was substantially approved by the resolution of the European Parliament last week, for which the Conservative MEPs voted. Those MEPs, of course, have a problem in the European Parliament; no other MEPs will have them as part of their group. They feel a little detached from the Conservative party on this side of the Channel. No wonder! Perhaps "semi-detached" is an expression that may carry more menace for them.

In her interview, the Prime Minister's clear message was that she had no intention of joining the exchange rate mechanism. She said of the timing that there had to be major changes by our errant partners—all the people who do not play by the rules and who are up to all kinds of dirty tricks. She said:

> "Now all that should happen during . . . what is called the Delors first stage, the first stage coming towards monetary union. I hope it will but other countries have to catch up a long way before it happens."

As she knows, there is no time limit to stage 1 of the Delors plan and she knows that the deadline for the single market is 1 January 1993. In so far as she claims that her conditions relate to completion of the single market, it would hardly be likely that she could make the judgment on their performance—a crucial part of her approach—before 1 January 1993. Let us remember that the last date for the next general election is June 1992.

I submit that the only reasonable conclusion to be drawn from that seminal interview is that there is no question of the Prime Minister agreeing to join the exchange rate mechanism before the next election. That position is hopelessly at odds with the view of the Deputy Prime Minister. Is it the Prime Minister's policy that the Government do not anticipate joining the exchange rate mechanism? Is that the view of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary or the new Chancellor of the Exchequer? The new Chancellor has an opportunity today to spell out his policy. If he does not, I fear that confusion will remain.

Let me remind the House of that crucial sentence in the speech of the Deputy Prime Minister:

> "It is of the highest importance that Her Majesty's Government is seen to remain committed to that position clearly and in good faith."

The Prime Minister's response may be clearer than the Deputy Prime Minister anticipated. However, does he believe that it can conceivably accord with the good faith that he believes to be of the highest importance and which is so important to our economy and our political strength? If it does not, can he accept what the former Chancellor could not—that a Government policy is undermined, and seen to be undermined, by the Prime Minister on national television?

When the Deputy Prime Minister refers to good faith, I believe that he has in mind good faith within the Government—rare though such a commodity must be—and good faith in relation to the other member states in the Community. It is worth reflecting on what those member states thought when they considered the patronising tone of the Prime Minister's Walden interview. We can rest assured that there is one person who will not be worried by that. If the Prime Minister can feel sorry for all 48 other countries of the Commonwealth, why bother about a mere 11 in the European Community?

I referred earlier to divisions on domestic economic policy. To be fair, I believe that all members of the Government began with much the same position. In those early days, when monetarism was unchallenged within their ranks, the belief was firm that the exchange rate could be left to the market and that just controlling the money supply would keep inflation in check. Even the former Chancellor was in line then.

In a famous reply on 3 July 1980, when asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) what mechanism existed for medium or long-term alteration of the exchange rate, the former Chancellor replied simply, "Market forces." That was the era of free floating when it was said that there was

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"no stable or reliable relationship between interest rates and the exchange rate."—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1980; Vol. 991, c. *537*.]

However, the former Chancellor learned by hard experience. He saw the irrational and wild oscillation in the exchange rates and began to move towards the position that he had adopted by the time of his resignation—that is, managing the exchange rate and participating in international agreements to stabilise exchange rates among the G7 nations through the Plaza and Louvre accords.

On the basis of his experience, the former Chancellor began increasingly to realise the potential value of participating in the exchange rate mechanism. Clearly he moved a long way, but the Prime Minister has not. The lady did not turn. She believed and she still believes, as she has told the House, "You cannot buck the markets." That was her reason for demolishing the Chancellor's policy of shadowing the deutschmark. It was also the reason why she summoned Sir Alan Walters back from the United States to be her adviser earlier this year. She apprehended that two issues were coming to the forefront on which, if she did not strengthen her position, she might lose out. Those were the arguments over the exchange rate mechanism and the desirability of seeking to manage the exchange rate.

The Prime Minister also knew, as she told us eight times on Sunday, that the former Chancellor was "unassailable". I could hardly believe it when she said that again today during Prime Minister's Question Time. However, it was precisely because the Prime Minister assessed the Chancellor as unassailable that she set out to undermine him.

Only the truly innocent believe that Sir Alan Walters was just another adviser—one of those people who advise while Ministers decide. He was more than that. He was a crucial ally of the Prime Minister. In the knowledge of his fierce opposition to joining the exchange rate mechanism, frequently and publicly expressed on both sides of the Atlantic, he was recalled to serve in No. 10. It did not take long for Sir Alan to become the alternative Chancellor, and we know the sad eventual outcome of all that. The new Chancellor will not have Sir Alan around.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: No; I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

If the new Chancellor seeks to develop a policy of which the Prime Minister does not approve, he will encounter the same problems as were encountered by the former Chancellor. The new Chancellor must make up his mind, and he should tell us today whether he follows the previous Chancellor's policy or whether he takes sides with the Prime Minister and believes that the markets cannot be bucked.

While the new Chancellor carries out his duties, I urge him to be careful about the Prime Minister's praises. If she calls him brilliant, he should be wary. If he hears the words, "brilliant, brilliant", especially if the call is uttered shrilly, he should be worried. If he is ever described as unassailable, he should start to tidy his desk.

There are echoes of the Westland affair in all this. Once again, there is a serious dispute over a European policy question. The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) wanted a European solution to the Westland affair. The Prime Minister did not. The right hon. Member for Henley was undermined by the leaking of a Law Officers' letter—a process assisted by unelected officials in No. 10. Business as usual, one might say.

In the Westland affair, the Prime Minister lost two Ministers. In the present crisis, she has lost thus far only one, albeit the most senior Minister in her Government. The Deputy Prime Minister, who lost his old job in the reshuffle earlier this year, should take especial care. So should the new Chancellor.

The new Chancellor's crucial training for his new post was not so much the two years that he spent as Chief Secretary to the Treasury; rather, it was his three months as Foreign Secretary. After he had negotiated an agreed communiqué with the representatives of the other 48 Commonwealth countries at Kuala Lumpur, his efforts were completely overturned by the Prime Minister's lengthy denunciation of the views of those very countries.

As we approach the Council of Europe meeting to be held in Strasbourg in December, the new Chancellor should be especially vigilant; otherwise he might have been Kuala Lumpured in October only to be Strasbourged in December.

As the new Chancellor faces the task of steering British economic policy over the next year or so, I beg him to abandon the foolish notion that a balance of payments deficit now running at an annual rate approaching £20 billion does not matter provided that it can be financed. We know to our cost the price of such financing—interest rates of 15 per cent. which are doing such deadly damage to business and industry and causing such misery for home owners from one end of the country to the other.

Sooner or later—I earnestly hope that it will be sooner—the balance of payments deficit must begin to be reduced. In debate after debate, and only last Tuesday, Labour Members have urged the urgent need for an industrial strategy to begin the task of refashioning and rebuilding manufacturing industry. Manufacturing industry is the indispensable wealth creator and the crucially international tradeable part of our economy.

It is interesting that, whenever we urge the adoption of an industrial strategy for manufacturing industry, the Conservatives do not believe that that is a policy. That says far more about them than it does about us. Right across the political spectrum, people are deeply worried about the future of our industry. Those who work in it, manage it, and advise it are all deeply worried. The only people who do not seem to worry about the crisis in manufacturing industry—it must be a crisis, if we have a £20 billion balance of payments deficit—are the Conservatives, and the Ministers responsible for the conduct of our economic policy.

We will urge this alternative again and again until the message gets home—not only the Labour party, but the whole of Britain wants a strategy for manufacturing industry.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Last week the right hon. and learned Gentleman told us that he supported an industrial strategy. Will he be a little more specific? We are all concerned about the prospects. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman talking about tax incentives or greater public spending? What policies does he have in mind?

Mr. John Smith: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was present during our debate last Tuesday —he probably was—but I am prepared to accept his assurance that he is concerned about manufacturing industry. The Opposition have many more Conservative Members to work on.

Let me spell out, as I did last Tuesday, the three crucial elements of that industrial strategy—first, the repairing of the ravages of the neglect of education and training by a massive education and training programme; secondly, a policy to introduce new technology by Government support for research and development; thirdly, a strong regional policy to tackle the continuing decline of the under-used regions of this country. Once again, one may be told——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Smith: Conservative Members should allow me to speak. Given what happened earlier, I have been reasonably generous in giving way at all to some Conservative Members.

As the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) will come to realise, perhaps before his colleagues on the Government Front Bench do, that is the essential precondition of any successful economic policy for this country. The Opposition have also urged the abandonment of the one-club golfing of exclusive reliance on interest rates and recommended the limitation of bank lending as a superior alternative to the control of demand, as long as that is necesary.

In addition, the new Chancellor should take the opportunity today to rule out tax cuts in the next Budget. He should use the Autumn Statement, again as the Opposition recommended only last Tuesday, to initiate regionally targeted public investment to strengthen education and training, and research and development, and to stimulate regional economies.

That is not only an alternative policy—it is the alternative policy which Britain desperately needs. It is a policy which will secure our prosperity not just for the year or two to come but throughout the 1990s. Let us never forget that the crucial folly of the former Chancellor's policy was to lecture the Federal Republic of West Germany that its economic miracle was over and that ours had just begun.

When we look at the massive trade deficit and how it has gone throughout the whole of this decade, despite North sea oil revenues, which the Conservative party had and which they frittered away, we see an adequate commentary on the effectiveness of the Government's policy. Let it not be forgotten that other countries of the EC, which, in the Prime Minister's warped view of our continent, are so badly trailing behind, have superior economies and are much better fashioned societies than ours.

The purposes of economic policy are to be centred on four objectives—steady and balanced economic growth, control of inflation, the attainment of full employment, and reasonable equilibrium in our balance of payments. The last objective—the balance of payments—has been downgraded as we have seen a decade go by in which our North sea oil wealth has been frittered away and our economy and society made the laboratory for Thatcherite experiments in free market economics, social unfairness and the retreat of Government from their proper responsibilities.

Because of the conduct and content of Government policies, I fear that our economy has been gravely weakened and the social cohesion of our society put at risk. This country desperately needs a change in the style of Government and in the economic policies that have been pursued—a change in both the conduct and content of Government. But we are told that it is business as usual. The country received that statement as a threat, not as a promise. In an interview in the *Daily Express*, the Prime Minister told us that her convictions had to be seen

> "in every piece of policy."

That must have sent a shudder through every independent-minded Minister—if there are any left in this Administration. The Prime Minister's convictions "in every piece of policy" tells us more about how the Government are run in this country than almost anything else. If it is business as usual, we will continue with a debilitating balance of payments deficit, and the highest interest rates and the highest inflation rate of leading industrial countries. I fear that, both economically and socially, we will continue to lag behind the rest of Europe.

This confused and divided Government cannot provide the leadership which Britain needs for the 1990s. They cannot do so, because they cannot change while the Prime Minister remains at their head. As the *Financial Times* editorial observed on Saturday

> "As she has become pre-eminent her Government has become much more vulnerable."

What concerns the Opposition is not so much the vulnerability of Government as the vulnerability of our country. What Britain needs is not a new Chancellor but a new Government—a Labour Government.

4.55 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. John Major): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

> 'congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the determination with which it has pursued policies to bear down on inflation and improve the supply side of the economy; welcomes the sustained growth of output, productivity, investment, employment and living standards which the United Kingdom has enjoyed as a result; and endorses the Government's resolve to continue with the policies which are in the long-term interest of the British economy.'.

At the outset I wish to say how much I regret the resignation of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). I had the pleasure of serving with him in the Treasury for three years—for one year as Treasury Whip, and for two years as Chief Secretary. I enjoyed that experience enormously. I supported his policies and those of the Government when I was Chief Secretary. I believed that they brought increased prosperity to the country then, and I have not changed my view since then. Whatever the controversies of the day may be or may bring, I believe that history will record that few Chancellors brought about so many fundamental improvements to the economy of this country. Only the grudging and mean-spirited will deny that. My right hon. Friend was a great reforming Chancellor and will be remembered as such.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) made his usual forceful speech—both forceful and his usual speech. It was good music hall. He

[Mr. John Major]

has become the Jasper Carrot of parliamentary debate. For all the humour, however, it was an empty speech. It was empty of policy, it made no serious attempt to diagnose the problem, and it provided no solutions whatsoever. On the one single issue on which he was questioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) it was not until some minutes had passed and someone had whispered to him that he actually provided the answer.

There is no difficulty at all about a diagnosis of the economic problem that we face at present. As a result of over two years of exceptional growth on a scale which no one expected, least of all the Opposition, we have seen the re-emergence of inflationary pressures. They are evident both in rising domestic prices and in the growth of imports.

Let me be quite clear about the main priority before us. It is progressively to reduce inflation and bring the economy back to the path of steady growth. There is no doubt about that. I know that inflation is not high by the standards of the 1970s, and it is still as low today as in the best month we ever saw during the period of the last Labour Government. I know, too, that some people argue that a little inflation is no bad thing, that one can live with it, that it induces a feeling of well-being and does no harm. Emphatically I do not share that view.

I do not share that view because inflation has two particularly destructive effects. First, it damages the economy—it brings uncertainty, it discourages investment, it breeds suspicion and conflict in industrial relations, and it puts a premium on playing safe at all levels of management. It is no coincidence that the past eight years, which have seen the longest period of sustained growth—strong and steady growth—since the war, has also been the period in which inflation has been reduced.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Given that inflation is destructive in all the ways that the right hon. Gentleman has described, why have the Government allowed it to rise?

Mr. Major: The hon. Lady would have done far better to address that problem to her right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East. She should also be aware that, if we were to see the implementation of the policies that her right hon. and learned Friend has in mind, inflation would be back in the stratosphere. I shall turn to that particular question in a moment.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Major: But the social effect of inflation is even more pernicious, as we saw during the period of office of the last Labour Government. It bears most heavily on those least able to protect themselves. In the last five years of the 1970s, with high inflation and low interest rates, pensioners saw the value of their life's savings halved and their retirement security diminished. Indeed, many pensioners today may be on social security benefits, not because they failed to save and prepare for a secure retirement—often they did so at some hardship and sacrifice—but because the Labour Government lost control of inflation and destroyed their security. That happened because the Labour Government had neither the courage nor the foresight—or both—to pursue the necessary but occasionally unpopular policies to curb inflation.

The Opposition have learnt nothing since then—as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) should know. Their present policy is clear. They would reduce interest rates prematurely and relax monetary policy. They would increase spending massively, and undermine fiscal policy.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough) *rose*——

Mr. Major *rose*——

HON. MEMBERS: Give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Major: Labour would devalue the currency as each and every previous Labour Government have done —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must say to the House again—as I had to say to Conservative Members earlier—that if the hon. Member who has the Floor does not give way, hon. Members must resume their seats. It only wastes time to shout, "Give way, give way."

Mr. Major: I understand that the Opposition do not like being reminded about how their policies destroyed people's security, but they deserve to be reminded because they are peddling the same policies again. The policies that they operate would not stop inflation. They would unleash hyper-inflation, with all the economic and social consequences that we saw before.

There is no conviction whatsoever in the Opposition's concern about inflation. Their conviction is against the very policies that would curb inflation and bring it down. That is their concern.

We need to be quite clear about the need to bring inflation down and I have no doubt whatsoever that we are right to use all the practical levers at our disposal to do so.

Mr. Bell: I should like the Chancellor to concentrate for a moment on the Government's present policies. The OECD review stated that the Government have been raising interest rates to bear down on inflation and to stabilise the exchange rate. Is that still the policy of Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Major: If the hon. Gentleman will wait a moment I shall turn specifically to that point. Indeed, I have already begun to do so.

In my judgment, we are absolutely right to use all the practical levers at our disposal to bear down on inflation. One of these—an important one, of course—is fiscal policy. One of the great achievements of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby has been the transformation of the Government's financial position.

Public expenditure—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members racked up debts day after day when they were in Government—we have repaid the debt that they racked up. Public expenditure remains under firm control, and we are now repaying Government debt—the debt that the Labour Government built up—on a massive scale. By the end of this financial year we shall have repaid roughly one sixth of the public debt accumulated over two centuries, at an annual saving of £3 billion in debt interest costs.

No one should doubt that my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby had a tight fiscal policy, and no one should doubt that I intend to keep it equally tight.

The key lever on inflation is monetary policy—the use of interest rates. I understand very clearly that high interest rates are often unwelcome and often painful, but they are effective and they are having their intended effect now. Spending is slowing down, with retail sales in particular falling over the past three months; so are house prices, which rose much too fast over the past two years; and so is monetary growth, which is now moving close to its target range.

I understand very well that present levels of interest rates make things very difficult for some home owners, particularly young people who have large mortgages in relation to their incomes, but there are others who should also concern us. We also have to be concerned about those young people who could not afford to buy in the first place, because of the pace of rising prices—*[Interruption.]* If only for their sakes, there had to be a correction to rising house prices to prevent them being priced right out of the market. That correction is now happening—*[Interruption.]* It is clear that Opposition Members hate the thought of home ownership and the independence that it brings. The harsh truth is that too many people have been borrowing too much and saving too little, and high interest rates provide a direct incentive to redress that balance.

Interest rates have other important effects, however—not least on the exchange rate. A falling exchange rate directly raises the prices of things that we buy from abroad and reduces the discipline on British industry. That can only feed inflation. A firm exchange rate helps underpin the policy to stop inflation, and for these reasons it should be clear that I favour a firm exchange rate.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The right hon. Gentleman talks about the housing problem. Is he aware that the Government have been responsible for cutting council housing? They have encouraged the idea that people should buy their own homes and now they have implemented a policy of high mortgage rates, which means that the very people whom they encouraged to buy are suffering under their policies. How can the right hon. Gentleman explain why the Government should be so cruel to the people whom they encouraged to buy homes and why they are also leaving people without any houses at all?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind that under this Government this country has seen its greatest ever growth in home ownership—*[Interruption.]* —and that will continue.

Not surprisingly, exchange markets were unsettled last Thursday, but less so than many imagined and far less than the Leader of the Opposition predicted. On Friday he said, "today when the pound plummets"—[HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful!"] But it did not plummet. And I hope that in future the right hon. Gentleman will keep his market predictions to himself and not seek to talk sterling down. Markets can see for themselves that policy has not been changed and will not be changed.

Mr. John Smith: If the right hon. Gentleman believes that markets sustain the Government's policy, is he aware that a year ago today the pound was valued at DM 3.15, but today it is valued at DM 2.90? Is he also aware that interest rates were then 13 per cent., but today they are 15 per cent.? What kind of market verdict is that on the Government's economic policy?

Mr. Major: Two years ago, markets were at almost precisely the same level as they are today, a point that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has overlooked. Markets can see that policy has not been changed and will not be changed, and no change in policy means just this. It means that I will set interest rates as high as is needed for as long as is needed to bring down inflation, and in this I will continue to be guided by a range of monetary indicators, including the exchange rate.

I will deal comprehensively with the Government's approach to economic and monetary union and the Delors report in the debate on Thursday, but I shall say something now about the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Has she seen this speech?

Mr. Major: As a matter of fact, my right hon. Friend has not seen the speech.

HON. MEMBERS: Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Major: I am sorry to disappoint the Opposition on that point.

The exchange rate mechanism, as its name implies, is no more than a contrivance, a means for promoting a greater stability of exchange rate between Community currencies and greater price stability. However, it is not a recipe for problem-free economic management, and it should not be seen as such. We should recognise that it does not change the economic fundamentals. It does not reduce the pain of bringing down inflation. It does not mean that a country does not need reserves and can forgo intervention in the exchange market—far from it. It does not, and cannot, absolve a country from an adequately tight monetary policy. It does not insulate a country from high interest rates. Anyone who believes that early British membership would bring interest rates in the United Kingdom tumbling down would be sadly disappointed. Indeed, the very essence of the exchange rate mechanism is a strong commitment to set interest rates at whatever level is needed to keep the exchange rate within its bands.

Although it is no panacea, experience in recent years suggests that the exchange rate mechanism has helped participants both to bring about greater stability in exchange rates and to reduce inflation. I am in no doubt that in the right circumstances it would help us, too. But the circumstances have to be right if it is to be in our interest to join. The exchange rate mechanism will face new tests as exchange controls are abolished throughout the Community, and as the single financial market develops. In these circumstances, it would be very risky both for the United Kingdom and the present participants to introduce sterling—a currency which is traded much more widely than any other in Europe with the single exception of the deutschmark—when there is such a large differential between our inflation and interest rates and those in Germany.

Following the Madrid summit, the Government reaffirmed their commitment to join the ERM and specified precisely the conditions under which we will do so. The question is not whether we should join, but when. I repeat the conditions now for the avoidance of doubt.

[Mr. Major]

We will join the exchange rate mechanism when the level of United Kingdom inflation is significantly lower, when there is capital liberalisation in the Community, and real progress has been made towards completion of the single market, freedom of financial services and strengthened competition policy. That was the position that was set out at the Madrid summit and it remains the position today. There should be no doubt: when these conditions are met we will join—clearly and in good faith. Were it not a question of good faith, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister would not have set out the conditions so clearly some time ago.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): How long does the right hon. Gentleman think will be a reasonable period of time within which to assess whether these things have come to pass?

Mr. Major: As the hon. Gentleman will have understood from what I have just said, that is not wholly within our hands, for much of the action needs to be taken by other people, rather than us, so how speedily that will be done is in other people's hands as well as ours.

Without those conditions being met, entry into the exchange rate mechanism would be neither in our interest nor in that of Europe. With them, membership of the exchange rate mechanism will bring benefits to this country as it has, in my judgment, to its present members. That is a further reason why economic policy must be addressed to bringing inflation down—both for wider economic reasons and as the necessary preliminary for entry into the exchange rate mechanism. We have set out our conditions for entry clearly. We are not hiding behind "certain prudent conditions", as the Opposition sought to do.

Bringing inflation down is an important task, but it will be neither easy nor speedy. Inevitably, anti-inflation policy is bound to slow the economy down for a time. Therefore, I do not expect to see domestic demand growing anything like as fast next year as it has in recent years. Nor would I expect anything more than a fairly modest rate of output growth. With spending slowing down, businesses will have to take a hard look at ways to keep down their costs, including wages. If they do not succeed in that, the harsh truth is that jobs may be lost, needlessly. I hope that management and unions will ensure that that does not happen, and that Opposition Members will reinforce that message.

In recent months, much has been made of the rapid growth of our trade deficit, not least by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. It has grown.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Does what the right hon. Gentleman is saying confirm that he does not believe that the exchange rate mechanism is a half-baked scheme?

Mr. Major: The right hon. Gentleman may reflect on what I have just said. I have said that when the conditions are right we shall enter into the scheme. That is self-evident.

In recent months, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East has made much of the rapid growth of our trade deficit. It has grown, and by far more than is comfortable. It cannot continue at present levels and it will not, as we have always said. In due course, it will come down as demand growth slows.

But the Opposition paint far too black a picture of the trade deficit. What they have never been prepared to admit is that much of it reflects investment and not consumption. Over the past two years, investment has grown by 23 per cent.—the fastest two years of investment growth on record—and over the whole life of this Government investment has grown far faster than consumption. This investment does suck in imports—often capital equipment—and it may widen the trade gap in the short term. That effect is clearly unwelcome. What must be understood is that in the medium term, to the extent that these capital imports build up extra productive capacity, that will play a part in reducing future deficits. Much of today's problem is a preliminary to better performance tomorrow, and exports have been performing better and now stand at an all-time record level.

I suppose that it was a little optimistic to expect the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East to acknowledge the facts on investment. Business investment is a higher proportion of gross domestic product than ever before, but as far as the Opposition are concerned, that does not count. Why not?

In their view, it does not count because investment is not investment unless it is paid for by the taxpayer, because training is not training unless it is publicly financed by the taxpayer, and because the supply side of the economy cannot possibly be right unless it is managed from the centre. It would be a tragedy for industry if that form of thinking ever returned to the government of this country.

Over the last decade, under our economic policies, the underlying strength of the economy has improved and British industry is in fundamentally good shape. Our approach is working. In the past two years profitability has been higher than at any time since the 1960s. There is a record rate of new business start-ups—more than 1,600 per week so far this year, by far a new record. Productivity in manufacturing has grown faster in the 1980s in the United Kingdom than in all the other major industrialised countries. And that is after two decades in which we were bottom of the league, much of the time governed by a Labour Government. Moreover, employment has risen faster over the past five years than at any time since the war and by more in this country than in any other European country.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): As the new Chancellor of the Exchequer has put forward such a convincing view of how rosy the economy is, will he tell the House why in such circumstances his predecessor resigned?

Mr. Major: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman could do a good deal better than that. I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) will be able to speak for himself on that matter.

None of those improvements is accidental. Each and every one of them is a direct result of the policies that we have pursued over recent years. It may be that we shall face a difficult year ahead, but if that is to be so, industry is far better motivated and equipped to handle it than at any time in the 1970s.

Only the Opposition refuse to recognise the changes that have occurred in the past 10 years. Their persistent denigration of the economy bears no relation to reality. Business men, both here and abroad, are well aware of the improvements that have taken place. They know that this country's economy is strong. That is why they are investing in this country at record levels. Work forces know this too. That is why workers, more involved than ever before in the success of their companies, have increased their productivity faster than in any other major industrial nation—and we have more people in work than at any time before in our history.

I believe that people recognise that we must deal with the short-term difficulties before us, and they expect us to do so. They know that our economic prospects have been improved out of all recognition in the past decade, and they expect us to build on that. The fact that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East does not recognise it is a sign of how out of touch he is now and will be shown to be at the next general election. I have no doubt that the policies that we have been following are the right ones and I propose to continue them. I see no need for radical changes in policy.

We must never go back to the policies which nearly destroyed our economy in the 1970s and led to the inflation rate of a banana republic under the Labour Government. The Labour party is well aware of that. That is why it has invented Mr. Mandelson and his public relations gloss and disinvented Socialism. Socialism is rarely mentioned from the Opposition Front Bench except to deny that it exists. The Labour party knows what poison it is for most of the people in this country. Occasionally, even—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Listen, Kinnock!

Mr. Major: If the Leader of the Opposition is back with us, I shall continue.

Occasionally, even BBC interveiwers ask what Labour would do. The Leader of the Opposition tells them with delicious frankness that he has not a clue. But the Labour party's policies, however it tries to hide them, seep out one by one. The Labour party is in favour of credit controls —just as everyone else is abandoning them. It would renationalise wherever it could. It would increase taxes on companies and individuals. It would abolish the trade union legislation. The Leader of the Opposition would reinvent sector working parties. A Labour Government would spend more—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not need to remind the House of the pressure that there is to participate in the debate. I ask the House to give the Chancellor of the Exchequer a fair hearing for the rest of his speech.

Mr. Major: The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said a few minutes ago that he wished television were here in the Chamber. I wish that the public could see the behaviour of Opposition Members. They cannot bear the fact that over the past few years the levels of prosperity in this country have risen by an unprecedented amount and the people are well aware that that is the case. They know very well that the policies of the Opposition would take us back precisely to where we were in the 1960s. A Labour Government would spend more, borrow more and, yet again, they would devalue, as each and every successive Labour Government have done. The policies that they espouse are the failed policies of the 1960s. The electorate rejected them before and it will do so again. I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the motion and to support the amendment.

5.26 pm

Mr. Nigel Lawson (Blaby): I am old-fashioned enough to believe that my first comment on recent events should be made to this House. This is not an easy speech for me to make, and I am sure that the House will understand that. I shall do my best to be brief, and I hope that the House will assist me in this.

I am most grateful for what my right hon. Friend the new Chancellor of the Exchequer has said about me, and I wish to take this further opportunity to wish him every success in the task that lies ahead of him. As he reminded the House, we worked closely together for just over two years, and he has my full and unstinting support.

As for my own record, I have no doubt that I have made my share of mistakes; but I am content to be judged when the passage of time has provided a greater sense of perspective than is possible today.

No one, however long he has held the post, lightly gives up the great office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Certainly I did not. As as the resignation letter that I wrote to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister clearly implies, it was not the outcome I sought. But it is one that I accept without rancour—despite what might be described as the hard landing involved. I would only add that the article written by my right hon. Friend's former economic adviser was of significance only inasmuch as it represented the tip of a singularly ill-concealed iceberg, with all the destructive potential that icebergs possess.

I have long been convinced that the only successful basis for the conduct of economic policy is to seek the greatest practicable degree of market freedom within an over-arching framework of financial discipline to bear down on inflation. That being so, a key question is where the exchange rate fits in. Is it to be part of the maximum practicable market freedom, or is it to be part—indeed, a central part—of the necessary financial discipline?

I recognise that a case can be made for either approach. No case can be made for seeming confusion or for apparent vacillation between these two positions. Morever, for our system of Cabinet government to work effectively, the Prime Minister of the day must appoint Ministers whom he or she trusts and then leave them to carry out the policy. When differences of view emerge, as they are bound to do from time to time, they should be resolved privately and, whenever appropriate, collectively.

But to return to the exchange rate. Faced with the question that I posed a moment ago, my answer is, unhesitatingly, that it should be seen as an essential element of financial discipline, with the rider, incidentally, that exchange rate stability is itself an economic benefit.

There is nothing novel, of course, in any of this. The House will recall the classical period of the gold standard before the first world war, the Bretton Woods system after the second world war, and, of course, over the past 10 years, within the European context, the EMS.

None of these systems were or are panaceas or soft options. Tough decisions still have to be made. None of them were or are without difficulties. But those difficulties, in my judgment, are very much less than the practical diffculties and disadvantages which the world has

[Mr. Nigel Lawson]

experienced during periods of freely floating exchange rates. Nor, incidentally, can there be any doubt that the less credible the exchange rate discipline is, the greater the weight that interest rates will have to bear, and the higher they need to be to maintain the necessary anti-inflationary pressure.

Full United Kingdom membership of the EMS—I was glad to hear much of what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said—to which, again, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear at Madrid, this Government are committed, would signally enhance the credibility of our anti-inflationary resolve in general and the role of the exchange rate discipline in particular, and thus underpin the medium-term financial strategy. Indeed, given the existence of the EMS, our continuing non-participation in the exchange rate mechanism cannot fail to cast practical doubt on that resolve, however ill-founded such doubt may be.

There is, I believe, one other way in which anti-inflationary credibility might be enhanced in the eyes of the market and that is why, a year ago, I proposed to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister a fully worked-out scheme for the independence of the Bank of England. But that would be a buttress; it would not be a substitute for what I was saying earlier.

But if full United Kingdom membership of the EMS, although not indispensable, would facilitate the conduct of economic policy in general and the battle against inflation in particular, as those already participating have demonstrated, there is also a vital political dimension.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in her Bruges speech, Britain's destiny lies in Europe as a member of the European Community—and let me be clear that I am speaking, as she speaks, of a Europe of nation states. Within that context, it is vital that we maximise Britain's influence in the Community so as to ensure that it becomes the liberal free-market Europe in which we on the Conservative Benches so firmly believe. I have little doubt that we will not be able to exert that influence effectively, and successfully provide the leadership, as long as we remain largely outside the EMS. So, for economic and political reasons alike, it is important that we seek the earliest practicable time to join, rather than the latest for which a colourable case can be made.

Finally, a word about the short-term prospects for the British economy. There always has been, and there always will be, an economic cycle. During our period of office so far, we experienced a sharp downturn between 1979 and 1981, followed by a remarkably vigorous and prolonged upswing which lasted from 1981 right through to 1988. We are now once again on the downswing, and I see no need for a further policy tightening. While this downswing will not be as sharp as the previous downturn, not least given the very much lower level of inflation that we now have, a dull 1989 is bound to be followed by a difficult 1990.

But from then on, I have every confidence that, with the policies that the Government have been pursuing and will continue to pursue, as we heard from the Chancellor today, the long-term upswing will continue, based on lower inflation and on the unprecedented underlying strength that the British economy now possesses.

I have every confidence, too, that this will lead at the end of the day to a fourth election victory under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, whose outstanding contribution to the renaissance of Britain over these past 10 years I am proud to have been able to assist.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Will those hon. Members who are not remaining please leave the Chamber quietly?

5.36 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The House listened with close attention to what the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) had to say. He was frank. There were no obfuscations, no skating over the reality of his disagreements and the reality of his disappointment that he felt obliged to resign his high post. As he said, he did not lightly give up being Chancellor of the Exchequer, nor was it an outcome that he sought.

Furthermore, the right hon. Gentleman focused upon what I believe was the major and continuing source of disagreement between himself and the Prime Minister in economic policy—that is, the relative weight that they have given and continue to give to the use of exchange rate policy in the general mix of Government policy and counter-inflation strategy.

The right hon. Gentleman has not in the past sought, or conducted himself in a way that encouraged, the affection of the House. But, if I may say to him, those of us who have disagreed with him most strongly have always respected his intellectual ability and his great intellectual candour. We have not always enjoyed it, but we have respected it. He has done himself no harm at all on either side of the House in what he has had to say in his very frank speech today.

The right hon. Gentleman's resignation last Thursday raised for all of us three serious issues of economic policy. First is the question of the authority over economic policy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in relation to the Prime Minister and to her advisers. Second is the question of the Government's policy towards joining the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS. Third is the question—the most important of all—of the continued and massive deterioration in our economic prospects and what the Government intend to do about it.

The first issue has inevitably received much attention in the debate, and no doubt will continue to do so after the right hon. Gentleman's speech. I say "inevitably" because it was the right hon. Gentleman who, in his resignation letter, put clearly, as he saw them, his reasons for going. Having listened to the right hon. Gentleman, surely no hon. Member can doubt that for the best part of the past 18 months he has had major disagreements with the Prime Minister on both interest rate and exchange rate policy.

Not only were there major disagreements, but they were made highly visible by comments both from the Prime Minister and her former economic adviser, Sir Alan Walters. When the Prime Minister told Mr. Brian Walden in a television interview on Sunday:

"I fully backed and supported the Chancellor . . . somehow Nigel had made up his mind that he was going",

she was being exceptionally economical with the truth. Today's debate would never have been staged if the Prime Minister had really wanted to keep the right hon. Member for Blaby as her Chancellor. Without further ado, she would have sacked her part-time adviser. She did not do so, and she continued to refuse to do so even when she knew for certain that to retain Sir Alan would mean the departure of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Faced with the choice of backing or sacking the right hon. Gentleman, the Prime Minister simply waited for his resignation. Sir Alan Walters's resignation settled nothing. It simply removed the surface manifestation of disagreements between the Prime Minister, her former Chancellor and her present Deputy Prime Minister.

The result is confusion and uncertainty, or, to use the words of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) only yesterday, "an appalling muddle" about the real thrust of Government policy and in particular their attitude to joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. It is no good the new Chancellor making statements, partly propagandistic and partly designed to reassure people, that there is no real change in Government policy, because the nation knows that two different policies were pursued in parallel, the consequences of which we are all aware of today.

The problem that the Government must face is the result of their long-term mismanagement of the British economy. They have presided over years of under-investment, high and costly unemployment, squandering of North sea oil reserves and, in the past three years, the growth of excessive purchasing power swollen by a falling savings ratio, a massive increase in personal borrowing and large cuts in taxation. That excess purchasing power has been reflected in both rising inflation and a horrific current account deficit.

That is the economic background against which proposals for joining the ERM must be judged. The argument about joining the ERM in the next two or three years is now largely academic. Whether or not the Prime Minister's condition that other European countries free the movement of capital is met, and whether or not United Kingdom inflation comes down from its present rate of 7·6 per cent. to the Community average, we are in no position to join so long as our vast current account deficit pertains.

Our £20 billion deficit on current account this year is almost 5 per cent. of our gross domestic product and the largest deficit that any major country has experienced since the end of the second world war. At its peak, the American deficit was less than 3·5 per cent. of GDP and its gradual diminution required several massive devaluations of the dollar before noticeable progress could be made. Today, no one has the faintest idea what the level of sterling should be in relation to the deutschmark and other European currencies.

I am aware that many other conditions would need to be satisfied before Britain could contemplate membership of the ERM. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and my right hon. and learned Friend the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer frequently refer to the need for adequate swap arrangements between the central banks, for a co-ordinated growth strategy throughout the European Community and for enhanced regional support. All those points are important, as is the ending of exchange controls in European Community countries, but it is inconceivable that we should enter the ERM and fix our exchange rate while our huge deficit remains and we have literally no idea what the rate should be.

Mr. Beith: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No, not for the moment.

If we were so foolish as to join the ERM before the problem of our deficit were resolved, we should be forced to make successive adjustments in the rate—with all the ill will that that would create—or to suffer the penalties of rising unemployment and lower output, as we became increasingly uncompetitive.

Mr. Beith: I had formed the impression that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) would join the ERM now if his four conditions were met. Is that not the right hon. Gentleman's view?

Mr. Shore: I am simply drawing attention to the problem of fixing a current, practicable and sustainable rate for sterling. It cannot be done now, given the horrendous size of our current account deficit.

Our long and far from happy experience of fixed exchange rates between 1945 and 1972 in the International Monetary Fund system should also counsel caution. Two problems were repeatedly experienced. First, there were large, short-term speculative movements, with the constant danger of exhausting our reserves. Secondly, there was medium-term loss of competitiveness, due to our slower rate of growth of productivity and our tendency to higher inflation than many of our major competitors. The result was strong pressure on us throughout that period to maintain an uncompetitive rate for sterling long after we should have devalued. That forced successive Governments in the post-war period to engage in stop-go policies and made the United Kingdom growth rate unsatisfactory compared with other, faster-moving, competitor economies.

There can be no real stability in exchange rates while there are large differences in productivity and inflation between member countries. Large differences remain today between ourselves and both Germany and France. Furthermore, as the case for periodic realignments in exchange rates becomes ever stronger, the pressure for adjustments falls on the weaker currencies and is hardly felt by the stronger ones. That lack of symmetry in the adjustment process exerts deflationary pressure on all weaker economies in fixed exchange rate systems.

The ERM, which has been the focus of much of the debate, is no exception. Those who claim the virtues of the ERM should look at the performance of the economies of the member states. Unemployment in France has remained virtually static for the past four years and was running at 10 per cent., or 2·6 million men and women, in May this year. During the same four-year period, unemployment in Italy has risen from 9·2 per cent. to 10·7 per cent., reaching a total of nearly 2·9 million people. Unemployment of 10 per cent. in the Netherlands and Belgium has shown only a marginal improvement in the past four years.

Those figures of 10 per cent.-plus unemployment in major European economies within the ERM compare with 6·8 per cent. unemployment in May 1989 in the United Kingdom. Most of us believe that that is still much too high, but it is well below the levels of our European neighbours.

The only country in Europe that has seen a near return to full employment and a substantial decrease in the numbers of unemployed in the past four years is Germany, where the unemployment rate was only 5·9 per cent. in May 1989. Far from achieving convergence since the

[Mr. Shore]

formation of the ERM in 1979, the German trade surplus with other EC countries has massively increased in terms of both money and import-export ratios.

Our experience of fixed exchange rates in the IMF—which was far from the happy one that some seem to recall—took place against a background of strong controls over the movement of capital from the United Kingdom into the outside world. We no longer have those controls; we no longer have any exchange controls. The cost of maintaining a fixed rate for sterling is bound to be much more onerous in the future than it has been in the past.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): My right hon. Friend has not mentioned the way in which the inflation rates of the countries that he has named have come together. I should have thought that, if we are to discuss the convergence of the economies of those countries, we should consider that factor.

Mr. Shore: It is one of the mix of matters that should concern all who wish to see a balanced, effective and successful macro-economic policy; but to posit the overriding importance of counter-inflation against our other major interests—growth in the economy, and the provision of jobs—is far more a Conservative philosophy than one that has commended itself to Opposition Members. All those matters need to be debated and evaluated seriously before any decision is made to return to a fixed exchange rate system.

In my view—I address this remark particularly to the right hon. Member for Blaby—it would be both dangerous and wrong for Britain to make its decision about joining the exchange rate mechanism not on economic grounds, but as a political act—either as a gesture to demonstrate our European bona fides or, still more disastrous, as a prelude to the full-blown economic and monetary union described in stages 2 and 3 of the Delors report. We must judge such issues in the economic interests of our people, not simply as part of a madcap rush towards federalism in western Europe.

5.51 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I am surprised that the Opposition decided to have a second Supply day to debate the economy within seven days of the first. Nothing in the economy has changed since last week: it is as strong as it was then, and has the same troublesome but, I hope, short-term problems. The only difference is that we have a new Chancellor of the Exchequer. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his new appointment, and wish him every success in his post. He has come in at a difficult time, but his background as a banker and former Chief Secretary to the Treasury will provide him with invaluable experience, and I am sure that he will fill the position with distinction.

Like my hon. Friends—and, indeed, many Opposition Members—I think that the former Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), will go down in history as a great reformer. The country will, I believe, benefit greatly over the years from his reforms, particularly his reform of company taxation and the part that he played in creating the enterprise economy by reducing direct taxation dramatically and encouraging the talented in every sphere to work in this country. I find it odd that the Opposition, who were so critical of the former Chancellor last week, are now turning him into their hero, although both my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the new Chancellor have said that there will be no change of policy, and that the Government's priority will continue to be the defeat of inflation.

If any justifiable criticism could be made of the previous Chancellor, and his policies, it would be that the Government, having brought inflation down to its lowest level for decades, have allowed it to rise again. It is easy to be wise after the event, and I think that, understandably, the former Chancellor underestimated the extent to which the economy was overheating in the first half of 1988. To be fair, I must point out that the statistics on which he and the Bank of England must work could be much better, as has been pointed out several times by the Treasury Select Committee.

Most people, I think, agree in retrospect that monetary conditions in the first half of 1988 were too lax, and that it was a mistake to try to shadow the deutschmark at a level of DM3 to the pound when market pressures were forcing the pound up.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Did my hon. Friend hear the former Chancellor say that he recommended according the Bank of England similar status to that of the German Bundesbank, and that the Bundesbank had enjoyed constitutional independence and been both a brake on inflation and a prudent guardian of the money supply in the Federal Republic, thus providing the benefits that we have seen in that country? Will my hon. Friend say a little more about what may be the ex-Chancellor's final legacy to the House, in that he has moved us in the same direction—I hope inexorably?

Mr. Townend: I noted what the former Chancellor said with great interest, and have made a note to refer to it later in my speech.

To shadow the deutschmark, the Chancellor reduced interest rates several times, and I think that that error played a major part in the overheating of the economy. If it had not been made, our trade deficit would now be lower, as would inflation, and interest rates would not have been able to rise so much. Taking that into account, I find it strange that so many hon. Members on both sides of the House are so enthusiastic about joining the exchange rate mechanism. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby was shadowing the deutschmark, the United Kingdom was a de facto member of the ERM, and we are now paying a heavy price for that.

Mr. Bell: The hon. Gentleman is quite right: at that time we were a de facto member of the ERM. That was the entire policy, although it certainly was not elaborated by the Treasury.

The hon. Gentleman has criticised the former Chancellor for shadowing the deutschmark. The real reason why the economy went into disequilibrium was not that, however, but the fact that the right hon. Gentleman reduced income tax so much that he put £6,000 million into the economy.

Mr. Townend: There is another reason, which I shall come to in a minute.

If there was a disagreement between the former Chancellor and the Prime Minister at that time—as many commentators have said—time has proved that, once again, the Prime Minister was right. It is not often that I agree with the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), but I thought that he made some relevant points. We are not yet fully aware of the strain that will be put on the system when the other members of the ERM abolish exchange controls.

I also find it strange that those on the Opposition Front Bench are so keen to join a mechanism that depends on the dictate of the Bundesbank. Let me now deal with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher). I thought that one of the ex-Chancellor's most significant statements today was his suggestion that he had advanced to the Prime Minister proposals to make the Bank of England independent and more like the Bundesbank. That may indeed be one of his great legacies: an independent Bank of England would give us even less reason to join the ERM and experience the discipline of the Bundesbank.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the new Chancellor will not slavishly follow an exchange rate policy, and increase interest rates to a level that will force us into a major recession. Interest rates are very high at present, and, while I accept that such rates are necessary, they are bearing down very hard on the small businesses that are the seedcorn of our future success.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) referred to the shadowing of the deutschmark. Although the shadowing of the deutschmark, and the low interest rates that went with it, was partly responsible for the upsurge in inflation, the seeds of the inflation that we are now having to deal with were sown in 1986, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer stopped targeting broad money. I accept all the difficulties that in measuring broad money, but the argument in its favour was put cogently by William Rees-Mogg in a press article yesterday. His argument was most convincing. Whatever the problems of measuring broad money may be—and I accept that there are problems—may I ask the new Chancellor not to ignore it.

The trade deficit is too high for comfort. However, it is not mirrored, as is the case with most trade deficits, by a budget deficit. The deficit is caused by the private sector spending too much, running down savings too much and borrowing too much. Over time, the trade deficit should right itself, but the position will improve more quickly if we improve the supply side of the economy.

The major cause of the trade deficit is said to be the decline in our manufacturing base. The figures for the motor car industry show that there is a deficit of £6 billion, so the point is well made. We must ask ourselves why the United Kingdom ceased to be a car exporting country in surplus and became a car importing country in deficit. The answer is that we did not make the right cars at the right price and of the right quality, with the right after-sales service that the market wanted. Without doubt, a large part of the blame for that lies at the door of the Opposition paymasters, the trade unions.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Does it not have any connection with the fact that one quarter of our manufacturing capacity and 28 per cent. of our manufacturing jobs were closed down between 1979 and 1983?

Mr. Townend: That has nothing to do with the car industry. Just look back to the 1970s—to the disruption in the car industry. At open-air meetings, there were no secret ballots, and out the workers went on unofficial strike. Just look at the restrictive practices, the go-slows, the refusal to accept new technology. Management was unable to manage and the industry was dominated by militant shop stewards.

We should cast our minds back to what happened to the Rootes family business, a fine British motor car firm that tried to stand up to crypto-Communist, Left-wing shop stewards. A strike at Acton went on for week after week. The company was financially crippled and had to sell out to Chrysler in America. British Leyland would have gone broke had it not been for the millions of pounds of taxpayers' money that were poured into it. In some factories, quality control managers were ordered to limit the number of cars that they sent back for poor quality because there would have been a strike if more than a certain number had gone back. Those cars went to the customer. That is what destroyed the British car industry.

This Government, under the Prime Minister, have dealt with those problems. We have stopped the rot by reforming industrial legislation and by bringing the trade unions within the law. We have severely restricted picketing, blacking and sympathy strikes. The British motor car industry is beginning to rise like a phoenix from the ashes. Investment is pouring in, but sadly much of it is Japanese. Beggars, however, cannot be choosers. The Opposition's friends destroyed the industry; we need help to rebuild it. Nissan will be producing 400,000 cars within five years, Toyota 200,000 cars and Honda 200,000 cars. In the mid-1990s, that will have a significant effect on our balance of trade. We shall reduce our imports and we shall reconquer the European car market.

All of us agree that British industry must keep down unit costs. Is it not tragic, when we have this balance of trade deficit, that the engineers are demanding a reduction in the working week to 35 hours and threatening to go on strike? If they win, that will increase our unit labour costs, at a time when we cannot afford to do so. If the Opposition want to be considered able to form a responsible alternative Government, they should tell the engineers to settle and condemn their ridiculous action.

A reduction in the working week at this time would do more damage than at any other time in the last 10 years. The labour market is very tight. If we reduced the working week, we should reduce the number of hours of skilled labour that are available. That would lead to inflationary pressures on the skilled work force. The reason for the shortage of skilled workers is the decline in apprenticeships —again partly due to the ridiculous attitude during the last 10 years of the unions that have forced up apprentices' wages. The only place where there has been an increase in apprenticeships is the electrical industry. The union leaders have been sensible. They have decided to reform apprenticeships by reducing the length of apprenticeships and the level of pay. Therefore, apprenticeships in the electrical industry are now expanding.

I wish the new Chancellor every success. It is quite clear that it is business as usual, that there will be no let-up in the Government's determination to solve the short-term economic problems. My hon. Friends and I are fully behind the Chancellor and the Prime Minister.

[Mr. Townend]

6.6 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I wish the Chancellor well and welcome him to his new job, to which he brings particular qualities, relevant experience and the courtesy that we have all come to expect from him. It is a very odd course of career that has brought him to the job at this time. If I were in the furniture removing business, I would get to know him well. His effects must have been careering up and down Whitehall at an alarming rate. As I heard the cheers of his hon. Friends, I thought that they ought to press him to their bosom while they still can, before he is moved on to something else.

If, for example, the new Foreign Secretary is thought after a week or two to have gone native—there is a considerable risk of that, after his previous experience at the Foreign Office—the Prime Minister would be on the phone to the Chancellor, saying, "John, I need you back in the Foreign Office." It may be that the new Home Secretary will be moved yet again to another post to fill the gap that the Prime Minister creates by her manner of conducting business.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The Chancellor has had as many job changes as the party of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has had name changes.

Mr. Beith: I am very happy with my party's name. The hon. Gentleman must be careful what he says. It is all coming out this afternoon. We now see the differences on the Government side over the European monetary system. It is impossible for Ministers to say that the policy remains unchanged after the clear assertion of the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), that he believes that we should join the European monetary system in the shortest possible time. We have heard his successor pronounce a formula that is closer to the Prime Minister's words, one that we understand will have to be interpreted in the light of her words, which means that it will take an unconscionably long time to join the European monetary system.

We have also heard from the right hon. Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) a clear declaration that, if certain terms can be met—which are a little far-fetched because they rely on the Germans embarking on a policy of reflation, which seems unlikely, at best—the Labour party would take us into the EMS immediately. However, in last week's debate, senior Labour party members made pronouncements in terms that were very close to those of the Prime Minister. They could usefully hold a little seminar at which the Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and others could gather together to extend the list of conditions that would have to be satisfied before they could support entry into the EMS. Between them they could produce volumes of conditions. All of them represent delicate compromises by means of which each of the parties can refer to the EMS, because both parties are divided as to whether we should enter the EMS.

The Chancellor's speech was thin on certain of the major issues on which answers are currently sought. It did not give any clear guidance about the Government's monetary policy. The Chancellor spoke of a broad range of indicators. He did not tell us whether he places his faith in M0 or whether we are to have a new indicator of broad money. He did not tell us whether movements in the money supply or movements in the exchange rate will determine the level of interest rates.

He was still unclear what he meant by his preference for a strong pound, and how far he would go to secure it. We know that he will spend our reserves to secure it, as that was clearly done on Friday, but how far will he raise interest rates to "buck the market" and keep the pound at the level he prefers? That remains unclear, and his speech added nothing to our knowledge.

The Chancellor's words about the European monetary system demonstrate vividly that the Prime Minister's prejudices are still determining that issue. The Prime Minister is like the heroine of one of those old black-and-white films, who is always waiting to get on the train that is about to leave. The guard blows his whistle and still she will not get on board. We sit in the cinema wondering whether she will board the train or remain on the platform locked in an embrace. The Prime Minister is embracing her prejudices, her belief in national sovereignty and her conviction that, however little power we exercise, we must preserve the illusion of sovereignty. So she never boards the train.

Mr. Butcher: I should like to put to the hon. Gentleman the same question I asked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon. The SLD is in favour of almost immediate membership of the exchange rate mechanism. If we did so with a margin of 7 per cent. between German and British interest rates, and if British borrowers bypassed with impunity the domestic constraints and borrowed from Frankfurt, would that not increase the money supply and add to domestic inflation? When would the hon. Gentleman suggest we join the exchange rate mechanism—now, under those circumstances?

Mr. Beith: Borrowers are quite free to borrow in Frankfurt now. The former Chancellor quite rightly removed exchange controls and capital controls. One disincentive to borrowing abroad is uncertainty about the exchange rate, and clearly that is a changing situation. Clearly, the basis on which we would enter the exchange rate mechanism and the terms of the currency at the moment of our entry are bound to be influenced by such issues. The Conservative party is supposed to be in favour of liberal exchange rates and a free regime in which people can borrow freely in any part of Europe. I believe that any security or framework for our currency requires us to join the European monetary system as soon as we reasonably can.

What other respite is being offered to those who now have to face a £900-a-year increase on a £30,000 mortgage as a result of the interest rate increases since March? What respite is offered to all the other victims of high interest rates?

There can be no serious prospect of lower interest rates, unless some alternative to present policy is found. Only one element of that alternative is membership of the exchange rate mechanism. There have to be other components. There has to be a tight fiscal policy, but that should not be achieved by further cuts in the very public expenditure which is necessary to turn round our balance of payments deficit. We should not start cutting expenditure on training, research and the infrastructure, which are most in need of additional expenditure. The new

Chancellor, as a former Chief Secretary, was familiar with that exercise. He was so recently in that office that I was tempted to use his former title.

If we launch into public expenditure cuts in those areas, we shall never get the trade deficit sorted out. It must therefore be achieved by other means. We have suggested increases in national insurance contributions, a commitment not to make tax cuts in the next Budget and the abandonment of the 20p in the pound tax pledge. I did not hear anything from the new Chancellor about whether he still holds to that pledge, and whether that policy is unchanged.

We want incentives for saving, and we have suggested changes in funding policy all designed to accompany membership of the exchange rate mechanism. We certainly would not argue that that by itself would solve our economic problems. The Chancellor was building a straw man, erecting a whole structure around the idea that there are those who believe that membership of the exchange rate mechanism would sort out all our problems.

As it is, there is no framework, no rule and no discipline now governing British economic policy. We are not in the exchange rate mechanism and we are clearly not joining it; we do not have in independent central bank; and the right hon. Member for Blaby implied that we must have one or the other if anti-inflation policy is to be credible. It would be interesting to hear whether the study of central bank independence to which he referred has been taken any further or whether it found its way into the Prime Minister's or Sir Alan Walters's wastepaper basket; and if so, for what reason. Perhaps it is to be a new source of dispute. Is it an unchanged commitment which will be continued by the new Chancellor, or will it surge forward at some point as the issue on which he resigns when he discovers that it is the subject of tittle-tattle and unwarranted things all got up by the press?

There is no clear framework within which British economic policy operates—it is not the EMS, the independent central bank, broad money or narrow money; and it is certainly not the exchange rate. If monetarism cannot be worked by the present Government, I cannot conceive of any Government that could make it work. If a strict monetary policy tied to M0 cannot be made to work by this Government, with the authoritarian power that is exercised by the Prime Minister and that certainly was not exercised in America by President Reagan, I suspect that the experiment has been carried out and that we have demonstrated that there is no political structure short of absolute dictatorship in which pure monetarism can be applied.

We now have the economic management of a touch on the tiller, but the Chancellor will find that two different hands are reaching for the tiller. If he is not careful, the new Chancellor will find that another hand is there before his.

The right hon. Member for Blaby stated in his resignation letter:

> "The successful conduct of economic policy is possible only if there is—and is seen to be—full agreement between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer."

How will that ever be secured other than by subservience? How did the Prime Minister manage to contrive that what the former Chancellor wanted as his price for staying happened as soon as he had got out of the door? That is the unanswered question about the details of last week. How could she have received and accepted the very resignation which had been sought the moment that the former Chancellor had departed? Did she try to dissuade Sir Alan Walters from resigning? We never found out.

The former Trade Secretary, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), dwelt on how dangerous it was for a captain to appear semi-detached from the team, and said that, had Lord Whitelaw still been in the Government, he would have warned the Prime Minister that she was in danger of having to choose between her adviser and the Chancellor. The Prime Minister said that the Chancellor was *unassailable. What Chancellor is* unassailable if his chosen exchange rate policy is publicly challenged by the Prime Minister's adviser? What Chancellor is unassailable if the Government's stated conditions for entering the European monetary system are extended every time the Prime Minister opens her mouth, and particularly every time she appears on television? The longer that interview had continued, the more conditions she could have produced to prevent our entering the exchange rate mechanism.

It is all part of a wider issue. As the right hon. Member for Blaby pointed out, it is the tip of an iceberg. The Prime Minister's dispute with the former Chancellor, her hectoring of our European partners and her behaviour at the Commonwealth conference are all of a piece. It all rests on the belief that she alone is right and everyone else is out of step. It is no basis for running Commonwealth, Europe or Cabinet, and it comes home most particularly in Cabinet government. It means that nothing the Chancellor could say today can claim much credibility. Indeed, if his stature grows in office, his future will be shortened.

The whole character of British government under the Prime Minister has become autocratic, centralised and patronising. Power is concentrated as never before. Cabinet government has gone the way of local government. The Prime Minister has no time for it, and the people of this country are the victims.

Liberal Democrats are determined to secure for this country a system of government in which no future Prime Minister can exercise such unchallenged power.

6.19 pm

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) envisaged a seminar to be attended by the Prime Minister, Labour Members and himself. That is an enticing thought. I do not like seminars, but I should like to be present at that one.

There seemed to be something of a black hole in the policy that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed outlined, but he made some interesting remarks about the European monetary system. I shall not talk about that, neither shall I talk about Sir Alan Walters.

There was even more of a black hole in the critical speech made by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). Although his name was not mentioned, there was the all-pervasive presence of one man throughout the speeches that the right hon. and learned Gentleman made last week and today—Mr. Walter Mondale, to whom I shall return shortly.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of his new high office, in which we all know that he will perform exceedingly well. He has a difficult task ahead, for two reasons. First, as was confirmed this afternoon, his predecessor is a man of massive intellectual distinction, knowledge and ability and, secondly, because the legacy

[Sir Ian Gilmour]

that my right hon. Friend has inherited is not as he would wish. He made a good start today with a most pugnacious and partisan speech. Although there was not a black hole in his policy, there was a small gap in it, with which I should like to deal in a moment.

My right hon. Friend mentioned the balance of payments, although not in as much detail as I should have wished, and said that it would come down in line with inflation. The key question is whether by using a single weapon the balance of payments problem and inflation can be conquered. That is not only interesting but it is the key factor in whether we shall have a Conservative Government after 1992.

The Government have never exactly explained how interest rates are meant to cure inflation—certainly not through controlling the money supply, as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed suggested. I do not think that anyone believes that that now happens. But as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor seemed to suggest, they work by cutting demand, so unemployment rises and wage claims are reduced. There is pressure on companies not to accede to wage claims, and therefore inflation falls as companies' profit margins, particularly on exports, are squeezed. Clearly, that is not the only way of cutting demand and it has obvious disadvantages, which I shall mention only briefly as the House is well aware of them.

The first disadvantage of using interest rates is that they have an immediate effect on the retail price index and therefore increase inflation. It is a perfectly respectable argument to say that mortgage interest rates should not be included in the RPI, but the fact is that increases in mortgages increase housing costs and will have an effect on wage claims later this year.

The second disadvantage is that high interest rates have an uncertain effect over an uncertain period. The Government have been using the interest-rate weapon with increasing strength for a year, but it is still unclear when, whether, where and by how much the economy is slowing down.

The third disadvantage is injustice. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor freely conceded, people who have bought houses, or who are trying to do so, are, through no fault of their own, suffering grievously. High interest rates have equally important, if not more important, effects on industrial investment, which has only recently recovered, and therefore have serious implications for our future.

The fourth disadvantage of high interest rates is their perverse effect on the balance of payments. Squeezing export margins not only makes it difficult for exporters to export but sometimes makes it almost impossible. After a year of the medicine that we have been enjoying—if that is the right word—the last quarter was the worst for the balance of payments in our history. Although the last month was slightly less discouraging than the preceding two, the last quarter has been disastrous.

Everyone now seems to agree that a sharp fall in demand is necessary. As the policy of high interest rates has the considerable disadvantages that I have mentioned, the onus is surely heavy on the Government to prove that no other weapon could or should be used. Until now, that onus of proof has not come anywhere near being discharged. Indeed, it has hardly been attempted.

In his speech last week, when he was interrupted by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) dismissed out of hand the use of fiscal measures to reduce demand, curb inflation and help the balance of payments. If I understood my right hon. Friend the Chancellor correctly, he said the same this afternoon. He said that we should use all practical levers, but then said that the key lever is monetary policy. He said nothing about using fiscal policy.

As it is now widely agreed that the tax cuts in the 1988 Budget were too high, surely this is the time to rectify that mistake. The Government's objective is to cut demand, and tax rates do that far better than high interest rates, because they are far fairer and do not hit investment but cut consumption.

The Labour party is unable to recommend that obvious expedient—to some extent, the same applies to the Liberal Democrats, if that is the right name—because of its electoral unpopularity. We all know what happened to Walter Mondale—he has never been heard of or seen since he fought the 1984 election on a tax-increasing policy. Mr. Bush got himself into quite a lot of trouble by following the reverse of that example in 1988. The Government are not prepared to implement such a policy, because they have made such a fetish of tax cuts. We all welcome tax cuts and have done very well from them, but surely it is wholly erroneous to think that taxes should never increase. Surely the only proper way to proceed is to cut taxes when one can and raise them when one must. Surely this near-crisis is one of the occasions when taxes should be raised.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The right hon. Gentleman should be careful about what taxes he is talking about. He must remember that the Government have increased taxes as a proportion of gross domestic product, whereas they were about 4 or 5 per cent. lower under the last Labour Administration.

Sir Ian Gilmour: I apologise if I did not make myself clear. I was talking about direct taxes, which I think was implicit when I mentioned the tax cuts in 1988.

I believe that income tax should be increased and that the ceiling on national insurance contributions should be removed. That is one point about which I am in agreement with the Social and Liberal Democratic party. If taxes are not increased, it will be difficult to solve the current problem.

Another expedient that is derided by many hon. Members on this side of the House—it certainly has great disadvantages, but I do not believe that it would be right entirely to rule it out—is some sort of credit controls. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby said in his Mansion house speech, they would be very leaky and there would be massive evasion, but would there be so much evasion that they would not be worth having? There is considerable income tax evasion, but no one has suggested that we should not have income tax.

The Government have not made the case in practice —that is important, because so far the medicine has not worked very well—and neither have they argued it properly in theory, for using only high interest rates, which have considerable disadvantages. I hope that they will think again. The enormous advantage of raising direct taxes and using direct control of credit is that the reduction in domestic demand would, so far as possible, be concentrated on personal consumption, which is where it is needed. With lower interest rates and ultimately a lower real rate of exchange, industrial investment and international competitiveness would be better sustained. After we have turned what my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby suggested will be an awkward corner, there will be a reasonable chance of achieving at a later stage sustained non-inflationary growth. There will be a real chance that the Conservative party will win the next general election.

6.30 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): The hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) suggested that, because we were courteous and polite to the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), we accepted the Government's economic policies. That is untrue. It has been said repeatedly that it is business as usual. I shudder to think about that, because it means that we shall have a £20 billion deficit by the end of the year. The former Chancellor suggested that that did not matter and neither did the fact that we will have a manufacturing deficit of £17·5 billion. Far from being a success story, the economic record of the Government since 1979 has been one of failure. Under this Government, the increase in expenditure on manufactured goods has been three times greater than the increase in what has been spent on the production of manufactured goods. That is a way to disaster.

Since the Government took office in 1979, there has been a 20 to 25 per cent. destruction of manufacturing industry and we are paying a heavy price for that now. The growth in output since 1979 shows that this country is 17th out of the 18 OECD countries. That is far from being a success—it is a failure. If the Government continue to claim it as a success, I would not like to see what they regard as a failure.

Last year the former Chancellor spent billions of pounds trying to keep the pound below DM3. This year he has spent billions of pounds trying to keep it above DM3. Clearly, both policies cannot be right. To continue with that policy would be akin to economic madness. The consequences of attempting to keep the pound at a level that cannot be sustained were pointed out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) when he said that successive Governments—including previous Labour Governments—have paid a heavy price for trying to keep the currency at a level that one cannot protect. It would be better to allow it to float downwards.

The right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) referred to high interest rates attracting hot money into the country. That hot money would quickly leave when interest rates came down. High interest rates mean mortgages that people cannot afford and that is under a Government who talk about a property-owning democracy. People will have to give up their homes because they cannot afford them and young couples cannot even think about buying. Even more disturbing is the cut that will take place in investment in manufacturing industry. Already we are investing less than our competitors such as France, Italy or West Germany. The Confederation of British Industry predicts that the cut will occur in 1990. As a consequence of that cut we will be less competitive and there will be a rise in unemployment.

That is the price that the British people will have to pay if we continue with the policies adopted by the previous Chancellor. We have heard today from the Prime Minister and the Chancellor that that is the path they will follow, whatever the consequences. It would make more sense if we kept the pound below DM3 as it would make our products more competitive in relation to Germany. It would also make imports from Germany more expensive. That would be sensible because we have a trade deficit with West Germany of £9 billion. We need to obtain a bigger share of that market. It is madness to continue with the present policy.

We should be looking at how we can revitalise our manufacturing industry. The Conservative party does not understand manufacturing industry or what it has done to it. It is good to have an economic debate on the day that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said at the Dispatch Box that the Government are withdrawing the golden share from Jaguar. That will mean that the last of the totally British-owned motor manufacturers will go to the wall. It does not seem to matter that by that policy he has created a bear garden in which the multinational American companies will slug it out. It does not seem to matter that research and development in Jaguar will go overseas. The Minister does not seem to care about the consequences for Jaguar employees, or what our position in the motor industry will be.

That is symptomatic of the Government's approach to manufacturing industry in general. It is a sad state of affairs. We ought to be looking——

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): The Chancellor tried to say that the imbalance between Germany and other nations was caused by retailing and reinvestment. I was asked recently by a managing director in my constituency to visit his company. The company has a policy to buy British. It has spent six months scouring Britain in an attempt to obtain British machinery for retooling. The Government have completely destroyed that sector of the economy and that company had to buy Japanese and German machinery. That whole sector of manufacturing industry and the new technologies in packaging have been destroyed and companies cannot now buy British when they want to.

Mr. Hoyle: That is a good point. If one goes into any plant where investment is taking place—particularly in machine tools—one finds that companies are forced to buy foreign because the goods are no longer available in this country. A large part of the destruction of the manufacturing industry has involved the machine tool industry. That seedcorn has gone. The Government are doing nothing to bring about the revitalisation of manufacturing industry. They say that we can be prosperous with a service economy. We have seen the consequences of buying goods from abroad in our £20 billion deficit.

We ought to be trying to give incentives to manufacturing industry to strengthen the manufacturing base that we have left. One of the tragedies of Government policy was seen recently in Sunderland, where two companies wanted to recommence shipbuilding. Those companies did not want any intervention funding and would have been prepared to re-establish shipbuilding in an area where labour was still available. However, the Government went to the European Commission and were

[Mr. Hoyle]

ready to accept that, if the companies reopened for shipbuilding, there could be a cost of about £90 million. That is ridiculous. They ought to have said that we are going to see shipbuilding reopened in Sunderland because there is going to be an upturn. However, that is typical of the Government's outlook in relation to manufacturing industry.

The same is true of training. The hon. Member for Bridlington talked about a reduction in the working week. The West Germans already enjoy a shorter working week, yet they are more competitive than us. The hon. Gentleman said that a shorter working week would cause a problem because of the skills shortage. That shortage exists because we are not training people and are not providing training in the new industries, such as information technology. That is one of the tragedies. The problem with the Government is that they think always in the short term, never in the long term.

I am sorry that the new Chancellor of the Exchequer is not in the Chamber. We wish him well in his new job, but we heard a very uninspired speech from him. Much effort was needed by Conservative Members even to acknowledge that the right hon. Gentleman had completed his speech. One or two tried bravely to wave their Order Papers. We could see that there was no great enthusiasm for what he was saying.

The right hon. Gentleman's problem is the problem of the previous Chancellor—who will be in charge of the Department? One suspects that "Fortress Thatcher" will continue and that the Prime Minister will continue to run this Department as she runs every other Department, whatever the possible cost of having the Prime Minister running that Department and whatever the possible cost to our international standing. We gather from what she said on Sunday that she will continue to do it her way and if her Ministers do not like it, they can get out of the Cabinet. That applies, of course, to the present Chancellor.

This shows the need for a different Government who will collaborate with our European partners and end what the Bundesbank is doing in terms of deflationary policy. That must be the way forward. We need a Government who care not only about national but about regional policies. I am afraid that, judging by what we have heard from Conservative Members, we will not have that type of Government from the Conservatives. We need a new Government who will have faith in the country, our people and the future. I know that we will not get that from the Conservatives. Only a Labour Government can bring that about. *[Laughter.]* If I were a Conservative Member, I would not laugh so loudly. Some Conservative Members have only a short time to remain in the House.

6.42 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): It must be unusual in the House for a particular economic concept to form the touchstone of a major political debate and even more unusual—it is perhaps unprecedented—for an esoteric, technical mechanism such as the exchange rate mechanism to be the source and focus of so much emotion.

There is a perfectly coherent, valid, intellectual argument that Governments should not concern themselves with exchange rates, that the target of macro-economic demand management should be the maintenance of equilibrium between money supply and productive capacity, and that Governments who interfere with exchange rates run into fundamental contradictions with sound monetary management. It is true that it is technically impossible to target a particular monetary aggregate and the exchange rate. If one targets the exchange rate, one commits oneself to increasing interest rates if the exchange rate falls below the target, thereby reducing demand. If the parity tends to move above the target, one has to reduce interest rates and inrease demand. The monetary course is therefore changed involuntarily.

One great problem for those who follow that argument is that, since the end of the Bretton Woods system in 1971 —indeed, in modern history—there has never been a Government of any major western country who for any length of time have been disinterested in the level of the exchange rate. That is more than a reflection of the natural detrimental desire of all politicians to interfere in and manipulate the economy. There is a sound theoretical basis for the stance that has been adopted by all western Governments.

First, the notorious stickiness of prices in modern economies produces a ratchet effect. Unionised labour demands nominal increases in wages to cover actual, recorded or expected inflation but does not accept nominal reductions in wages, however far prices may fall.

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman is explaining an interesting theory about trade unionists accepting wage cuts in times of recession. Is the hon. Gentleman, with his various directorships and other arrangements providing tens of thousands of pounds for working here part time, prepared to give up some of that money, given the value of his work in the House?

Mr. Davies: I would be in danger of being ruled out of order if I followed the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I look forward to the opportunity to debate that matter with him in another context.

Because of the ratchet effect, if one's currency depreciates unduly, one suddenly finds that a higher level of inflation has been built in without the possibility of building it out if the parity rises.

Secondly, there is the technical deficiency of monetarism. The theory is based on the assumption that there must be some objective measure for policy. Under modern conditions, almost no one has succeeded in finding an aggregate that tracks effectively the money supply and aggregate demand over a period. The United States may have done that—I think of M2 in the first half of this century, which is the basis for Milton Friedman's famous work on that subject and, indeed, his Nobel prize. However, no one in Great Britain has been able to find an index that even begins to play the role that the monetarists require of it.

Thirdly, no responsible Government can contemplate a unilateral free float. If every other country is intervening to manage its exchange rate, clearly any country that declines to join that game will be the passive victim of those intervention policies. Free floating, rather like football, is probably a game that cannot be played alone. It requires others who are prepared to play by the same rules.

The argument which is pursued enthusiastically between those who say that in no circumstances should Governments intervene in the exchange rate or adopt an exchange rate policy and the supporters of the ERM is a charade. This is an elaborate debate which has nothing to do with the issue. The issue is not whether we should have an exchange rate policy but whether, if we were part of the ERM, that policy would be more effective and we could achieve given objectives at a cheaper price. That means not just a smaller use of reserves to maintain a particular parity but moving interest rates, for example, less far in either direction to counter an undesired rise or fall in parity, resulting in a smaller loss to other economic objectives.

I find it difficult not to take the view that within the ERM, monetary policy would be more effective and, in the sense in which I have defined it, cheaper. It cannot make sense to suppose that if we were co-ordinating our use of reserves with others' use of reserves, so that intervention was in the same direction, it would not be more effective. A greater weight of demand or supply for a given currency would bear on the markets at a given time.

There is also the great matter of confidence. There could be no greater degree of commitment by any Government to a particular exchange rate policy than to announce the exchange rate which is targeted. That would be the effect of our joining the ERM, and we have not done that up till now.

Conversely, if we decline to join the ERM, I am afraid that we shall be sending a signal to the financial markets to the effect that we are unwilling or unable to accept the degree of discipline which is required for us to join. We would again be regarded as having a more volatile and weaker currency structurally than have the countries which are members of the ERM. That would be dangerous because a weaker currency discounts a higher level of inflation and interest rates, and the prophecies can too easily be self-fulfilling.

The Chancellor made a positive speech today. It has been an encouraging day for those who are committed to stability in the economy and to our future prosperity to hear that our joining the ERM is no longer a question of whether but of when. We must have a viable system which is able to deliver the advantages that I have set out, and we must have the right parity at the moment when we join; DM2·85 is much closer to whatever the right parity is than is DM3·15, which was the figure not long ago. The country can take from today's debate a message of considerable encouragement. It is with pleasure that I endorse the remarks of the Chancellor.

6.52 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I was intrigued by the speech of the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) I was not sure whether he was referring to monetarism today, yesterday or tomorrow. It was interesting to learn that the parity of no devaluation welcomes a devaluation of the pound from DM3·15 to DM2·85. It seems that that message has not yet reached the occupants of the Conservative Back Benches.

I was grateful when the Chancellor allowed me to intervene earlier so that I could put to him a point contained in an OECD review showing that in relation to the British economy it was Government policy that interest rates should stay as high as necessary for as long as necessary to reduce inflationary pressures. The review went on to point out that the Government had also confirmed their commitment to not accommodating increases in domestic costs by exchange rate depreciation. In short, the British Government would use interest rates to stabilise the exchange rate and to fight inflation.

I asked the Chancellor if that was still the policy of Her Majesty's Government. During his speech he elaborated on that and said clearly that he believed in a firm exchange rate. That means that he believes that the markets should be bucked. That is a clear swing away from what I can only describe as the nefarious influence of Alan Walters at No. 10 Downing street.

Neither the Chancellor nor my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) dealt at length with the subject of credit controls. I shall not discuss that subject at length, but I trust that in due course the Minister will examine the points that I raise. A recent paper published by the International Monetary Fund entitled "The instruments and operating procedures for conducting monetary policy in the group of five countries" showed that, while the level of short-term interest rates was the main monetary policy weapon in America, Japan, West Germany, Britain and France, it was supplemented by bank reserve ratios in all the five countries except Britain.

Thus, within the central banks of our major competitors and allies is a measure of some control on their lending. Hence, if we are moving away, as I believe we are, from the single-club policy about which we have heard for so long—the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) thought that there was no other weapon—it might be useful to examine the concept of supplementing by bank reserve ratios so that we are in line with our competitors.

We also often hear from the Government—not surprisingly, I suppose—about what our policy would be in a given situation. I am reminded of the general who approached Napoleon and said, "Suppose the enemy was to the front of you and behind you. Suppose also that the enemy was to the right and left of you so that you were surrounded. What would you do to get out of that situation?" Napoleon replied, "Get out of it? I would not have got into it." Who would get into the situation of having £20 billion deficit across the exchanges? Who would get into a situation of having inflation that does not go down? Who would get into a situation of having 15 per cent. interest rates, meaning an overdraft at 18 per cent. for those who borrow, and then ask Her Majesty's Opposition, "What would you do about that?" Our answer, which we give regularly, is that we need an industrial strategy that will offset the balance of payments deficit.

We believe in an industrial rather than a financial strategy. We cannot allow our country to be overrun for years to come by imported products and respond only in a financial manner. The consequence of high interest rates is an added cost to all of us, whether or not we borrow, because at the end of the day those high interest rates bear on all members of the public. Only by embarking on an industrial strategy that gets British workers making goods for British consumers will we ease away from the massive deficit in our balance of payments. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) dealt with that issue and said that nothing was being done to revitalise industry.

In the final analysis, we are talking about the wealth of the nation, the so-called prosperity which lies in the net worth of the personal sector, which is based on the inflated

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

value of people's homes. House prices have shot up by so much that we are becoming almost millionaires, in the poor sense of the word. Paul Getty used to describe himself as a rich millionaire. I recall once joking that I was a poor millionaire, and I have had to live with that remark ever since. With property values rising, we are getting wealthier. We have witnessed what a newspaper referred to as the embourgeoisement of the British people.

That has nothing to do with the creation of wealth or with the productive capacity of our manufacturing base: it is happening simply because so much money is available to enable people to buy property that house prices spiral, and intangibly some of us have the impression that we are becoming richer. I say "intangibly" because, when we come to sell the family home and buy another, we have to get on the treadmill again—borrowing more money to buy another house at a greatly inflated value—and so the process continues. The bubble expands until one day, like all bubbles, it bursts.

The Government make a vice out of their own virtues. Hardly a Chancellor's Question Time goes by without some reference to the iniquity of allowing mortgage payments to be part of the retail price index. We are constantly told that, if that did not happen, our inflation rate would be lower than that of Italy. Only the Republic of Ireland, we are told, follows the same system.

We are told that the Government believe in and stand for a property-owning democracy. The Conservatives want everyone to own their own homes. Indeed, they arrange the financial conditions to that end, so that in the Chancellor's constituency of Huntingdon people can borrow five times their annual earnings to buy properties. The Government then complain all the way to the House of Commons about the unfairness of the system and the extent of mortgage payments ending up in the retail price index. As the Chancellor may one day want to come to the House to tell us that he is going to take mortgage payments out of the RPI, he must remind the House that other countries, which do not have the same policy and which have a large rented sector, use a rental value in the calculation of the inflation rate. The Chancellor cannot simply say that he will take mortgage payments out of the RPI and thus bring down inflation without putting something in its place, as our competitors in Europe do.

The Prime Minister showed her solidarity with her new Chancellor today. We all know that she believes in Victorian values, but they did not necessarily work in those days and they work even less today, 100 years later. The old Victorian concept of covering one's balance of payments deficit on manufactured goods by invisibles through the City of London has died the death. Last month's deficit was reached after imports of £10·37 billion exceeded exports worth £8·4 billion. The surplus on trade in services and profits from abroad was put at £300 million —hardly a significant contribution to reducing a trade deficit which has reached such massive proportions.

The Prime Minister certainly believes in freedom, but it is the freedom to push up interest rates and to threaten the small business man. We have heard from the Chancellor that the number of new starts in business is 1,600 a week. He did not tell the House how many businesses close down in the same period.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): The figure was net.

Mr. Bell: I did not hear the word "net", but if the figure is net I will accept that. However, the small business men have to live with high interest rates, high overdrafts and the threat of bankruptcy. Home owners have to pay more for their mortgages. In the Chancellor's constituency of Huntingdon, five times the value of a person's salary is available to obtain a mortgage.

In the Prime Minister's country, we have the freedom to risk our lives at work and the risks are greater because the Health and Safety Executive has been impoverished by Tory cuts. We have the freedom to borrow more than we can pay back through the banker's card, thus adding to insecurity. The OECD report said:

> "An increasing number of households may be overextended or severely constrained—because interest payments now amount to some 13 per cent. of disposable income and exceed interest receipts for the personal sector."

We have the freedom to worry about the future of our children, the future of our educational institutions and the education system itself. Since 1982-83, the Government have cut capital spending on education and science by 10 per cent. in real terms and serious shortages of teachers now threaten educational reform. Her Majesty's inspectors stated in their 1989 report:

> "Too many teachers fear that their profession and its work are misjudged and seriously undervalued."

The Prime Minister also gives us the freedom to leave our own homes and areas to seek work elsewhere because the Government have failed to have an appropriate regional policy. We know that average income has risen faster in the four better-off regions—the south-west, greater London, the south-east and East Anglia—but the chances of being in the bottom 10 per cent. of households in terms of earnings is greatest for the people in the west midlands and as one moves steadily north. The freedom to be homeless under this Government has doubled between 1979 and 1987, with the number of new houses completed in Great Britain falling by 17 per cent. That is the freedom in which the Prime Minister believes. It is the freedom of the condemned man. We all know the story of the condemned man who, before being taken to the scaffold, can have any breakfast he likes. That is the freedom of the British people—to have a good breakfast before the hanging.

We heard today from the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). The hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) referred to the right hon. Gentleman's speech, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle). However, the fact that we respect the former Chancellor, as a House of Commons man making a statement to us, does not mean that we accept the policy that he followed for so many years.

The steps leading to his resignation are easy to trace and they were touched on by the hon. Member for Bridlington. There was the relaxation of monetary policy in 1985. There was the devaluation of the pound which followed the fall in oil prices—another piece of sleight of hand by the former Chancellor. The party that did not devalue allowed the pound to be devalued when oil prices slipped in 1985. That gave Britain a competitive edge which ensured economic prosperity, as the country perceived it, in the run-up to the 1987 general election. We saw, in fact, a devaluation-led boom leading up to the 1987 election and, like the Barber boom, it was good old devaluation from the man who said that his party had never been the party of devaluation and never would be.

The short-term benefits were there for all to see under the effective disguise of an economic miracle. That was part of the go strategy of the former Chancellor, but when it was time to put a stop to the go policy he was unable to do so. When the consequences of the go policy were high inflation and a high balance of payments deficit, when there was a serious imbalance in and destabilisation of the economy, and when the time came to bring that under control, he was unable to do so.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): As I believe that the hon. Gentleman is a straightforward and honest man, I wish to ask him a question before he moves too far from high interest rates. His party's alternative is to have discussions with the big banks to encourage them to lend less to the public. Has he considered that it is not enough to talk only to the big banks? His party would also have to talk to the building societies, which are now free to lend for purposes other than home ownership. There are about 500 building societies in Britain. It would also have to talk to Curry's, Dixon's, Selfridges and all the shops dishing out credit on every high street. One can pick up a few thousand quid in an afternoon just with shop credit cards. The hon. Gentleman should also consider all the moneylenders. One would need to hire the Albert hall to talk all those people and institutions out of giving credit.

Mr. Bell: The Opposition believe that the single-club policy is neither an effective policy nor the only policy. As we have often said, the alternative is to consider the question of credit controls. I have given one suggestion to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on ratio bank reserves and there are other possibilities. However, I do not want to go down that road as I have to wind up my speech so that my colleagues who have been sitting here patiently can speak.

I do not want to give the impression that the former Chancellor was any kind of miracle worker. On the day he resigned, the headline in the *Evening Standard* said:

> "Miracle Worker or Mirage Builder".

There is no doubt that the former Chancellor's record reads like a bad novel in which the characters are unreal and the story line naive, and in which words count for little more than to fill page upon page of paper. Only the ending has any semblance of reality, as the novel ends in tragedy.

Last week, the former Chancellor moved an amendment to an Opposition motion in which he commended the Government on raising output. He knew all along, because he had referred to it, that the latest CBI report revealed that the volume of new orders had fallen over the past four months, the first negative result since July 1986. The right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham referred to the economy slowing down. There was proof in the CBI report, which showed that the economy was slowing down.

According to the latest OECD report, using the former Chancellor's own peculiar method of plucking statistics out of the air, growth over the past 10 years

> "hardly exceeded two per cent. per annum."

In other words, over 10 years, there was 2 per cent. growth per annum.

In his last speech from the Dispatch Box, the former Chancellor said:

> "The real issues are what is happening to productivity, to the quality and quantity of investment, to profitability and to training."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 694.]

In fact, when it comes to growth, the United Kingdom is still 25 per cent. behind most of the rest of Europe. It is 16th out of 21 in the European productivity league table, and in non-manufacturing the rate of productivity growth has been only one third as fast as in manufacturing. Investment stood at £3,000 per head in 1988. It is lower than that of our major competitors and it is half that of Japan. Between 1979 and 1987, investment rose by only 9 per cent., which is less than half as fast as consumer spending. Manufacturing investment fell by one third between 1979 and 1983.

We have listened to the Chancellor of the Exchequer today. We are aware of the mountain that faces him in tackling the balance of payments deficit and the difficulties facing him with interest rates and the exchange rate mechanism with Europe. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has the Gordian knot before him, but he has no Excalibur with which to cut it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Before calling the next hon. Member, I remind the House that Mr. Speaker has determined that speeches should be limited to 10 minutes between 7 pm and 9 pm. The digital clocks are there for all to see.

7.9 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I will of course obey your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I do not wish to hit an iceberg, or even the tip of one.

It is ironic that a few years ago, when some of us in this House and elsewhere immersed ourselves in arcane questions about the European monetary system and the exchange rate mechanism, they were dismissed as boring and sexless subjects which had no political relevance. People were not generally interested in those questions. However, hon. Members now talk of nothing else. In the Tea Room and the Smoking Room, there are 650 experts on the exchange rate mechanism and why it is a good or bad thing. Even those who are against it claim to know something about it.

It is also ironic that, just when everyone has become an expert, the exchange rate mechanism has become rather more marginal to the central question of international currency and even to our national domestic issues than it was in the past. That has happened partly because of the greater attempts of the G7 nations to co-ordinate. It has also happened for a reason described by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer this afternoon. The real issue is how we in this country impose monetary discipline on ourselves. In other words, the real issue is how we manage our own affairs.

I believe that the exchange rate mechanism, when we join under certain conditions, will help at the margin to reduce some of the speculation against the pound which has mounted inevitably while we are outside the grid and others are inside. But, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said, the real issue is how we manage our internal monetary affairs to ensure price stability.

In that regard it is right to ask, as this debate asks, how the Bundesbank has done it over the years. How has it been able again and again to control the monetary aggregates to deliver up a quite amazing degree of price

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stability and so fulfil the overriding duty of maintaining the value of the currency? Neither the good Professor Sir Alan Walters, whom I greatly admire for having a very stimulating mind, nor my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), the former Chancellor, was able to face that question.

We have heard arguments about whether we should go for floating rates and monetary control or the exchange rate mechanism. However, neither Sir Alan Walters nor my right hon. Friend the former Chancellor could say how, in an economy of our size or even in a larger one, we can control the monetary aggregates. The truth is that neither the theory of floating rates with wonderful precise control of the monetary aggregates—it ought to work on paper, and Professor Walters is quite right to state that it works in theory—nor the move towards fixed and managed rates within an exchange rate grid, can work unless we know how to control the money supply and the monetary aggregates internally.

If we do not know that, we will run into difficulties no matter whether we are part of the exchange rate mechanism or not. We are dealing with international capital flows, not with a panacea, whether the ERM or a magic adherence to money supply figures which it is impossible to get hold of.

Even after the eruptions of last week, we must still address that issue. There are two new thoughts on the agenda that hon. Members must consider with the utmost care. The first was raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby. We should be under no illusions: in all that he said this afternoon, he made one comment of the utmost significance which will be central to our debates in future. He said that he had been thinking, as many of us have, about how to set up a genuinely independent central bank which would depoliticise monetary decisions. The politicisation of such decisions bedevils them, causing them to be taken on political rather than purely technical grounds.

I am not talking simply about denationalisation and repealing the Bank of England Act 1946. We must unravel issues dating back to the first world war, long before going off the gold standard, when the Bank of England and the politicians from Lloyd George onwards became increasingly interwoven. We must address that very complex problem now. I was very encouraged to hear the ideas raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby, and like others I want to see them developed.

The second new thought follows from the first. If we have an independent central bank, we can begin to operate on the money supply in ways in which we have not been able to do hitherto. We set the interest rate for money and the central bank provides unlimited quantities as lender of last resort at the price of 15 per cent. That is not controlling supply, it is controlling demand. Many of us wonder whether we can switch to operating on the bank's reserves—on the monetary base. In that case, the independent central bank would not set interest rates. Instead, it would operate on the reserves and interest rates would fall out of the end of that. They would be more volatile, as there would be no fixed interest rate.

We must consider those two new thoughts if we are to begin to move away from the crazy and quite false argument in recent times about whether we should be part of the ERM or have a floating rate. That is a stark and unreal choice on which we have paralysed and crucified ourselves.

I understand that references to independent central banks are anathema to many Opposition Members. They think back to 1931 when they seized control of the banking system from Montagu Norman and the rest. Today the Labour party wants to return to exchange controls. That is the only way in which Labour Members can conceivably run a direct consumer credit control system. They must return to exchange controls. My recipe is no good for the Labour party. However, if my right hon. and hon. Friends believe that we are surrendering power if we move monetary policy to a more independent banking authority, they are wrong. There will be a substantial gain in the power and influence of politicians to ensure that sensible monetary policies operate in this country.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby, the former Chancellor, has confirmed that the time has come for us to have an independent central bank which can operate an effective monetary policy which ensures stability of the currency upon which everything—the jobs, growth and everything else hon. Members want—depends.

7.17 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): This debate is a vote of no confidence in the Government. The Opposition Benches faithfully reflect the views of the British public in their attitude to the Government.

A week ago tonight I was billed to debate with a Tory Member of Parliament in the students' union at Liverpool University a motion that

"this house has no confidence in the Tory Government."

Over the summer the students' union applied to 60 Tory Members to get that debate started. As we have no Tory Members in Liverpool, the students' union thought that they would have to haul one through the Mersey tunnel. Unfortunately he could not show up. The Government cannot get a Tory Member to defend their economic policies.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fields: No. I have only just started and I have only 10 minutes to speak. Other hon. Members are waiting.

In the European elections earlier this year, the results marked a sea change in British politics. For the first time in 10 years, there was a massive swing against the Tories. They gained their lowest percentage of votes in 100 years.

The workers and the youth in this country hate what the Government are doing in society. More importantly, that hatred is directed at the Prime Minister and the Chancellor for causing the conditions that prevail for millions of people.

We must move away from personal attacks, although they are very convenient. Labour Members share the glee of their constituents at what is happening on the Conservative Benches. However, we must be sober in our approach to what is happening in the economy. Those Tory characters will not suffer; instead the ordinary working-class men, women and children, the old, sick and disabled will suffer as a consequence of the Government's mismanagement of the economy.

Hon. Members talk about opinion polls. They are faithfully reflecting what is going on. Ex-Cabinet Ministers on the Government Back Benches outnumber Ministers on the Front Bench as a result of their disillusionment with what is going on. We saw in the *Financial Times* last week that a survey even in Lewes, Sussex, showed that most Tory voters are disillusioned with what is going on in the country. We see key issues such as the Health Service, the water and electricity industries, the poll tax and pollution militating against support for the Government. The economic collapse is politically undermined by what is going on in the House and in our legislation. The Government got away with it for a while—as long as they delivered the goods for certain sections of the community and provided inceased profit for financiers and capitalists, while squeezing poorer people to ensure that profits were maintained.

However, the mood in the country has changed, particularly in regard to housing, health, water, gas prices, privatisation of the electricity and water industries, inflation, and mortgage rises. Whole sections of our community are turning in their tens of thousands against the Tory Government. The reason for that, which Conservative Members are too blind to see, is the decline in Britain's economy. Total disregard for investment in our industrial base is at the root of the crisis.

One hundred years ago, Britain's share of world manufacturing exports was 33·2 per cent., 50 years ago, it was down to 20·9 per cent., and today it is at an all-time low of 8·1 per cent. We were third in the OECD league, but we are now 19th. From 1979 to 1986, there was a 13 per cent. fall in investment in this country, while other OECD countries increased their investment by one third in the five years preceding 1987.

Those points are important. To the working class they are statistics, but we must elevate the argument to allow people to see clearly that these things do not just happen on a whim. There are deep-seated problems in the British economy. At the end of the day, British workers will pick up the tab while the jokers in the Government walk away from the problem. The key to the crisis is the lack of investment. The Government are all right taking the profits and running away with them. In 1979, they invested £10·4 billion in industry. In 1982, the figure dropped to £6·35 billion. In 1988, the level was up to £10·01 billion. That means that in 1988 the Government had reached only the 1979 level of economic investment—in real terms, the 1950 level.

Economic growth between 1979 and 1988 was 2·1 per cent. a year, the smallest rate of economic growth in the whole nine-year period. The EEC estimates that, in the next two years, growth in Britain will be lower than that in France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Greece, Spain and Portugal. Britain is becoming a Third-world economy.

Statistics are one thing, but the reality of life for working people is that a woman in my constituency sold her baby aged two because she was suffering mortgage repayment problems amounting to £1,000. It means also that a guy went into a housing benefit office and set fire to the place, unfortunately killing one of the clerks, and then jumped from a six-storey block of flats. The Government are responsible for those social conditions. They are responsible for 10,000 pensioners dying every year because of neglect, hunger and hypothermia. At a stroke, the Government reduced the benefits of 5·5 million people and gave £2 billion in tax cuts to their rich friends while taking £650 million from pensioners and the unemployed and low-paid. The Government and their economic policies mean personal debt and poverty for millions of our fellow citizens.

I do not wish to speak for too long. The case will be adequately made by my hon. Friends. Although Lawson and Walters can walk away from the problem, millions of ordinary decent people in society will be stuck with nowhere to go. In that will be the seeds of destruction not only of the Government but of the system that they represent. As Socialists, we give fair warning that workers are turning towards democratic Socialism because they see the ineffectuality—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): In Russia, Hungary and East Germany?

Mr. Fields: I do not need cameras, mate. I will speak on Socialism anywhere. You know nothing about capitalism. We know a lot about your system. That is why you are cutting into education. I do not refer to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I refer to the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks).

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I trust that the hon. Member will direct his remarks through the Chair.

Mr. Fields: As capitalism fails, not only in Britain but internationally, workers will come to the only logical conclusion: that the solution to the problems lies in the Socialist transformation of society—a democratic system of society—in which the talent, energy and resources of people cast on to the scrap heap by the Government's economic policies are put to the common good, and in which wealth creation is channelled to improve the conditions all people in society, not the spivs who are represented by this bankrupt, politically corrupt Government. The Opposition wholeheartedly oppose the Government policies and look forward to the day when we see them out of office, with an elected Labour Government carrying out Socialist policies on behalf of the people.

7.25 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I suppose that there are still some who believe that the control of inflation should be the judge and jury of the Government's policy. Therefore, we looked to the new Chancellor's speech for some signs of his attitude towards inflation. Three factors in my right hon. Friend's speech may give us cause for some encouragement at this time.

First, it was significant that my right hon. Friend argued against inflation, not on the narrow economic ground that, for instance, it makes investment decisions difficult—it certainly does that—and not merely that it causes difficulty in wage negotiations, although it certainly does that. He argued on the social ground that inflation is felt most deeply by the poor. Perhaps my right hon. Friend has the advantage of origins which make him feel that point deeply. He faces taking a risk in favour of growth or being more cautious and anxious to contain inflation, and he demonstrated that his gut instinct would be more inclined to reduce inflation.

Secondly, his analysis of the causes of our present difficulties was rather heartening. Of course, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) believes—no doubt honourably—that our present difficulties arise from a single mistake. He says that all the great industrial

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nations reflated after the crash in October 1987 and that he, with all other Chancellors, was inexorably and inevitably driven to follow their mistaken advice. However, our present Chancellor puts it rather more widely. He says that there was excessive expansion of the economy over about two years. He points to the excessive retail sales and to the high level of house prices during that time. For him the problem is much bigger and will require much stronger action than was envisaged by our right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby.

The third factor in my right hon. Friend's speech should encourage those of us who believe that inflation should be substantially reduced. The last time when people saved in large measure—that is, when the savings ratio was about 15 per cent.—was between 1974 and 1976. Of course it is true that there was a high rate of inflation then, but there were also circumstances of grave political instability. Any sensible person would say to himself or herself, "My goodness me, I must have a bit of spare cash in my deposit account because I can't be exactly sure what's going to happen over the next couple of years."

There are, of course, grave disadvantages for those of us who are party politicians when we see political disturbances or our party doing badly in the polls. Ironically, there are also economic advantages for those of us who wish to see people saving more and who wish to see control of the money supply. If people say, "My goodness me, the Tories might lose the next election. My goodness me, there could be circumstances of great uncertainty ahead," they save more. They are less inclined to borrow a bit more or to buy a more expensive house, and to that extent credit is reduced.

Therefore, there are three factors that should enable us to give a couple of cheers for the new Chancellor. However, I withdraw the third cheer because I still find it impossible to understand what the Government's exchange rate policy is. It seems that we believe in markets when the markets hold up the value of the pound, but we do not believe in markets when they bring down the value of the pound. That is rather like believing in democracy when one wins an election, but not believing in democracy when one loses.

The difficulty is that no one can say that the British people are firmly opposed to inflation. There was no popular outcry between 1986 and 1988 when it was quite obvious to anybody who took even a passing interest that credit was far too lax and the money supply expanding far too fast. Indeed, we were extremely popular during that period.

It is not the process of creating inflation that is unpopular, it is the process of checking it that is unpopular. Everybody enjoys the binge but complains afterwards that the Alka-Seltzer tastes unpleasant. Therefore, while we are administering the Alka-Seltzer, it is important to try to reduce its unpleasant taste if possible.

One way in which that can be done is to point out that a disagreeable consequence of a period of lax credit is that the exchange rate is likely to fall. It will not fall principally as a result of the words of the Leader of the Opposition. Indeed, I cannot believe that he is betraying his country if he happens to point out that there are few advantages from a lower exchange rate against the deutschmark.

However, to give the impression that it is within the power of Governments to hold up the exchange rate is to give the impression to the rest of the country that—if I may take the Alka-Seltzer analogy further—the Alka-Seltzer will be even more unpleasant than it is. Of course it is necessary to encourage people to save and to explain that at least personal borrowing must be reduced, but if we were to give the impression that it is also our wish heavily to squeeze manufacturing industry to a greater extent than is necessary by holding up the exchange rate—which I argue is not possible anyway, but even if it were possible and we intended to do it—we would be telling people that the squeeze will be more difficult than it would have been and that the consequences for unemployment would be much greater.

Surely we are entitled to say, "All right, we believe that there has been an excessive expansion of credit for a couple of years, sadly, that the increase in the money supply will inevitably work its way through into price levels and one likely consequence is that the exchange rate—the pound—will fall against other currencies," because at least that means that some manufacturers will be able to take up demand from foreign countries. They will be able to export to a greater extent, even if they find that their home markets go dead. Surely we should be able to give that necessary message if we are to sustain the political will to fight the inflation that was created in the past.

It is silly to pretend that the British people dislike inflation. Between 1986 and 1988 they have seen all the symptoms of rising inflation going through its first euphoric phase. I have never found anybody who has said, "My goodness me, it is a terrible thing—my house has gone up in value by 30 per cent. this year." As far as I can gather, everybody believes that inflation is caused by the other person's wage increase and, in spite of the great work done, I am bound to say——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I must now call the next hon. Member. Ms. Primarolo.

7.36 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): It is not Alka-Seltzer that the Government are administering to the population of Britain and especially to its workers, it is arsenic—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady needs to be heard.

Ms. Primarolo: The arsenic is proving terminal for a great many workers and the pain that they are experiencing is not the pain that leads to recovery: it is the pain that leads to certain economic death.

I wish to approach the debate from a slightly different angle. I wish to interpret and concentrate on the definition of "economics" as

"the way society distributes its goods and benefits to the population"

and within that,

"the rewards that leads to and the needs it fulfils,"

Using this approach, we can take a broader look at the impact of the Government's economic policies and in so doing, we must consider the social and human consequences of those policies and whether they are morally defensible.

I do not believe that is is morally defensible that there are beggars in our large cities across Britain. I do not believe that it is morally defensible that we see people sleeping on kerbs in cardboard boxes in alleys in London, lying beside cars that cost between £20,000 and £40,000. I do not believe that an economy that produces those levels of inequality is working properly.

Because of the time limit, I shall touch only briefly on the issues that I wish to cover. First, when judging the Government in economic terms, there has been much talk about the industrial base and our manufacturing industries. Let us consider mergers and the Government's paralysis when faced with supporting and defending our economic base and manufacturing industries. Let us consider DRG, a Bristol-based firm where thousands of people's jobs are being traded as if they were houses on a Monopoly board in a hostile bid financed by junk bonds. People's lives are being traded as if they were cattle, without any power to influence the decisions that are being taken. As a consequence of that bid, 200 engineering firms are expected to close in Bristol alone, let alone the consequences for other parts of the country. Where is the economic sense of that in terms of our future industrial policy? Where are the views that say that we are defending our economic base?

I turn now to the major question of the inequalities in our society. About 69 per cent. of the population believe that Britain is more unequal now than it was 10 years ago. In that period, the Government have deliberately increased the inequality in our society. They have widened the gap so that the top 10 per cent. of the population have received increases of 41 per cent. while the bottom 10 per cent. have received only 1·7 per cent. Where is the economic justice in that?

There has been much talk about borrowing. The Banking, Finance and Insurance Union produced a report entitled, "Hard times for the poor as the credit gap widens." It said—this is a surprise—that there are two worlds in our divided society—the haves the have-nots. When the haves go to banks when they have financial problems, they are provided with new services and credits. However, if the poor fall on hard times, they are denied that credit. They are forced to the moneylenders and loan sharks. That is another arcane medical treatment that the Government want to impose on the British people—using leeches on the poor.

The Government refuse to invest in training, when £750 million is necessary for vocational training. They do not bother investing in people's houses, in the young, schools, social services, infrastructure and transport systems. Then they tell us that it makes economic sense to pawn the future to make a quick buck in the present. That is their economic strategy, and that is the strategy that both the Labour party and the people of Britain are rejecting.

The Labour party is not alone in criticising the Government's strategy. The CBI has also done so. It produced a report, which was carried out on a regional basis. The one for our region is called, "Prosperity for the 1990s: South West's needs". It says that if we are to take advantage of future economic growth, we must have the infrastructure, the training, the houses and the transport systems to do so. We need to have investment now to ensure that our companies are producing in the future. The Government are not interested in that approach. They are interested only in making money for the people who have it now and in making sure that the people who do not have it continue not to have it.

The Government deal in banal explanations such as, "If it's hurting, it must be working." That is a crazy approach to people's lives. The people whom it hurts are the very people whom it is not designed to benefit. It hurts people at the bottom of the economic scale because it is about transferring money to those at the top. Those at the top get the Alka-Seltzer while we at the bottom get the arsenic. That is not good enough. It is not necessary for us to have esoteric debates about whether the current occupant of the post of the Chancellor of the Exchequer——

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Primarolo: No, I will not give way because we are having to operate under the 10-minute limit and it is difficult to make a quick speech, especially for those who have been here all afternoon—unlike others.

The Government must do more than change the Chancellor. They must change their economic policy and require all their Departments to work as a team, which they do not do now. For example, the Secretary of State for Employment tells us that young people should not take training unless it is vocational. Then the Secretary of State for Social Services penalises young people by stopping their benefit if they refuse to take any job at any price, regardless of the effect that that has on their future.

People's lives are a misery. They are struggling to make ends meet and are being denied money from the social fund. They are being threatened with unemployment and bad housing. They can see the riches in a small section of our society developing and expanding beyond their wildest imagination, and the Government have the cheek to tell us that that is a sensible economic strategy. It is not. It is about division, inequality and unfairness, and about the Government's defeat at the next general election.

7.44 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): The first point that I shall make is a personal one, but I hope that it is one with which the House can agree. We all know that politics is a game that is played with a hard ball, and inevitably, from time to time, players will get hurt. None of us, politicians or political commentators, should take sadistic pleasure when we see it happen. For that reason especially, and because he has served the country and my party very well for many years, I regret the hurt that last week's events must have inflicted on my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). I believe that that regret is shared by every one of my colleagues. His speech today was all the more remarkable for that.

My next task must be to add my voice to the good wishes that others have already expressed to my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) on his succession to the great office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. No one can deny his ability. He proved that again in full measure today. His own words said it all. With our right hon. Friend at the Treasury, the Prime Minister now leads a team that is as strong as it has ever been, and it will work together for policies in which we all believe.

The economy is fundamentally sound, we have a tight fiscal policy, the Government's accounts are in substantial surplus and our public finances are the strongest in the western world. That is an essential part of the war against inflation. However, so too is the use of interest rates. The

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Labour party likes to pretend that one can control inflation without using interest rates, but one cannot maintain the conditions for sound money unless one is prepared to raise the cost of borrowing. Money is simply another resource. If a Government want people to use less of it, they have to raise its price.

When I intervened in the economic debate on 7 June, I told the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) that, although his speech on 24 October contained some amusing bits, that did not conceal the fact that it was fundamentally shallow and unconvincing. I am glad to pay him a tribute now, as he clearly took my criticism to heart. His speech last Tuesday had so many funny bits in it that he almost succeeded in hiding the fact that its policy content was too thin to show if one stood it sideways. Today's speech was little better, so I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will not mind if I try to tease out some of the few threads of Labour's alternative policy that he found that he could weave into his speech on 24 October between the jokes.

I shall start at column 684, skipping the first two and a half pages of comic invention. He said:

"the first requirement of an alternative approach is to adopt an industrial strategy that puts the promotion of our wealth-creating manufacturing industry at the top of the national agenda for recovery."

I hope that I am not being unfair if I say that this industrial strategy amounts to more publicly funded investment, more publicly funded training and much more public expenditure, although we have never been told how much more.

Then, in column 686, the right hon. and learned Gentleman made it plain, when he talked about raising more money by taxation, that he would be perfectly ready to do this. We know that the Labour party is committed to massive income tax increases that would affect 95 per cent. of the tax-paying public—not forgetting its proposals for an investment income surcharge. The right hon. and learned Gentleman then dealt with credit controls, an issue that has become such a central feature of what passes for Opposition policy:

"The Chancellor should seek to restrain the amount of credit made available by the banks. First, he should invite their co-operation in restraining lending."

He added that he believed that the banks would co-operate, but if they did not,

"the Government can require them to make deposits with the Bank of England, and that would have the effect of limiting the amount available for lending."

He went on to say that he did not expect that foreign banks would take an irresponsible view if approached by the Government.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) said in his speech later in the debate—it is a pity that he was not more widely reported—

"such an idea is completely out of date because in a system of open economies without exchange controls it is simply impossible to achieve that degree of control, or even persuasion, over the international banking community."—*[Official Report*, 24 October 1989; Vol 158, c. 684-715.]

If nothing else, there would be no means of making an overseas bank refuse credit to someone from this country who wanted a loan.

What interests me even more is the fact that credit controls must mean credit rationing, and we have been given no sign of how a credit rationing scheme would work and who would get priority. What, for instance, would happen to mortages? We should nor forget that mortgages account for 85 per cent. of personal borrowing. If wealth-creating manufacturing industry is to have top priority, how are the firms to be chosen and what say will the unions demand in that choice? It did not surprise me that, when the Leader of the Opposition was challenged about credit rationing by Mr. Hobday on Friday morning last week, he shot off at a tangent like a demented ferret, babbling about siege economies.

I shall return to the exchange rate mechanism, about which we have all heard so much. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East told us last week that we should

"negotiate to join the ERM under the important and prudent conditions that the Labour party has outlined ."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman had to be prompted by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) to remind us of those conditions, as he was again prompted today. What was his response on 24 October? He said:

They are conditions relating to proper swap arrangements between the central banks, a policy for growth rather than deflation, and consideration of the right point at which entry to the ERM should be effected." *[Official Report*, 24 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 684-5.]

He was immediately challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) to say what size of devaluation that entailed. The right hon. and learned Gentleman dodged the question, refused to give way further, and put up a great cloud of smoke by engaging in a prolonged exchange with my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). We saw the same sort of tactic today. The right hon. and learned Gentleman refused to give way. He accused those who sought to intervene of organised wrecking tactics, and rode off in another direction.

The Leader of the Opposition returned to the subject on Friday when he spoke of establishing serious conditions, and then negotiating those conditions for entry into the ERM, as something that the Government must do to assist the pound and the economy. That is a bit rich. In the first place, the "conditions" that the Labour party claims to have outlined are vague in the extreme, and virtually useless as a basis for any sort of negotiation worthy of that name.

Even more to the point, the Government have already gone a long way down that road. The relevant terms of the Madrid summit are a commitment, and I think that the Government have the terms right. Britain will join the ERM when our Madrid conditions are met. Nothing has changed on that since last week. There is no question that we shall go into the ERM, but we shall not do so immediately, not even within the next month.

It will take time to reduce inflation, and it will take time for other Governments to remove the controls that prevent the free movement of capital in many European countries; France is very much an example. Mr. Mitterrand should be concentrating very much on removing those controls instead of dreaming up new and unnecessary treaties of Rome in some sort of geopolitical effort to forestall forces at work elsewhere in Europe. Meanwhile, I am sure that we must be careful not to let these matters become out of proportion or to constitute some sort of totem issue. I entirely agree with those who say that the ERM is not a soft option or a panacea. Membership must be a discipline or it will be pointless, but it must be an acceptable discipline. That is why it is vital that we should adhere to the straightforward and sensible terms that we have set and insist that they are met before we join.

In all this, the people of the United Kingdom will expect us to defend their interests. If we do not stand up for ourselves, who will? That brings me back to the Leader of the Opposition. At one moment he is under control, playing the part and sticking to the script, at the next he has gone bananas. That is exactly what happened last Friday morning on the "Today" programme when the right hon. Gentleman set out to talk the pound down, to make it plummet, and to do everything in his power to damage the economy for his own short-term political gain.

The Leader of the Opposition said recently that the Prime Minister puts her pride before her country. Everyone knows that that could not be further from the truth. What is true is that the Leader of the Opposition will be remembered as a man who will do anything, say anything and unsay it for political power. He puts his ambition first and his country nowhere. That happens time and time again.

7.54 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): There has been some speculation that the former Chancellor of the Exchequer resigned because of the actions of the Prime Minister or Sir Alan Walters. That is not my view. The former Chancellor of the Exchequer resigned having read the Treasury's economic forecast for next year. It is one thing for a Chancellor to carry the economic can when he is in charge of economic policy and another to be the fall guy for someone else's economic policy. The Treasury forecasts that were prepared for the Autumn Statement were available for the Chancellor to see. There was no need for a crystal ball—he read the book and got out from under. Much of the forecast information was probably available in the summer recess; all that was needed was the opportunity artificially to up the stakes on his excuse—Walters—and get out with as much political kudos as he could muster.

Of what was the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer frightened? What do the Treasury forecasts predict? As they are not available to Members of this place, the nearest that we can get is the London business school survey, which was published yesterday and which predicts slow down, poor growth, deceleration in output, rising inflation, falling investment and increasing unemployment—welcome to the Treasury, Mr. Major! In addition, there is a world record trade deficit, the highest inflation in industrial Europe, the highest interest rates of any of our G7 world competitors, a devaluing pound, a reducing share of global manufacturing and money market hysteria which makes lemmings seem laid back. That situation, plus the Treasury's forecast of further deterioration into recession, explains with clarity why the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer baled out when he did.

Parliament has been a mere spectator. Oddly enough, the debate shows why we need a more democratically elected second Chamber. It underlines once again that the House is failing in its constitutional duty of holding the Government to account. That is more evident and more desperately necessary in economic policy than in any other area. No statement on the economy has been volunteered to the House by the Government since before the Summer recess. No emergency debate was granted after that recess despite the magnitude of the crisis. It has been left to the official Opposition to use one of its Opposition days to drag the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the House. In years to come, this week will be remembered as a constitutional rather than an economic crisis.

Where is the Prime Minister in all this? We all know that the right hon. Lady lacks confidence in the House. That is evidenced by the few occasions when she makes statements, compared with the number of times her predecessors did. Unquestionably, the Prime Minister holds the House in contempt, but we are told now that the bunker mentality has gone so far that when the Cabinet met last week it did not even discuss the exchange rate mechanism, the European monetary system or the crisis involving the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Without agreeing to it, we have seen the development of a twisted presidential system in which Parliament and the Cabinet can be disregarded and in which no written constitutional checks can be brought to bear. Where President Nixon's Erlichman, Haldeman and Dean could be exposed, an impotent and decorative House of Commons cannot even gain access to Powell, Ingham, Griffiths and Walters. The Mother of Parliaments, like the mother in "Psycho", sits as an ancient and obsessively preened skeleton—permanently in the dark.

We criticise the City of London for being distant and irrelevant to the "real economy", but we in this place must demand to be more than an irrelevant sideshow to the real political life of the country, which we have allowed to gravitate wholly to the Government and the press conference. That is an issue to which the Labour party must give a great deal of thought.

In the short period that remains to me in this debate, I should like to dispel some Tory economic myths peddled by the Prime Minister and her yes-men. Those myths were nicely summarised by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury when he replied to the Adjournment debate which I raised on the state of the economy on the first day following the summer recess. I am sure that he will forgive me if I use his script as the basis for some comments.

First, he talked of generating "sustainable economic growth" over the past few years. Where is that growth? The growth that we have experienced has been generated by consumption. During 1988, the gross domestic product grew by 8 per cent. while production increased by only 5 per cent. An article in today's edition of the *Financial Times* tells us that there has been a rise of 23 per cent. in the number of business failures since the same period in 1986. Insolvency practitioners say that that is the tip of the iceberg. Perhaps that is the iceberg to which the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) referred.

The head of the Price Waterhouse insolvency arm says:

> "The situation is now worse than in the run up to the two previous recessions."

Market forces have not delivered investment to Britain. There has been a collapse of manufacturing and we have seen massive investment abroad. Short-termism has strangled British enterprise.

The Government then talk of "a supply side revolution." At least there is some truth in that. There has, indeed, been a supply side revolution. For 100 years we have largely supplied our economy from home production.

[Mr. Graham Allen]

Now our supplies are coming increasingly from abroad. That is indeed revolutionary, but it is commonly known as a balance of payments crisis.

The Government spokesman went on to say that manufacturing productivity is growing. Manufacturing as a percentage of GDP is falling and the reason for the growth in productivity is due entirely to the bankruptcies in the period 1980-82. Inefficient manufacturing companies were eliminated from the calculations so that average productivity rose. In cricketing terms, the Conservatives have taken all the bowlers out of the batting averages and declared that the team now has a higher average. In that statistical essay, the Chancellor, who I understand is a cricketing fan, appears as the blue bearded wonder.

Then the man from the Treasury said:

> "Businesses are at the most profitable for 20 years."

The surge in profits stems from an economic boom generated primarily by credit-financed consumer spending, which has worsened inflation. The outlook for profit growth is for a sharp downturn as economic growth slows and costs rise. Industry has taken advantage of the improved profits in order to one-time profit-take rather than to invest in their businesses and ensure continued growth.

The Government have also referred to "unprecedented prosperity". If they are referring to the unprecedented consumer spending of the past five years, which has been credit driven, including mortgage borrowing, they are correct. However, all the surveys show that such a period is about to end and turn into a long period of slow economic growth, high inflation and Britain having the highest interest rates in Europe. The chickens are coming home to roost and many are deeply affected by the salmonella of decayed monetarism.

Mr. Jaques Arnold *rose*——

Mr. Allen: The reference to decayed monetarism was not an invitation to the hon. Gentleman to intervene.

Then the man from the Ministry said:

> "investment has grown more than twice as fast as consumption, a clear sign that British industry has confidence in the future".—[*Official Report*, 17 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 118-119.]

That is one of several Government entries in the British Statistical Institute's whopper of the year contest. Consumption is measured in billions and investment in millions, but by measuring the increase in percentage terms, the picture can be reversed. For example, a 10 per cent. increase in investment is completely overshadowed in real terms by a mere 2 per cent. increase in consumption. There can be no greater compliment to the central office public speaking courses than that Ministers still keep a straight face when delivering such statistical distortions. The CBI surveys tell a completely different story. Business investment has collapsed due to high interest rates.

According to the Economic Secretary, the Budget surplus is an achievement unequalled in the past 40 years. Basically, it means that Government income is higher than Government expenditure, which means that the Government have either overtaxed, perhaps by accident or perhaps to depress demand, or they feel that they cannot spend their revenues in the areas crying out for public expenditure because of the inflationary consequences of doing so, so they use that money for prematurely repaying debts to the money market where it can swill around looking for short-term capital gain.

Time has caught up with me so I must wind up my remarks. In the past few years, the Conservative party has successfully perpetrated a number of other economic myths. They need to be nailed and I shall take pleasure in performing that public service in the months ahead.

8.3 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, there is no doubt, contrary to what the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) was alleging, that the United Kingdom's underlying economy is strong at the moment. We need only look at one element of that economy to see how strong it is. At the moment, industrial investment is still running high and the corporate level of profitability has been running at record levels over the past 20 years. That is a combination of facts which leads us to suppose that industrial investment is likely to be sustainable in the medium term and perhaps in the long term.

But it is equally true that we face two major problems in the economy, and both are closely related. One is the inflation rate and the other is the balance of payments deficit which is running at far too high a level. Both those problems must be controlled in the same way—by the rise in interest rates. Interest rates are, in reality, the only way of controlling inflation.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) said last week, credit controls on lending institutions would fail. They would certainly fail in the absence of exchange controls being reintroduced, because anybody wishing to borrow under those circumstances would simply go to some bank which was not subject to those credit controls. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said this afternoon, the Labour party's underlying policy in introducing credit controls and restrictions on bank lending through special reserves and reserve deposits is inherently to suggest the reintroduction of exchange controls.

No one welcomes high interest rates, because of their effect on people with mortgages and on small businesses. However, it must be said that the damage that they do to large businesses is much less, since, even with the change in the overall corporate borrowing level in the past year, larger businesses tend not to be net borrowers. They tend to be cash-rich, which means that the present level of interest rates tends to favour them.

But the damage caused by high interest rates is less than the damage caused by inflation, as has come out clearly in the debate. The danger of high interest rates is that they have to be maintained for too long, in which case the damage that they do to individuals trying to find the money to pay for their increased mortgages becomes much more serious. People can always finance a short deficit on their mortgage payments, but it is much more difficult if the deficit lasts for any length of time. Inevitably, interest rates have an effect on the exchange rate and, inevitably, the two are not necessarily working in the right direction.

There is a strong argument that the level of interest rates in the economy is too high for domestic inflation purposes, but is only just high enough for exchange rate purposes. That in itself leads to a problem which may well exacerbate the slowing down of the economy to the point where it would be difficult to control a soft landing. We must hope that interest rates, for exchange rate purposes, can be brought down before too much damage is done to the domestic economy.

Industry needs a stable exchange rate so that it can plan and market properly for export orders. In the long term, that can be achieved only by bringing the fundamentals of the United Kingdom economy into line with those of our major trading partners, which in practice means the major countries in the EC, particularly West Germany.

That is a highly desirable goal which it has been argued would be achieved by our joining the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS. The long-term goal to join the ERM is highly desirable, but to be able to do so and to make it work, we have to bring our economy into line with the other large economies inside the ERM, principally with West Germany.

The mechanism for achieving that is rather complicated. The problem is that the ERM is effectively a deutschmark parity mechanism. Only one currency, the deutschmark, is heavily traded within the ERM, making the ERM a monopolar parity arrangement. That is relatively easy to sustain against the international currency transactions in volumes which will be dealing inside those markets. Inevitably, that will change as France removes its exchange controls. At present, the French franc is not widely traded outside the French banks, but it must be expected that when it is, pressure will be put on the ERM.

If the United Kingdom joins the ERM, there will be two heavily-traded currencies inside the parity, which will lead to serious problems. If there are three heavily-traded currencies, with the French franc inside the parity, we shall run the risk of blowing the ERM wide apart. There is one simple reason for that. At present, currency dealers have no idea which way bank intervention will operate in their currency. If there is a parity arrangement and dealers know within which band of parity a currency is being held, they will be able to trade currencies against each other. Foreign exchange dealers and currency dealers will know exactly where intervention will come from and will trade on a one-way ticket.

It would not be possible to sustain the present simple ERM if we joined it. One of the major constraints is that at present the Bundesbank dictates the monetary policy of member states through the ERM. It does so effectively, but I doubt whether it could do so if sterling were in the ERM.

I was intrigued when my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) said that suggestions had been made in the Treasury that the Bank of England should be constituted with its own charter—presumably modelled on the Federal Reserve in the United States—to enable it to control the money supply independent of political decisions. That has some attractions, even in isolation, but I am afraid that it is the attraction of copping out on political decisions. It should be possible to run monetary policy sensibly and prudently without establishing the Bank of England as a separate entity.

It is sensible to consider that suggestion as a way of resolving the inherent problems of the ERM. If the Bank of England and the Banque de France could have a relationship with a more moderately constituted Bundesbank, so that the three central banks of the major EC currencies could operate monetary policy independent of political decisions, they could run monetary policy in such a way as to produce stability of monetary policy across the EC which would enable the ERM to work. That is a fundamental change towards which we should perhaps move more rapidly than we are moving towards European monetary union.

8.12 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I listened with great care to the opening speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). He isolated three important elements of policy which have a direct and important effect on manufacturing industry which poses the greatest problem in our economy. No one can take lightly the fact that our economy, which has historically been based on trade, has a balance of payments deficit in manufactured goods amounting to £20 billion. No matter what Conservative Members say or think, they cannot escape the scale and depth of the problem represented by that statistic. The House must accept that, no matter what is happening on the stock exchange or which way the currency is going, if manufacturing industry, from which wealth is created, is not healthy, the rest of the economy cannot be healthy and our aims cannot be achieved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) made an important and specific point about what is happening in the financial sector. She expressed anxiety about the effect on her constituency of a takeover bid for the DRG group of companies. That will also affect my constituency, where a factory is about to be taken over. There is no manufacturing or industrial logic to the takeover, which bears out the point made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East. The only reason for it is that the organisation making the bid wishes to reduce productive capacity in that industry. That is the direction that the economy is taking but it will not produce the goods and services that we need for the future.

I wish to concentrate on the Government's performance in the three areas mentioned by my right hon. and learned Friend. Before I do so, I wish to comment briefly on a point made by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). *Bank Briefing* of August 1989—hardly a Left-wing journal or centre of revolutionary ideas—said:

> "While it is usual for the company sector to move into deficit in this stage in the economic cycle, a second year of deficit would be exceptional."

Today, the right hon. Member for Blaby, who with his experience in the Treasury is presumably better informed on these matters than most hon. Members, conceded that in his view we shall have that second year of deficit during which company finances will be in even greater difficulty than this year. That was an important revelation. Let us be clear that our economic prospects in the manufacturing sector are no great shakes.

A further matter for concern is the future of the engineering industry. I am interested in that industry because I spent the first 10 years of my working life in it and I am sponsored by an engineering union. In *The Engineer* of 28 September 1989—again, hardly an organ of the Labour party—John Pullin, writing an article entitled "Battening down the hatches", stated:

> "Engineering industry is heading for the downturn, and appears to be cutting back on investment in people, products and processes—the principal tactic used in the deep recession of the early 1980s."

[Mr. George Howarth]

Clearly, well-informed sources in the financial sector and the engineering industry as well as the former Chancellor of the Exchequer believe that we are inescapably heading for a hard landing.

The three important points made by my right hon. and learned Friend about rebuilding the economy take on even greater relevance. If we are to climb out of the recession it is important that manufacturing and, in particular, engineering companies have the resources to do so. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East spoke about the need for a regional policy. What is a regional policy and how does it apply? One important aspect which affects my region, the north-west, is proper transport links. We have had various reports about the progress of the Channel tunnel, but we now know that it will be finished. What will be the consequences for the regions?

In the August edition of the National Westminster bank *Quarterly Review*—I presume that hon. Members will accept that it is not a particularly biased journal—Derek Palmer, who works for the CBI, wrote:

> "the 70 per cent. of United Kingdom residents who live outside the South East will be very much on the periphery"—

when the Channel tunnel is completed. He went on:

> "instead of the proposed London to channel tunnel high speed rail link, there are strong arguments that a high speed line to Glasgow via the North West and Birmingham would give greater benefits."

That is what the experts are saying about the needs of regional policy.

Mr. Palmer went on to compare our position with that of West Germany. According to him,

> "West Germany invests three times as much in rail transport as we do. It is planning a 2,800 mile network of 150-170 mph inter city express services including 500 miles of new line."

Nothing like that is happening in this country. The regional infrastructure that we need if we are to take advantage of any upturn in manufacturing simply will not appear—and that is just one small aspect of policy.

The second of my right hon. and learned Friend's important points concerned research and development. I have compared the amounts spent—as a percentage of gross domestic product—by both Government and private sector in the United Kingdom, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, Sweden and the United States. The United Kingdom is bottom of the list bar two and equal with one. That hardly suggests the sort of Government action that we must expect if we are to experience a revival of the manufacturing and engineering industries.

My right hon. and learned Friend's third point concerned investment in training. What is happening to that? Again, let us compare our progress with that of West Germany. I have figures from the engineering industry training board—they were published in July 1988, but the position has not changed much since then. In 1987-88, 8,273 people were undergoing apprenticeships as craftsmen and technicians; in 1979, the figure was 21,000. In West Germany, the apprenticeships in industrial metalworking trades alone amount to 179,000. There are 62,000 apprentices in industrial electrical trades, 184,000 in metalworking trades and crafts and 65,000 in electrical trades and crafts.

Clearly ours is no recipe for an industrial revival: we have not the regional infrastructure, the research and development or the trained people. What do the Government offer? They offer youth training schemes, which between them produce qualifications for only 25 per cent. of those who take part in them. The Government have failed to take any appropriate action to help manufacturing, and their failure has imperilled the entire economy. It has placed the trade by which we live in grave difficulty. That will ensure that they lose office in the next election, and deservedly so.

8.22 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): In one of her perspicacious and incisive speeches, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister once said that, whereas architects live in infrastructure, most of us live in houses. A similar comment could be made about economic debate in this House.

Politicians deal in economic theories and dogmas of one kind or another, while the rest of the world has to pay the mortgage and keep the businesses going, in the teeth of fluctuating interest rates which make it extremely difficult for them to compete or to plan ahead. I think that it is good for some of the people who listen to "Today in Parliament" on the radio to hear some sympathy from some of us—who enjoy relatively secure incomes, although we may have mortgages to pay—and from economists in their ivory towers who pass on their theories to us; to say nothing of the Treasury officials, who are even more cushioned and feather-bedded than the rest. We tell these people that they must grin and bear it, because we are going to chase our economic theory of the moment—in this case monetarism—or we tell them that we must switch to yet another theoretical device, the European monetary system, which will somehow solve all our problems.

The Labour party is, of course, a captive of the economic theories of Karl Marx: it is stuck with the Socialist idea that not only money but every aspect of the economy can be manipulated to make it work. At present, Conservative Members are in the grip of monetarist theories of the Chicago school of economics, which believes that controlling the money supply and using interest rates to regulate inflation—which, as we all acknowledge nowadays, is caused by Governments—can somehow make the economy and the money supply turn out all right in the end.

I think of a family known to me, three of whose members were in employment 18 months ago. For 16 years, the husband was in a good job with a good salary; now he is out of work because the company's business was money and it no longer had a job for him. The firm that apprenticed his young son has had to get rid of him because of monetary constraints, and his daughter tells me that present monthly interest on her mortgage is what she used to pay in a quarter. Those people are in severe difficulties, largely because of our constant addiction to one monetary theory or another.

When in the grip of one of these theories, politicians tend to believe that there is no alternative. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), however, touched on one alternative: he said that he had spoken to the Prime Minister some time ago about the prospect of privatising, or at least making independent, the Bank of England, and he presented the idea that banks should not be manipulated by politicians.

There is an alternative to our entry into the EMS, with all that that might entail. The involvement of a Euro central bank and a Euro central currency would in itself lead to inflation; the European Community inflates everything that it touches, as we have seen with the common agricultural policy. The alternative is a free banking system in which the Government would no longer intervene with money supply, and would allow the value of money to be decided by the markets. We should then no longer be in the grip of an obsession with some dead economic theory.

I should have thought that by now it was generally accepted that Governments who tinker about to stabilise either industries or money inevitably end up in some sort of crisis. Conservative Members have abandoned the idea of monopoly control of industries; we believe in the creation of free markets. We have shown that it works—in steel and road transport, for instance—but we seem to baulk at the idea of doing the same with monetary policies. We are following the traditional line that the Government know best and that, somehow or other, we can organise money to stabilise the economic system. Yet we know that the ups and downs of past years—high interest rates and low interest rates—have all been produced in response to political demands. Our present circumstances, in my view, prove the need for deregulation of our banking system.

Instead of concentrating on yet another panacea—in this instance, the EMS and the eventual establishment of a central bank—we should think in terms of denationalising, or perhaps demonopolising, the Bank of England, and making it just another bank in competition with the other European banks—which themselves should be free to set up banking institutions in the various European countries, and to circulate their currencies in competition with one another.

The idea of having competing currencies has also been touched on by the Government in recent times. It would mean that people who did not quite trust their own Government to keep up the value of their money, would be free to move their money into other currencies, and this would exercise some form of discipline.

The purpose of free trade in money is to impose on monetary and financial agencies a much-needed discipline by making it impossible for any of them for any length of time to issue the kind of money whose worth could be devalued. Inflation is a product of Government policy. It would be impossible for us to have inflation if there were competing currencies and if banks were responsible for their own decisions and their own financial policies. If any bank lent more than it should, the value of its currency would automatically be devalued. People would become aware that the bank was too free with its money. They would then move their savings or their business activities to banks that followed more prudent policies.

If we decided to invest in, say, deutschmarks, the value of that currency would rise. In turn, that would restrain its use because people would look for a cheaper alternative. These currencies would then gain strength from that confidence, and this would eventually lead to some parity of value.

The balance of payments problem would not exist if there were a free market in currencies and free banking. We do not worry about the balance of payments between, say, Lancashire and Yorkshire. We would not need to worry about it, either, between Germany and France, or between France and Britain, or between Britain and Spain if there were a free market in currencies within Europe and if the central banks of the European countries were denationalised.

Britain could lead the way by means of its own internal monetary policies. We could decide to have competing currencies in this country. We could remove our legal tender laws which prevent that from happening and decide that the Bank of England should no longer be subject to Government control, that it should stand or fall by its own economic decisions.

By creating a free market in money and in banking, we should be able to settle down to living our lives without constantly worrying about the fluctuating value of money, which leads to inflation, and fluctuating interest rates that are designed to correct inflation. In just the same way as we do not worry now about shopping for our groceries because we have a choice, or about shopping for our clothes because we have a choice, we should also have a choice in money and in banking.

8.32 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): When the dust settles on this debate, I think that people will find that the opening lines of the Scottish National party's amendment, which has not been selected, are most apt. A grave indecision on a major economic matter still lies at the heart of the Government. The Prime Minister has told us that advisers advise and Ministers decide, but we have yet to have a clear, rational explanation as to why the adviser was preferred to the decider on economic policy. That will come back to haunt the Government time and again.

When I returned to Westminster after almost 10 years it was like coming through a time warp. With the exception of a few electronic clocks, nothing had changed. The place had retained its wigs and garters, its delusions about its pre-eminent place in the world's democracies and its sad, tenacious hold on traditional patterns of thought, action and style from bygone days. Only one piece of the old jigsaw was missing from the time warp—an economic crisis.

The past week has put the final piece of the jigsaw in place. It is just like old times again. Some time soon I am sure that we shall hear once again the erudite arguments which used to be swapped by the dual failures on both Front Benches about the J curve, or perhaps we shall remain entranced by the new contraption of the exchange rate mechanism, which will doubtless spawn an immense journalistic industry in the next 12 months. The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) already said that there will soon be 650 experts on the ERM in the House of Commons and I am sure that it will be talked about in all the pubs, clubs and golf clubs throughout the country.

In reality, we are living through just one more episode in the saga of decline, relative to the rest of the world, witnessing the weakness and crisis of an English economy which at its core is essentially weak, and a political economy which is incapable of addressing that essential weakness.

The core weakness of the English economy is its lack of sufficient indigenous basic resources in relation to its population and a consistent failure to overcome that weakness by investing in manufacturing at a magnitude

[Mr. Jim Sillars]

which would enable English society to buy in what it does not naturally have, add value and capture overseas markets—as the Japanese have done with an essentially core-weak economy. Faced with the challenge to invest the political economy concentrates instead on consumption, engineered to win elections over what are, in economic terms, remarkably short four-year cycles. That emphasis on consumption simply compounds the weakness and creates a series of crisis in the English economy.

Nothing new is happening now. In 1964, the Tories bequeathed an economic crisis to Labour. In 1970, after the white heat of the technological revolution had been doused before it caught fire, Labour handed an economy in trouble back to the Tories. In 1974, the deflated ball was passed back to Labour, and in 1979 Labour passed on a shambles to the Tories. For eight years thereafter there appeared to be a break in the cycle of failure. The Tories proclaimed it a miracle, and so it was—a miraculous and spectacular robbery of £78 billion of oil wealth from Scotland, a vast sum from a resource which gave them additional revenue and simultaneously covered up the growing crisis in the balance of trade created by the continuing destruction of the manufacturing base. The miracle is that they got away with it. Without that money there would have been no election victory for them in 1987.

Now that oil prices have been reduced and the camouflage removed, the real economy can be seen again—a bit different here and there but still essentially weak, because investment has never reached the level required to give it clout in the international arena. Now we are back in the usual crisis. The Tories have no answer, and when one analyses the speeches of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) last week, one sees that Labour has no answer either. Both were witty and stylish, but their policies lack substance.

The harsh fact is that if the English economy is to claw its way out of 150 years of decline it can do so only by sacrificing consumption to investment. That would require a combination of monetary and fiscal policy, of which tax increases would form a key part. The consequence would be a drastic cut in the standard of living for the hitherto boom areas of the south. Both Labour and Tories calculate that that is not politically possible, so the decline will continue.

In the meantime, over many, many years, the Scottish economy has suffered greviously from being handcuffed to this weak English economy especially when, after the first and second world wars, centralisation—meaning London control of policy and a loss of indigenous control—became the order of the day north of the border.

In a recent document, "Scotland's Economy", the Scottish TUC puts it well. It says:

> "We start with the dimensions of the crisis. Norway and Denmark both have populations of roughly the same size as Scotland. At the beginning of the century Scotland possessed a far more productive economy than either. Output per head was more than 50 per cent. higher. Now the position is reversed. Scotland's GDP per head is only 89 per cent. that of Denmark and 76 per cent. of Norway's."

The document also tells us:

> "Scotland's industrial workforce today is only 58 per cent. of what it was in 1972."

Although the STUC hoped that it would not be read as such, and has tried to massage the time scales to concentrate mostly on the past 10 years, it cannot hide the consistent hammering and debilitation of the Scottish economy under both Tory and Labour regimes. In reality, the document is an indictment of both. The message that roars from its pages is that Scotland needs to be free if it is to flourish.

All economists of whatever school now agree that the English economy hangs on the brink of recession. The Government's policy of high interest rates is deliberately designed to force it as near that brink as possible without going over the edge and losing even minimal growth. History shows, however, that policies designed to deflate the English economy deliver a killer blow to Scotland's economy, because yoked as we are in a political and economic union which Labour defends as vehemently as do the Tories, we have no choices north of the border. Cooling off down here puts us into deep freeze. We are told that all the present agony of interest rates is to cool off the overheated south of England, but we do not have any experience of overheating in Scotland.

Of the top 10 unemployment black spot areas, Strathclyde, Fife and the Western Isles occupy three places. They represent more than half Scotland. While west Sussex has an unemployment rate of 2 per cent., in Strathclyde it is 12·9 per cent. and in Scotland as a whole it is 10·4 per cent. Those are the fiddled figures. In reality, unemployment is much higher. In Kinning park, Govan, the unemployment rate for men is 29·6 per cent. and the overall rate is 22·6 per cent. Not even in the world of the unreal, which describes Downing street today, could anyone argue that those figures represent an overheating which demands a squeeze by means of an interest rate of 15 per cent.

The lesson to be drawn by the people of Scotland from this Tory crisis and from previous Labour ones is that the union in which we now are is redundant and damaging. Only when we move from this union to the new union of the European Community—which will enable us to make key decisions on monetary, fiscal and investment policy—will Scotland, which has an intrinsically strong economy, fulfil its potential.

8.43 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): One of the less edifying spectacles of the past two days has been the gleeful anticipation of many Opposition Members, waiting for the market to crash, the pound to plummet or a crisis to occur. Nothing more clearly demonstrates the hypocrisy of their so-called interest in the health of the economy than their profound disappointment that none of those things has happened. The markets have firmed up and the pound has been recovering. The reason is quite simple. Despite temporarily high interest rates and speculation about our entry into the exchange rate mechanism, and even despite the Chancellor's resignation, the markets recognise that the economy is underpinned fundamentally by a very strong backing.

I could quote statistics which have been mentioned today on the record of manufacturing exports, the record of sustained growth and increases in the standard of living which seem to have eluded the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), but I will quote first three factors to emphasise my point. First, British industry is spending on training and investing in its work force £18 billion per year, which represents £700 per year for every man, woman and child in this country. What is more, that figure is expected to increase by a further 50 per cent. this year. Secondly, only last week in my constituency Brinton's, the biggest carpet manufacturer, announced a locally based investment programme of £41 million over the next five years. That does not seem to demonstrate a lack of faith in our economic policies or in the strength of the economy. Thirdly, only yesterday an article in *The Independent* stated:

> "The underlying strength of the economy—as measured by bank lending, declining unemployment and manufacturing output is . . . robust."

Of course the Gallup poll shows a fall in consumer spending. That is the intention of high interest rates. The housing market has at last been corrected from the over-high levels that it reached. More important, the CBI survey, despite showing some slowing down in investment intentions, still forecasts a growth rate next year of between 1 and 2 per cent., which demonstrates that although growth is slow, it will not stop altogether and there will be the soft landing that the Government have targeted.

We have obviously focused on interest rates because as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said, the Government have regarded them as an essential tool of monetary policy. Ever since the Macmillan committee of 1931, through the short-term interest rate control of the 1950s to the interest rate controls of the past few years, the role of interest rates in affecting demand in the economy has always been the subject of some debate.

As the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) rightly pointed out, there has always been a conflict between their internal role in reducing the aggregate demand through consumption, thereby reducing inflation, and their external role in increasing the exchange rate which decreases inflation but makes the elimination of the balance of payments deficit more difficult through the falling value of the pound, especially as in recent times balance of payments deficits have often been a manifestation of increased excess demand in the economy rather than rising prices.

Against that background, I wish to make two points. First, if demand in the economy is to be properly regulated, interest rates must operate in the right fiscal and monetary environment. On Friday, I was pleased that the Chancellor said that the economy is not regulated by interest rates alone. Although he was right to raise interest rates to bring down inflation—it worked in 1984-85 and it will work now—that is more effective in the context of monetary supply control. It is significant that, over the past three years, the broad-based measure of money in the United Kingdom has risen by 100 per cent. while in Germany it has increased by only 45 per cent. and there is evidence, particularly in Australia and Spain, that despite high interest rates, if the broad level of monetary growth is not contained, it will result in increased inflation.

I hope that the Treasury will consider renewed targeting of monetary supply. If an independent Bank of England —as mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) and my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs Gorman)—would help, I would be quite happy about that. Interest rate policy is far more effective if fiscal policy is tight as it is at the moment. More important, interest rate policy works if it is realised that in the long term, and possibly in the short term, it cannot be used to buck the foreign exchange markets.

Secondly, our obsession with entering the exchange rate mechanism is bogus. The exchange rate mechanism is, as the new Chancellor of the Exchequer said today, a contrivance and not a recipe for problem-free economic management. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby said, there are two strands of thought on the role of the exchange rate in anti-inflation policy, but anyone who thinks that simply joining the ERM will be a panacea for inflation-free economic growth is living in cloud cuckoo land. It is clear that, so long as the relative rates of inflation within different countries in the exchange rate mechanism are different, our entry into the ERM will be impractical.

The Germans have recently wanted to revalue against the existing members of the exchange rate mechanism. That was emphasised by the chief economist of Paribas, who is otherwise in favour of our joining the ERM, when he said:

> "Sterling cannot conceivably join the ERM before the second half of 1990, when there could be a distinct slow down in United Kingdom inflation."

That was borne out today by the *Financial Times*, which said that, far from converging, the economic policies of member countries of the ERM are diverging, if one considers their ratio of debt to GNP or their budget balances or deficits, all of which are growing further and further apart and may lead to problems for the stability of the ERM in the longer term.

I find it hard to stomach the hypocritical and somewhat dishonest attitude of the Opposition. We did not hear much of the economic policy of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), apart from the fact that it would involve some sort of industrial strategy. The Opposition say that they want to encourage saving, so why did the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) say last year that we should reduce interest rates to deter savings and increase inflation? Why did the Labour party not cost its proposals, which will cost £40 billion, increase inflation to 27 per cent. and rob savings of their value? In its policy review, it proposes to abolish the business expansion scheme. How will that push savings into young companies? How will savings be encouraged by a wealth tax, a capital value tax or a tax on unearned income over £3,000 per year? Yet all those ideas were put forward in Labour's recent policy review.

Labour Members talk about incentives and support for manufacturing industry. Will they explain why when the last Labour Government were in power output in manufacturing industry fell? What will be the effects on labour costs of Labour's proposed payroll tax and the less acceptable parts of the social charter? How will incentive be improved by decapping national insurance contributions and increasing the top rate of income tax to over 50 per cent., when we know that doing the opposite has not only increased yield and incentive but has made the tax system more equitable and fair? Labour Members will find it impossible to answer those questions.

Like the economy that the Labour party left us in 1979, Labour Members are bankrupt. They are bankrupt of ideas, competence and credibility. Their concern for the health of the economy is bogus—and so is their motion, which I urge the House to reject.

8.52 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I shall not attempt to follow the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), because the degree of his confidence is in exactly

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

inverse ratio to the degree of his understanding. Over the next few months, he will have to maintain that balance if he is to retain his sanity.

I do not want to comment on the fun that we have been seeing in the Fuhrerbunker or the hatred at Hatter's castle over the past week. It has been a touching spectacle, with the brave little woman getting on with the woman's work of trying to dominate the world, but being upset by emotional men throwing menopausal spasms all over the place.

I should not want to comment on that domestic drama. However, I should like to comment on the advice given by Professor Alan Walters, because much of the argument rests on whether his advice is accurate. Professor Walters was saying, first, that the pound needs to come down and, secondly, that we should not join the exchange rate mechanism. That advice is correct, because the pound is overvalued in real terms, even according to 1986 figures, by about 17 per cent. against the deutschmark, and by 45 per cent. according to 1976 figures. It will be difficult for British industry to prevail, to compete and to send exports to the EEC. Our main problem is that 75 per cent. of our deficit is with the EEC. It will be difficult to compete against imports in our home market.

Professor Walters seemed to be saying that the EMS is a monetarist joke that imposes on us an externally determined exchange rate decided by our competitors, whose interest it is to ensure that sterling is overvalued. It puts us back in the old sisyphean trap of struggling to maintain an externally determined exchange rate.

If we enter the EMS, sterling will be a guy rope holding the deutschmark down. The main problem with trading in Europe is that Germany is maintaining its huge industrial expansion and surpluses by keeping the deutschmark undervalued. If the ERM becomes a means of maintaining that undervaluation, it will lead to what it has led to in France and Italy—deflation, depression and a rise in unemployment. It seems to me that Professor Walters's advice is correct. The interesting question is why the Government do not accept it.

Britain's industrial base is threatened because of the folly of the Government's economic policy. For the first four years of their term of office we had massive deflation, which closed about a quarter of our manufacturing capacity and led to a loss of 28 per cent. of manufacturing jobs. If that deflation is followed, as it was, by a massive expansion of credit, a balance of payments deficit on the scale that we are experiencing is inevitable, because British industry cannot cope with the ensuing demand from the credit explosion.

How do we now deal with that problem? The only way is to get the exchange rate down. The Americans, faced with a smaller deficit in trade, talked the dollar down by about 40 per cent. That requires lower interest rates, so we can use the exchange rate to return the competitive advantage of British industry and to tax imports effectively. We secure that by lower interest rates, which help to counteract inflationary consequences. Any inflationary consequences will be comparatively minor because there would be an improvement in unit costs, but we will also need to counter inflationary consequences with social co-operation.

The hoo-hah of the last week and the dramatic resignation of the Chancellor should be used as an opportunity, or perhaps as a smokescreen, not to say "We shall carry on with our policies", which will be disastrous and ruinous for British industry, but as an opportunity to change and accept the advice that Professor Walters offered in the first place.

8.56 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I cannot help noting that here we are yet again with an Opposition debate on the economy. In view of the events over the past few days, I should have thought that we would be seeing a full-scale motion of no confidence in the Government. Would it be uncharitable to wonder why? Could it be that such a motion would have to be moved by the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), and could it be that on the subject of the economy he fears that he might be kebabbed?

We have heard many learned speeches on the exchange rate mechanism. The one message that is clear is that it is not a comfortable infant's cradle in which we would be cared for by a nice cosy German nanny. We should have to keep within the allotted exchange rate band, but we would not have the weapon of the exchange rate to keep within that band. Therefore, increased reliance would be placed on the interest rate weapon.

Today, we rely heavily on interest rates, as every hon. Member knows. With home ownership running at about 70 per cent. of the population, householders and business men in our constituencies are coming to us with complaints about the pain that has been created by interest rates. The opinion polls reflect that concern.

At the end of the day, the objective is to limit credit. That has been done by price rather than by rationing. It is clear that the Opposition's policy is to rely on the latter. Credit cards and personal consumer borrowing make up only 15 per cent. of total borrowing, and even the Opposition recognise that. In his Walden interview, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said:

> "We're not talking about the familiar aspects of credit control, the hire purchase restrictions, limiting credit cards and so on—these are not big elements."

They are concerned not about that but about the 85 per cent. of personal borrowing that takes the form of mortgages.

The Opposition would introduce rationing of mortgages. That would hit those who are trading up. The message is clear to the electorate: if someone is thinking of moving to a better home for their family, they should be prepared to go cap in hand to a bureaucrat and, even then, they will probably not obtain the increase hoped for.

The hon. Member for Dagenham let the cat out of the bag when Brian Walden asked him if those restrictions would inevitably hit young couples. The hon. Member for Dagenham said, "Yes." Since that Walden interview the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) have trampled on each other in the rush to the microphone to say that that is not Labour party policy. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said last week——

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Arnold: No, I must finish in 10 minutes.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said that he would invite the banks to co-operate in the restraining of lending. When he was twitted about the likelihood of their complying, he asked a question of my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim):

> "Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the banks would refuse to co-operate with a Government who sought to place some limit on lending? Which banks is the hon. Gentleman making that accusation about?"—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 687.]

I would answer that question by telling the right hon. and learned Gentleman to look at the hoardings being put up by Lloyd's bank. It has a splendid poster which says:

> "Where can we get a loan for a decent holiday?"

I can think of no more financially irresponsible and immoral question than that, which is trying to influence consumers to borrow for a holiday.

Why would the banks co-operate voluntarily with a future Labour Government when the trade unions—the Labour party's own paymasters—would not co-operate with the last Labour Government? Why would the City co-operate with a Labour Government when, in *Labour Weekly*, the right hon. Member for Islwyn described the City as

> "the army of brokers, jobbers and other quaintly named parasites."

Even if we were to assume that British banks would fall into line and that the Bank of England would oblige foreign banks with branches in London to comply, how would the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East control overseas banks and get them to comply in the absence of exchange controls?

There are hundreds of banks established with branches located in Amsterdam. The Dutch market is free of exchange and capital controls and they could, and probably would, set up departments to handle British domestic lending. The funds flowing to and fro could not be controlled. The Opposition have not suggested a viable form of credit controls in either this debate or the debate last week.

I would make a plea to my own Front Bench spokesmen. There may be economic merit in mopping up excess spending power, but will my hon. Friend the Minister bear in mind the fact that the pips of too many mortgage borrowers are sqeaking?

When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor considers his Budget next year, he should consider increasing mortgage interest tax relief from the current £30,000 limit to £45,000. That would constitute a greater proportion of house prices, particularly in the south-east. He should restrict that to the standard rate tax band. That would be fiscally neutral to the higher earnings but would give relief to average and low-paid households that look to the Government for protection.

9.3 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): This has been an interesting debate. It has been bye bye, Blaby, hello, Huntingdon. The former Chancellor attempted to explain how he became the enemy within and referred to the interesting parable of the iceberg. It was not clear to me whether he thought that the Prime Minister was the iceberg or whether he thought that she was the captain of the Titanic and that he was the iceberg.

It is true that the Prime Minister has been busy rearranging the deck chairs in the past few days. One result is that the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) has become the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Obviously, we all welcome him to his new job. It is always interesting to see the Bob Cratchit of the House of Commons suddenly becoming the Scrooge, and we expect to hear many more contributions from him. He is famous for being able to devour briefs from civil servants. We are sure that the Prime Minister has recognised his talents and will send him many briefs to master over the next few years. We realise that he has his own mind, but we shall not expect the Prime Minister to let him use it much. It is clear that, from now on, the Government's policies will be made in No. 10. The Prime Minister does not necessarily choose Ministers for their talent. They are chosen in spite of it.

The Government, especially the right hon. Member for Huntingdon, appear to believe that the balance of payments problem will be solved by high business investment. That is contradicted by two outside elements, which are probably more objective than the Chancellor. The first is the London business school survey, which we all probably read on Sunday, which showed that the balance of payments would continue with a deficit of £15 billion for the next four years and that the slowdown in the economy, which high interest rates will produce next year, will result only in a marginal decrease in the balance of payments deficit.

We must all look forward, because this problem will concern Governments of both persuasions, and think what a catastrophe an accumulated deficit extending over a five-year period—£20 billion this year, £15 billion last year and at least another three years of deficits of £15 billion —is for the whole country. How can it be turned round? How can we produce surpluses of £15 billion to £20 billion in the following four or five years to repay credit from other countries used to finance present excessive consumption?

Secondly, the theory is that business investment today will solve the balance of payments problem tomorrow. How can that be true, given that, during the past week, the Governor of the Bank of England has been issuing warnings about the nature of that business investment? He has made it clear over the past six or so months through informal forms of credit control that the banks are lending too much money to the property sector. There are no financial or legal sanctions that he can exact—this is an informal form of credit control. Conservative Members persist in believing that it does not and could not exist. The Governor of the Bank of England publicly announced his warning: "Please, do not lend so much money to the property sector." British industry is investing far too much in property and ergo far too little in the productive investment which might correct the balance of payments problem.

Let there be no doubt about the nature of business investment. The boom has been in fixed assets to too great an extent. Even the Governor of the Bank of England has issued informal and, finally, public warnings to that effect. Business investment is high, but it is in the wrong sectors —those that will never reduce the balance of payments deficit. Investment in office blocks has been booming, but they do not turn themselves into exports. Yes, there can be some exports in financial services, but it can never match a deficit of £20 billion without reorientation of business investment into the productive manufacturing and highly exportable sectors. Anyone who believes that our business investment is healthy, as the Chancellor said earlier today,

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

and that it can on its own solve the balance of payments problem had better talk to the Governor of the Bank of England, because plainly he does not believe it.

The Chancellor showed astonishing naivety today. It is clear that his previous experience as Chief Secretary, when he merely tried to add the public spending forecasts of the different Departments, has not equipped him for his onerous responsibility for overall economic policy. I do not say that in a spirit of curmudgeonliness. I welcome any new appointment which might help us to run the economy in such a way that we can look forward to some equilibrium with our overseas trading partners.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Stillars) —once his remarks were stripped of their Caledonian paranoia—was right to say that the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) had had the good fortune to preside over such a long period of a massive injection of advantageous oil wealth into the public Exchequer as to give him the luxury of making choices that Chancellors in other decades had not had.

The economy is almost back on a normal path now. There is still some extra bounce in it arising from our oil wealth, but that is much less than it was. We now need from the new Chancellor a direction of economic policy which will put the balance of payments deficit right. It is now at world record levels, 4 per cent. of our GNP, which is not production at home but consumption from other countries that we are having to finance. If we do not get that right, we will inherit an enormous mess when Labour takes over the government of Britain two years from now.

9.10 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I wish at the outset to welcome the Chancellor to his new position and I shall begin by saying what he should have said this afternoon. He should have said that he would introduce an Autumn Statement for investment in industry and that he would deal with the trade deficit as a serious problem. He should have conceded that supply side measures for investment, training and research and for the regions were necessary and that he would act to curb the inflation that the Government had directly created by their policy of inflating electricity and water prices and by the poll tax. He should have announced that he would open negotiations to join the exchange rate mechanism on the conditions that Labour had suggested.

In short, the Chancellor had a marvellous opportunity, as he changed jobs, to change policies. Instead, he told us that he was determined to repeat the errors of the past. Those mistakes in the last 18 months have meant that mortgages have risen by £80 a month for the typical home owner. They have meant that business borrowing is now up by more than £1·5 billion. They have meant that company bankruptcies have risen by 18 per cent. in the last year.

Those mistakes, which have led the CBI to worry about faltering and then falling investment, have made us, for the end of this year and next year, the slowest-growing economy in Europe, and have led the European Commission in its annual report on the British economy, published a few days ago, to say that British investment was low by European standards, that savings were pitifully low, that the trade deficit would not fall of its own accord and that there was a range of weapons, beyond the exclusive reliance on interest rates, that should be used.

Yet today, when we are faced with all the problems that business, industry, home owners and families throughout the country confront, the Chancellor made a virtue of saying that there was not the slightest need for a change of policy. There was no hint of the possibility of even the remotest fine tuning of the nation's economic policy. The Government still claim to the last detail, to the last decimal point, of their interest rate strategy, that nothing needs to be changed.

That has been the spirit of the events of the last seven days. The first occurrence after the Chancellor resigned was that the Deputy Prime Minister told the House that their "successful policies" would continue, the economic miracle was intact. Then the new Foreign Secretary came on the radio—no doubt looking forward to the freedom of a job in which he could be far from Downing street—and said:

> "It is a long time since the Cabinet was so united on major items of policy."

Then we witnessed incessantly on radio and television the increasingly ridiculous and ever-present figure of the chairman of the Conservative party, a one-man Saatchi and Saatchi, saying: "Everything will go on just as before."

That was not the most reassuring statement at that time. "Just as before," he said, meaning resignation, reshuffle, confusion and disarray. "Business as usual," we were told. it was to be "the team approach".

Our argument is that, even after weeks of division and disarray, of uncertainty and confusion, even after the resignation of a Chancellor who had been in office for six and a half years, and even after the personal adviser to the Prime Minister had resigned, the divisions which led to the resignations over the economic direction of policy remain to be resolved, and nothing that the Chancellor said today leads us to believe that they are on their way to being resolved.

There were two questions before us after the Chancellor's resignation—why did he resign, and what is the Government's policy? We now have an answer to the first question, courtesy not of the Prime Minister in an hour-long interview on Sunday, but of the former Chancellor in a 15-minute speech this afternoon.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): It was nine minutes.

Mr. Gordon Brown: It was a nine-minute speech this afternoon, which was dignified and a model of what a speech in these circumstances should be. Let us recall what the Prime Minister said about the Chancellor's departure on Sunday. She said that she did not know why he had resigned. When asked whether he would have stayed if Sir Alan Walters had gone, she said:

> "I don't know, I don't know."

She did not seem to know why he had gone.

Can anybody be in any doubt why he resigned after what we have heard today? It was not a personality clash, some wayward gesture or a spur-of-the-moment decision. As we have heard this afternoon, it was a fundamental question of policy—a question of exchange rate policy, which is right at the heart of the Government's economic strategy. As the former Chancellor well knows, it is a matter that has not yet been resolved.

The former Chancellor told us three things this afternoon: first, that he believes in exchange rate management; secondly, that he had come to the conclusion that the European monetary system and the exchange rate mechanism were the best vehicle for it; thirdly, that the sooner we were able to join rather than later, the better for this country. It is perfectly clear what the dispute of which, as he said, the Walters article was the tip of the iceberg was all about. Can anybody doubt how strongly he felt about EMS?

Mr. Lawson: If I may just set the record straight, the tip of the iceberg I was referring to was that this one article was merely the tip of the iceberg of Alan Walters's activities generally. I was not referring to the wider issues as being part of the iceberg. That is a different matter on which I was giving my views to the House.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the former Chancellor. Before he arrived in the House, I said what a dignified speech he had made. The former Chancellor clarified the Walden interview in even greater detail than we had suspected. When the Prime Minister was asked whether the Chancellor would have stayed if Sir Alan had gone, she said:

"I don't know, I don't know."

From what the former Chancellor has now said, it is clear what the result might have been.

No one can doubt how strongly the Chancellor felt about European monetary co-operation, no one can doubt how much he felt that the Madrid compromise was in difficulties, and no one can doubt that the issue was not just Professor Walters's activities, but the Prime Minister's apparent agreement with the views of Sir Alan. Yet this is the Prime Minister who said on Sunday—and on Thursday and again today—

"I have always supported my Chancellor."

The issue that still remains to be resolved is whether the Prime Minister, since Thursday's events, has ever repudiated Sir Alan Walters. Has she ever repudiated his view that the EMS was "half-baked"? Has she ever repudiated his view that the EMS had only a minimum level of plausibility? Has she ever repudiated Sir Alan's view that he spoke for the Prime Minister as well as speaking for himself? It is not what the Prime Minister did not know on Sunday, but what she did not want to say, that is the issue. That is the question at the heart of the Government's confusion of policy, which remains even to this day.

What are the Government's views on these major issues of economic policy or, more appropriately, what are the views of the Ministers one by one, because that is the way in which we now have to deal with these matters?

Let us start with the views of the Prime Minister. Can anybody doubt that, although the Government's official policy was to believe in exchange rate management and co-ordination, the Prime Minister has always believed, in her own words, that one "cannot buck the market"? While the official policy for many months was for co-ordination, the Prime Minister's view is that sterling should be floating free on the foreign exchanges and determined by market forces. The Government's official view was to join the exchange rate mechanism, but what is the Prime Minister's view? Has she ever given us one good reason for joining?

Let us consider the Prime Minister's excuses for not joining. In 1985, she said that she could not join because of the strength of the dollar. In January 1986, she rejected joining because she said that the British economy was different. In March 1986, the reason was the special status of sterling. In April 1986, it was the potential drain on our reserves. In June 1986, it was speculation. In November 1986, as the *Financial Times* article reveals, the reason was our economic weakness. The Prime Minister said that we would go in strong—if she was going to take us in. In 1987, her reason for not joining was the deflationary impact of the links to the deutschmark. In 1988, the excuse was inflation, and in 1989, the number of conditions to be met has multiplied.

In June this year, the ex-Chancellor referred to the two main preconditions for joining the exchange rate mechanism, which he identified as inflation and the removal of exchange controls. The Prime Minister, in response, said:

"Far many more conditions must be taken into account."

It was a question of waiting to see what happened with inflation, and even then sterling could join the EMS only if the conditions clearly existed. The Prime Minister then added cabotage, and on Sunday she added doubts about policy towards British family farms.

Under those circumstances, is that evidence of the Prime Minister wanting to join the EMS? Is the Prime Minister looking not for arguments to go in, but for excuses to stay out? She is not looking for actions we can take, like reducing inflation, to make it possible for us to join; instead, she is looking for action that she expects others to take so that we can stay out. How many more conditions will she have added by 1990? If the Prime Minister has her way, we will not be new members of the EMS by 1990, but there will certainly be new conditions.

Where do the rest of the Cabinet stand? Where does the Deputy Prime Minister stand? At the weekend, he said that it was of the highest importance that the Government remained committed to the position, clearly and in good faith. He said that we had to be clear about what was agreed in Madrid. How did the letter or spirit of Madrid include cabotage, which was added by the Prime Minister? How did it include dealing with the French farmers or, as the Prime Minister said, that

"artificial and cultural barriers had to come down"?

Is anyone in any doubt that the Prime Minister was attempting to create conditions to make it more difficult to join? Is it correct that on 24 January in a Lobby at the House, as the *Daily Telegraph* reported, the Prime Minister said that Britain would not join during the course of this Parliament?

Where does the Deputy Prime Minister stand in all this? What does he think of the Prime Minister's interview? What does he think of the new conditions? The truth is that he hoisted the flag of insurrection for 18 hours and then threw up the white flag of surrender. That was the shortest rebellion in history. When will he have the courage of his convictions rather than the courage of the Prime Minister's?

I have already welcomed the new Chancellor to his job. He has had the right training for the job over the past few weeks when he was Foreign Secretary—private humiliation, public repudiation and then instant promotion. They say that the Chancellor is ambitious. I cannot believe that. If he was truly ambitious last Thursday, he would have waited half an hour, looked at the jobs on offer and then gone for the most influential vacancy of all, that of part-time, back-stage economic adviser to the Prime Minister.

[Mr. Brown]

What are the Chancellor's views on European monetary co-operation? Let us consider what he said when he first addressed that subject in November 1981. He last spoke in detail on that matter as a humble Back Bencher. He said:

> "At the beginning of the parliamentary recess I firmly believed that Britain should not enter the European monetary system. I have returned to the House, having spoken to firm after firm in my constituency, believing that the sooner we enter the European monetary system to improve exchange rate stability the better it will be for our exports and our interests generally. I have no doubt that that is the right course."—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1981; Vol. 12, c. 61.]

What was right—*[Interruption.]* The Chancellor does not think that he said it. It appears in *Hansard* of 4 November 1981. What was the right course to be followed, immediately and unconditionally? The right course then is apparently not the right course now. Does the Chancellor still believe that the sooner we enter the better? Does he still believe that it is still the right course unconditionally? What are the Chancellor's real views? From what he said this afternoon, hon. Members did not get a full appreciation of his views—it was "on the one hand, on the other hand."

The truth was in an answer to an intervention by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who asked whether the Chancellor believed that the EMS is half-baked. The Chancellor would not or could not answer the question. He refused to repudiate Sir Alan's view. If he believes that the EMS is half-baked, why does he not say so? If he believes, against Sir Alan, that it has only a minimum level of plausibility, why does he not say so? If the Chancellor wishes to intervene now and repudiate Sir Alan's view, I should be happy to let him do so.

On what terms did the Chancellor accept the job? Did he ask that Sir Alan be removed? Clearly not. Did he ask that the Prime Minister drop her view that the EMS is half-baked, or did he just say, "Yes, Prime Minister"? Did she say, "My adviser will be in touch"? The only thing that we can say with certainty after the Chancellor's speech today, which added to rather than ended the confusion, is that his position is unassailable. Where are we now? We have a Prime Minister who is clearly hostile to European monetary co-operation, senior Ministers who are in favour of it, and a Chancellor who has not made up his mind. The divisions will still remain to be resolved, and they go right to the heart of economic strategy. Do the Government believe in management of our economy or do they believe that they cannot buck the market?

What will the Cabinet Ministers do? Will they stand up to the Prime Minister? Look at the Cabinet—the right team for Britain's future. Last month's right team for Britain's future has given way to this month's right team for Britain's future. Last month's right team has less future than could possibly have been foreseen.

What of the Ministers themselves? The Prime Minister was directly asked about that on Friday. Jean Rook asked:

> "You are accused of refusing to recognise your Cabinet as a team or working with it. What is your reaction?"

The Prime Minister replied:

> "A leader must lead, must lead firmly, must have firm convictions and must see that these convictions are reflected in each piece of policy."

There was not a mention of the team at all, no mention of working together, and not even a mention of the chairman of the Conservative party.

On "Panorama" last night, the Foreign Secretary came nearest to giving us the answer to how to deal with the Prime Minister. How does he deal with the Prime Minister? He answered:

> "to argue, but courteously. Then you will find yourself being contradicted, and sometimes told you don't know what you are talking about."

[Interruption.] Obviously, the Ministers know what it is all about. The Foreign Secretary went on to state:

> "But if you persevere, and have good arguments on your side, then you will find you will gain ground."

The right hon. Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), Lord Pym, Lord Prior and now the former Chancellor—the people who have persevered—have gained ground, but the ground that they are on is the Government Back Benches.

Who are the real decision makers in the Government? Faced with a choice between a Chancellor of six and a half years' standing, whom she had praised as brilliant, wonderful and marvellous, and a part-time adviser two months back, for most of the time contactable only by telephone, the Prime Minister chose her back-stairs adviser. When faced with the choice between the adviser, as she said, with only the power to advise and the Minister with the power to decide, she chose the adviser. Why? I suspect that it was because, in her own words, he is "one of us". It was the most damaging appointment of an adviser by a head of Government since—I was going to say, since Caligula's horse, but at least the horse stayed in Rome and worked full-time.

What sort of Cabinet do we have? Ministers sweep into Downing street in chauffeur-driven cars and wave to the television cameras as they ascend the steps of No. 10, but then find that the only person who listens to them is the policeman on the door. We have "do-as-you-are-told" Ministers in a "speak-when-spoken-to" Cabinet in a "Yes, Prime Minister" Government.

Our argument is not about the constitutional theories of government or about the end of Cabinet government or the pretence of it; it is about the lives and aspirations of millions of people throughout the country and about how they have been hit by the failures of a Government who are now divided. They tell us that we are going to have a soft landing, they tell the passengers to fasten their safety belts, but all we can hear is the noise of the squabbles in the cockpit about who has the controls.

They have had 10 years, at the end of which the Chancellor still tells us that the economic miracle is intact, but that his policies are going to hurt. Why are they going to hurt if there is an economic miracle? It is because the balance of payments deficit is the worst that we have ever known—yet the Chancellor cannot even admit that it is a problem. No other country has a deficit so big, yet the Government cannot concede that it is worthy of action. Inflation is the highest of all our major competitors, yet the Government came into power 10 years ago with the objective of zero inflation. We have the highest interest rates and the highest mortgate rates in the world. I advise Conservative Members that they cannot begin to solve those problems as long as the philosophy is "you can't buck the market".

What did the Prime Minister say about all this on the Walden interview on Sunday? When faced with these difficulties facing industry, business, home owners and families, she said:

> "Let's get down to the success we've had . . . the way in which people now copy Thatcherism, as they call it, the world over . . . Country after country is following our policies. They come in and say to me: 'We've tried everything else, now we'll try Thatcherism'".

Is France, with a 3 per cent. inflation rate, aspiring to the Thatcherite inflation rate of 7·5 per cent.? Is West Germany, with a trade surplus, attempting to strive towards the Thatcherite deficit that is approaching £20 billion? Is Japan, with 5 to 6 per cent. interest rates, aspiring to the Thatcherite miracle of interest rates at 15 per cent.? How many other countries aspire to deficits of the size that we have, and how many other countries aspire to inflation rates and interest rates at our levels? The Thatcherite miracle is not for export, because, as everybody knows, the miracle does not exist.

At the end of this week, where are we in the future course of policy for this country? The former Chancellor has gone because the Prime Minister preferred an itinerant adviser to a senior Minister—a court favourite to a Cabinet Minister. We have a new Chancellor who has been unable to tell us his view, but who has added to the confusion over exchange rate management rather than resolved it. We have a Foreign Secretary who says that the Government's job is to persuade people, when it is clear that it is his job and that of his colleagues to persuade the Prime Minister. We have a Deputy Prime Minister who raised the standard of revolt, but lowered it immediately afterwards. Yet that is what we are told is the "right team" for Britain's future. Is anybody in any doubt that, with the Cabinet divided and Conservative supporters throughout the country in disarray, we have now entered the first days in the final collapse of the Government——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Rubbish.

Mr. Brown: The real question that we must ask this evening is, who can now look to the Government for support? On Sunday, on that Walden interview, there was no mention of the problems people have or of those facing industry and business. These problems cannot be solved if we have a Prime Minister who is so out of touch and so protected from reality by unelected advisers that she does not even acknowledge that the problems exist. We need Cabinet government and democracy, and we need a Government who will take action to solve our economic problems. For that, the country will have to look to Labour.

9.35 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont) I start by joining my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in paying tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). My right hon. Friend was a good friend to me and it was a matter of great sadness to me that he felt that he had to resign. I worked with him for some three and a half years, and those were stimulating and enjoyable years. My right hon. Friend has had a great impact on this Government, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said, but not just as Chancellor of the Exchequer. As Financial Secretary to the Treasury, he played a key part in the abolition of exchange controls. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said, it will be for history to judge the significance of the tax reforms introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby. I believe that both sides of the House will agree that the speech that my right hon. Friend made was one of force, eloquence, and enormous lucidity, and it retained, as my right hon. Friend always does, a capacity to surprise. Those are the qualities which the people who have worked with my right hon. Friend know he has and for which they appreciate him.

Mr. Radice: If the former Chancellor's speech was so good, and if his case was so good, why did the Chief Secretary not resign with him?

Mr. Lamont: I spent no less than six or seven hours last week trying to persuade my right hon. Friend not to go, not simply because I did not wish him to resign but because I felt that it was a mistake, that it was unnecessary for him to resign and that his position, although difficult, was not impossible. Having expressed that view to my right hon. Friend, it would have been false if I had behaved any differently, and I know that my right hon. Friend agrees with me.

It is curious, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) pointed out, that an issue as esoteric and narrow as the European monetary system should come so to dominate a debate as it has dominated the House today. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has taken the first possible opportunity to emphasise that he wants to join the exchange rate mechanism as soon as the conditions set out after the Madrid summit can be satisfied. My right hon. Friend has made it crystal clear that he intends that they should be satisfied. He also went on to sound a note of caution by saying that the ERM is not a panacea. It is neither the salvation nor the ruin of the British economy. It is not, as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) suggested, that my right hon. Friend wanted to put up some Aunt Sally to knock down. It is because of the feeling that my right hon. Friend and I have, like many other hon. Members, that sometimes it is important to put this issue in perspective.

We must remember that the British economy has been managed at different times with different exchange rate regimes. We have had fixed rates and floating rates, and it is not obvious, at least to me, that economic success is correlated exclusively with one or the other. There are, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said, no soft options either inside or outside the EMS. If we are inside it, we shall still have to use interest rates to link our currency with low-inflation currencies. If we were outside the EMS, and even if the currency floated freely, which is not the Government's policy, we would still have a tight squeeze to contain inflationary pressures. Either way, there are no soft options.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The right hon. Gentleman has said that the position of the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer last week was difficult. How was it difficult?

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby has expressed his view and the reasons why he resigned. I do not wish to add to anything that has been said on that score.

The Opposition——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I am not giving way.

The Opposition have argued that there are divisions——

Mr. Stuart Bell: The Minister has said that his position was difficult but that it was not impossible for him to stay in his job. Will he tell the House why his position was difficult?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman misheard me. If he reads the report of the debate in *Hansard* he will note what I said.

The Opposition have sought to present themselves as the party that is united on the issue of the ERM. Those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who were present for the debate on the economy last week will agree, I am sure, that I was able to demonstrate fairly clearly that there are considerable divisions within the Opposition. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) believes that it is important to enter the ERM because the volatility of the currency matters. The hon. Members for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) do not think that the volatility of the currency matters at all. The hon. Member for Dagenham has said that he has a general hostility to the prospect of full membership. That is the view of a member of the shadow Cabinet, not of a part-time adviser to the Labour party. Is the hon. Member for Dagenham going to resign or not?

We are not surprised about the issues on which Opposition Members disagree, because we are used to them disagreeing. More remarkable is the point on which they all seem to agree. It is not clear, however, why they think that their long list of conditions would be more easily satisfied than those laid down by the Government. Their list is much longer than the Government's, much more amorphous and much more difficult to satisfy. It is the Labour party which is likely to lay down conditions that will never be satisfied.

The Opposition want what they call the deflationary tendency in the ERM to be removed. That is the issue on which all Opposition Members seem to be agreed. That is the most astonishing feature of all. For the majority of people, the essence of the ERM is to join it so that currencies will converge towards the lowest inflation rate, towards the German rate. That is why people want to join it. The Labour party is the only group I can think of that wishes to join it while not accepting the main reason for it.

The Labour party's policy document states:

> "Substantial changes would therefore be required before the next Labour Government could take sterling into the exchange rate mechanism".

The Labour party wants to subvert the monetary discipline that the system can provide. That is something that the Germans, for instance, could never tolerate. Further, the Labour party's policy document tells us that there must

> "be less reliance on interest rate adjustment and more on co-operation between central banks."

That is mere wishful thinking. How can a Government run a monetary policy without using interest rates? Perhaps someone would tell me that.

The Labour party wants to undermine the position of the Bundesbank. Labour's proposals to link the ERM to growth and to remove its deflationary bias would, if any of our European partners were foolish enough to accept them, drive the Germans out because those proposals are not consistent with the Bundesbank's constitutional duty to secure price stability.

It is extraordinary that everyone who advocates participating in the ERM is usually attracted to it as an anchor against inflation—except the Labour party, which does not want to join it until it is sure that it cannot be a bulwark against inflation. That is not surprising because we know that, whether in or out of office, Labour is always the party of inflation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) asked why we were having this debate today. After all, we had an economic debate last week. Perhaps in future we shall have economic debates once a week, or twice a week. That would be a good thing—far better than doing the public expenditure survey round or sitting in the Star Chamber. I would not mind. But perhaps we are having an economic debate for the reason to which my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) referred—that although the Labour party knew that it had to initiate a debate, it did not dare put down a censure motion and have a censure debate. Mr. Mandelson decided that the matter would be better handled by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), and that is why we are having an economic debate today.

Perhaps I am doing Opposition Members an injustice. Perhaps the real purpose of having a debate is so that Opposition Members could give those parts of their speeches that they did not give us last week—the bits that dealt with their policies. Those were the bits that we were to wait for.

It is hardly surprising. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East belongs to the Crossman school of politics. My hon. Friends will recall that some years ago, when the late Mr. Crossman published a Labour policy document on pensions, he was asked by the press why it did not contain any figures. He replied that it did not have any figures because they would all be shot to bits by the Tories. That is the attitude that the right hon. and learned Gentleman takes. He knows that he cannot produce any policies which will not be shot to bits by the press and will also please his hon. Friends.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Page 6104 of today's Order Paper gives the title of today's debate as "Government economic policy". The Minister is not addressing himself to that issue.

Mr. Speaker: There is also a Government amendment.

Mr. Lamont: We can all see that the Opposition have enormous confidence in themselves. They are terrified that we shall discuss their policies. That is a real advertisement for their confidence.

In the past week, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, who does not believe in policies, has been in a bit of difficulty because he is being pressed all the time by the media. He is being asked what he will do and how his credit controls will operate. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has managed to get through by putting on his best Glasgow family doctor appearance and looking confident.

Mr. Onslow *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way in a minute. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will settle down. We have 10 minutes left.

Mr. Lamont: I have always thought that the right hon. and learned Gentleman—"Dr. Smith"—would be a very good Glasgow general practitioner. He is very nice, very charming and very reassuring, with a good bedside manner. No doubt he would be one of those doctors who whisper in the patient's ear, "I think that that Mrs. Thatcher has gone a little too far with the NHS," but in every other way he would be excellent. The only trouble is that we would be wondering, has he kept up to date? Has he not read any textbooks, or articles in the *Lancet*? Does he know about the latest medicines that are available on the market? The more we listen to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, the more extraordinary and old-fashioned his policies seem.

Mr. Harry Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to help the Chief Secretary. For the past five minutes he has been going on about doctors. If there is a doctor in the House who can provide him with a couple of tranquillisers, the debate will proceed much better.

Mr. Speaker: I think that what would help the Chief Secretary, indeed, the whole House—would be for hon. Members to listen to his speech with the same care with which they listened to the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Lamont: We know that Labour is not a tolerant party—we know how easy Labour Members find it to listen to any argument against themselves—and that has been illustrated tonight.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Chief Secretary give way?

Mr. Lamont: No.

When the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was asked on the radio the other day what his policy was against inflation, he replied, "Industrial strategy." I must say, I was astonished. I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman had to say that he believed in industrial strategy when he was Secretary of State for Trade, but it never occurred to me then that he really believed in it. Nor did it occur to me that he could really believe in it today. Whatever else his industrial strategy may be, it has nothing to do with the immediate problem of inflation that faces us now.

The truth is that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has no policy—he simply has a phrase, albeit rather less coarse than the sort of phrase that the Leader of the Opposition uses when he is asked what is Labour party policy. We are told that Labour policy is to be one of backing winners—its record on that was not very good last time—and innovative technology. I think that we would be a bit more impressed by that if we had not sat here, year after year, listening to the right hon. and learned Gentleman ask for more money for shipbuilding, coal and all the other sectors that are not exactly at the leading edge of British industry. The idea of an industrial strategy is mildewed, moth-eaten and one might even say half-baked.

Does anyone really believe that the investments of the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation and the National Enterprise Board when Labour was in office did the British motor industry any good whatever? Is not the future of today's motor industry, as a result of our policies of privatisation and attracting foreign investment, better than it ever was under Labour's "industrial strategy"?

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: No, I will not give way.

It was the same when the IRC and NEB were investing in industrial technology. My hon. Friends may not remember the plethora of companies named after Greek islands and Greek gods. The gods may have been immortal, but the companies certainly were not, and they cost the taxpayer many millions of pounds. If we had never benefited from the activities of the NEB and the IRC, can anyone imagine that our industrial performance would have been any different? Of course it would not have been, although the taxpayer would have been billions of pounds better off.

What the right hon. Member for Monklands, East forgets is that in that golden age—that wonderful period when we had an industrial strategy—industrial production went down. What we need is not an industrial strategy in the sense in which he means the phrase, but a strategy for profits and commerce. That is what we have had lately, and that is why the health of our commerce and industry is better that it has been for years.

Whenever the right hon. and learned Gentleman has a problem, he has only one answer—to call a meeting. When he was asked a few years ago what he was going to do about car imports he said, "I'm going to call a meeting with the multinationals." He was asked what he was going to do about imports when he was Secretary of State for Trade. He said, "I'm going to call a meeting of the central working party." When the right hon. and learned Gentleman was asked last week how he would operate credit controls, he said that he would call a meeting of the bankers. The only answer he has is to call a meeting.

Credit controls did not work in the 1970s and they will not work now. The right hon. and learned Gentleman forgets that credit controls would also be highly damaging to British industry. Have the Opposition forgotten the effect of credit controls on the car industry in particular? Do they want to reintroduce the stringent credit controls that were imposed on the car industry? There is no doubt that their reintroduction would be vastly more damaging to investment——

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: There have already been a large number of interventions. I do not intend to have my speech disrupted by the hon. Gentleman.

The reintroduction of credit controls would have a very damaging effect on industry. Last year, the president of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said:

> "High interest rates, though painful, are a far more palatable solution than the reintroduction of credit controls. Those we most certainly do not want. The whole tactic was hopeless to manage and very destablising."

That is the view of manufacturing industry, and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, ought to take it into account.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman also put forward the policy of supply side Socialism. We are told that the Opposition will free up the market and free up the workings of the economy. What a supply side policy normally means is liberalisation—lifting the burden of

[Mr. Lamont]

bureaucracy and less intervention. Supply side policies are precisely the opposite of what the Opposition want. They want more bureaucracy and more intervention.

What are the examples of supply side Socialism? One example is an extension of the dock labour scheme. The way to free up the British economy, however, is to abolish the dock labour scheme. Another example of supply side Socialism is to extend the legal immunity of secondary picketing—what a way to encourage inward investment, and what an embarrassment for the British economy.

The Opposition have no policy. After their defeat in the last general election, the hon. Member for Dagenham said:

> "No amount of slick presentation can work if we do not have something sensible to say."

Getting the sensible things to say has been their difficulty. It was their problem then and it remains their problem today.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Chief Secretary now tell the House what it has been waiting to hear for the last 20 minutes? When he said that the Chancellor's position was difficult, did he mean that in his three and a half hours of discussion he and the Chancellor were hoping to go to the Prime Minister together and say, "Walters must go"?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman is building fiction upon fiction. If he reads *Hansard* he will see that his interpretation is wholly wrong.

The Opposition have tried to make this a debate about the Prime Minister's style. If it is a debate about that, why have they not had the courage to put down a no confidence motion?

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place, and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 238, Noes 342.

Division No. [illegible]] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsen[illegible]*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin

Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John

Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian

Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 339, Noes 234.

[Division No. 364] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*

Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob

Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth

Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Alistair Goodlad.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*

Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the determination with which it has pursued policies to bear down on inflation and improve the supply side of the economy; welcomes the sustained growth of output, productivity, investment, employment and living standards which the United Kingdom has enjoyed as a result; and endorses the Government's resolve to continue with the policies which are in the long-term interest of the British economy.

Licensing and Clubs (Northern Ireland)

10.27 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): I beg to move,

That the draft Licensing and Clubs (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 25th July, be approved.

The order is short, containing only nine articles. In 1987, the Government made significant changes to the licensing law in Northern Ireland. These were contained in the Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order 1987. The present order is intended to complement those earlier reforms. Articles 1 and 2 are introductory. Article 3 deals with the products that can be sold on licensed premises. The present law restricts public houses and off-licences to the business authorised by the licence, which by and large is the sale of alcohol. However, it makes exceptions for certain other goods, such as selling cigarettes, crisps, and the like, which go naturally with the sale of alcohol.

As the law stands, even the most modest change could be achieved only by primary legislation. It seems unnecessary to have an order every time a new bottle opener comes on the market. In future, therefore, we are proposing that any change should be through regulation.

Article 4 provides for the granting of extension licences and special authorisations when new year's eve falls on a Sunday. This is on average once every seven years, and it so happens that next new year's eve will be one of those occasions. As the law stands, alcohol cannot be sold in licensed premises or registered clubs after 10 pm on Sunday. I have been persuaded by arguments from the licensed trade, registered clubs and golfers at the 19th hole that, should I not act, there will be hardly a new year's party to which I will be invited in December. The provision will enable hotels, restaurants and pubs on application to a court and registered clubs on application to the police, to sell drink after 10 pm on 31 December until 1 am on Monday 1 January. I was addressing my remarks to the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) in particular.

Article 5 introduces a ban on all the off-sales of alcohol after 9 pm. This is the most significant change in the order, so I shall explain how it has come about.

Before 1 October 1987, the standard hours for alcohol off-sales from pubs and off-licences were 11.30 am to 11.00 pm., but not off-sales from pubs or the off-sales outlets attached to them.

The measure was aimed primarily at lager louts. I had received many complaints about thuggish behaviour in Northern Ireland. It was clear that the main source of drink involved was off-licensed shops. Since then there has been a decline in the problem, but there remains a widespread clamour for stronger action to be taken against drinking in public.

It was also clear that, following the 1987 ban, some of the off-sales shops were struggling because, as I have said, the 1987 ban did not extend to pubs or their attached off-sales outlets. Northern Ireland Members and others pointed out to me the detrimental effect that the new hours were having on existing free-standing off-licences.

The Government, therefore, must try to square the circle. The choice is plain: either we return to 11 pm closing for all off-licence outlets, or we require all of them to close at 9 pm. To take the former course would be to sweep aside the complaints of those who are rightly concerned about the serious problems associated with late-night drinking. That would be both unreasonable and unacceptable. The sensible answer, and the one that we have chosen, is to impose a ban on all off-sales after 9 pm, including those from pubs and off-sales outlets attached to them. That is the effect of article 5.

I now refer to article 6. I am sure that all hon. Members share my concern about the increasing problem of underage drinking. I know that all sections of the licensed trade are equally concerned, and they do not want to have under-18s among their customers. In passing I would like to praise what are known as no-alcohol pubs. I am pleased to say that in Armagh, Ballymena and, more recently, Dungannon there have been successful ventures to entice youngsters towards alcohol-free drinking. But we must keep a tight grip on the licensing side, and especially on offences involving minors. This article will create a new ground of defence for a person charged with selling alcohol to a minor, requiring him to prove that he had used all due diligence to prevent the offence. This defence will also be available to a person charged with allowing a minor in the bar area of a pub or in an off-licence.

This change stems from a recommendation made by Baroness Masham's group in its report on young people and alcohol, that the onus for avoiding the sale of alcohol to minors should be placed firmly on the licensee. I am sure that that is the right approach, but it is important to strike a balance. On the one hand, licensees must be left in no doubt about their responsibilities, and, on the other hand, it is important to have a defence for the conscientious licensee who makes a genuine mistake or could not foresee the intentions of his customer. I believe that the new defences strike that balance. They are, of course, identical to comparable defences now applying to the rest of the United Kingdom.

Hon. Members may like to know that the Federation of the Retail Licensed Trade, Northern Ireland has introduced a voluntary over-18 identity card scheme, similar to those operating in England and, I am glad to say, in my constituency. That is very much the sort of action which article 6 is designed to encourage, and many hon. Members are supporting it.

The remaining articles are mainly technical. Article 7 inserts a new arm into the definition of "intoxicating liquor" in the Licensing Act (Northern Ireland) 1971. Article 8 makes minor amendments to the Act. Article 9 contains repeal provisions.

I believe that what we are suggesting in this order is sensible, and that is borne out by the wide measure of support that it has received in Northern Ireland during consultation. I commend the order to the House.

10.34 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I now understand why the order is being rushed through —so that the Under-Secretary's social life will not be interfered with too greatly over Christmas. In the context of his remarks about the 19th hole, I can also understand what the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) meant about a one-club policy.

The Minister has covered most of the ground, which is not a matter of controversy between the parties. The proposals in the order—particularly those dealing with under-age drinking, the new defence for licensees who

[Mr. Kevin McNamara]

properly show that they are pursuing their duties, and the various other measures—are to be welcomed. I commend the order to the House.

10.35 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): When the Government introduced the draft Licensing (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, to which the Minister has just referred, which banned sales from off-licence shops after 9 pm, complaints were made that the order discriminated in favour of public houses, which could continue to sell alcohol for consumption outside until 11 pm. Not only did the order financially hurt off-licences but it meant that customers could still buy quantities of drink for consumption off the premises from public houses. The 1987 order thus defeated the purpose of closing off-licences at 9 pm, which was to restrict the amount of alcohol available to persons, especially young persons, who drank, often in public, where they behaved disgracefully and offensively to people living in or walking about the area.

So I welcome article 5, which introduces a ban on the sale of alcohol from all off-sales outlets after 9 pm, as well as forbidding the sale of alcohol for consumption off the premises on Sundays and Christmas day.

However, I question whether article 5(1)*(a)* will be readily effective with its present wording, which, if I may precis it, states that the licensee shall not sell intoxicating liquor to any person for consumption off the premises on weekdays after 9 pm. I want to emphasise that the wording of article 5 does not prevent the customer from buying alcohol after 9 pm and keeping it until the premises close, thus defeating the original purpose of a time limit on off-sales of alcohol.

Once the public house shuts at 11 pm—or later; sad to say, there are too many late night extensions—the customer can continue drinking outside in the street or in other public places, where his conduct can be extremely offensive to peace-loving and law-abiding citizens. Unfortunately, the situation is made much worse by the fact that the persons with the parcels of drink who are let loose on to the streets from the public houses will already have spent part or all of the evening drinking in a public house until closing time. They will be in a bad condition, therefore, and will behave much more badly.

Another aspect must not be overlooked, and I hope that the Minister will not overlook it. Anyone in a public house with parcels of alcohol after 9 pm can say that he bought the drink before 9 pm, thus providing the licensee with a defence to a summons under article 5—even though the items were sold after 9 pm. That will happen on occasions.

The police are already overstretched in Northern Ireland—they certainly are in my constituency. We need more police officers about the area. They cannot stand guard in every licensed premises in Northern Ireland to ensure that drink is not sold after 9 in the evening for consumption off the premises.

Article 6 deals with offences involving minors—the sale of alcohol to people under the age of 18. Under the existing law, whereby the prosecution has to establish that the licensee has "knowingly" sold alcohol to a minor, the police have been frustrated in their attempts to stop under-age drinking in public houses. The order shifts the burden of proof by removing the word "knowingly", but it provides a defence for the licensee if he can prove that he exercised all due diligence, or that he had no reason to suspect that the customer was under 18 years of age.

I hope that the Minister will take my next point on board, and have the matter looked into. Under article 6, the licensee can easily avoid the penalty that should fall on someone selling alcohol to persons aged under 18. I know that the article is in line with the changes made in the Licensing Act 1988 for England and Wales, following the recommendations of the working group to which the Minister referred, on young people and alcohol, which was chaired by Baroness Masham. It is interesting to note that the working party considered whether the sale or supply of alcohol to or for an under-age customer should be an absolute offence. It said that it

> "would undoubtedly be an effective way of strengthening licensees' resolve to establish the age of doubtful young customers . . . Indeed, some of us considered it the only really effective way."

On balance, it was decided against recommending that it should be an absolute offence.

We must recognise that there is a considerable amount of under-age drinking throughout not only Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom, but elsewhere in the world. The recent survey conducted by the Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland confirmed that there is a serious problem in the Province, and that two thirds of all 16 and 17-year-olds in the survey drink alcohol. Of these, 80 per cent. claim to drink in discos or clubs—some of the discos are held in public houses—51 per cent. in pubs and bars, with 52 per cent. buying alcohol from off-licences, which were also the major source of supply for drinkers under 16. The survey also revealed that, among 15-year-olds, 19 per cent. of boys and 11 per cent of girls drink at least once a week.

That confirms that there is a serious under-age drinking problem in Northern Ireland, and it must be dealt with. I hope that the Minister will come forward with other proposals. They may not be in line with the law in England and Wales, but they should make it easier for the police to stop under-age drinking in Northern Ireland, in public houses and on the streets.

10.43 pm

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): We shall soon be entering a new parliamentary Session and, once again, hon. Members who have the honour to represent the Province of Northern Ireland will be expected to suffer the humiliation of participating in a charade, a pointless exercise in which Ministers pontificate on matters affecting our welfare—Ministers who are not answerable to the Northern Ireland electorate for what they do or do not do, to justify their existence. We are expected to join this annual merry-go-round with iniquitous Orders in Council and to deliberate on their contents with no oportunity to amend them. We are asked at the proposal stage for our views, but in my experience that is just a cosmetic exercise —an attempt to introduce a modicum of democracy into the process. It is the faceless civil servants who are calling the tune in Northern Ireland and the Minister, whatever his views, is powerless to alter one iota of an order of this kind.

If my right hon. and hon. Friends were allowed to contribute in a meaningful way to these impositions, or orders, we could honestly and sincerely advance the views which are representative of our electorate. We could reflect the situation in the Province. But we are not allowed to do that. That is why such orders are anathema to the people of Northern Ireland. Ministers are not considered representative of the people. That is why the present system of government will never be accepted. It will always be a bone of contention, thus precluding meaningful relations between the Government and Unionist Members.

If I were to be treated democratically, like all those hon. Members who represent mainland constituencies, I should welcome the order as an attempt to cover something which was not dealt with in previous legislation. It is unfortunate, however, that it has not gone far enough in certain directions. The Minister is aware of my feelings on free-standing off-licences, for example. I believe that they should be subject to planning permission and not treated merely as trading shops. Such off-licences are springing up throughout my constituency and causing great offence to the community. They invariably become meeting places for lager louts, who practise what is described in the order as "anti-social behaviour".

I welcome the provision which will restrict the sales of intoxicating liquor at off-licences to no later than 9 pm, but that will not affect the consumption of liquor in public places by young people, who drink at street corners and get up to all kinds of mischief as a consequence. The Government should take a strong line on drinking in public places. They should legislate to place a complete ban on such an anti-social activity. It is unfair to expect local councillors to take responsibility, as their powers are often limited.

When dealing with under-age drinking, it is virtually impossible to place the onus of proof on the holder of the licence. Much of the drink consumed by minors is purchased by adults. I have witnessed this in north Belfast. Unless measures are taken to prohibit the consumption of liquor in public places, the new measures will not work.

The rest of the order is not contentious and will not present any problems, but it falls down in its approach to under-age drinking. That defect must be overcome if it is to give full effect to the intentions which lie behind it.

10.49 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I acknowledge the experience that the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) must have with lawbreakers. As a justice of the peace, he sees in court the results of some of the happenings on the streets of Belfast that he has so vividly described. I do not think he can expect us to believe, however, that the order is being dragooned through the House by faceless civil servants. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has taken considerable soundings from everyone involved in the licensed trade, including the Federation of the Licensed Trade, Northern Ireland, which has had many discussions with the hon. Member for Belfast, North on the order.

This is probably not the week for advisers, but it is necessary for me to declare an interest as an adviser to the federation. The Government are introducing the order because of alcohol abuse among young people, and very necessary it is, too.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) has already referred to the survey carried out by the DHSS published in April this year entitled "Drinking amongst school children in Northern Ireland". He said something about the results of that survey, which show that most young people obtain alcohol from off-licences, clubs and discos rather than from public houses. The survey says:

> "Off-licences were the major source of supply of alcohol to adolescent drinkers between the ages of 12 and 16."

The figures show that nearly half buy in an off-licence, a third in a club or disco, a quarter in a pub or bar and 5 per cent. elsewhere.

When the Minister replies, will he explain why it is necessary in this order to help the off-licence at the expense of the public house? I submit that the public house is an extremely responsible place in which to drink. The publican risks losing not just his licence but his livelihood and his home should he contravene the law on, for example, under-age drinking.

Reducing off-sales in public houses is unlikely to have any practical effect on reducing under-age drinking. Regulations to close off-licences at 9 pm were introduced in October 1987, but the fieldwork for the survey to which I have just referred was done well after that date and the results still show that adolescents obtain most of their alcohol from off-licences.

We do not want a rather sterile debate about hours this evening. There has already been much discussion about this, and the publicans' views have been made clear through their federation at meetings with the Minister and through the paper that it submitted on the draft order. They welcome the extra time allowed at the new year but they feel that the playing field is still a little uneven and tipped in favour of the off-licence.

I hasten to add that I am not the federation's spokesman, but it has come up with an idea that makes a lot of sense. The House will no doubt recall that, during a debate in this place on the reform of the licensing laws in England and Wales, there was considerable debate on what should be done about Sundays. As a result of what has been described in the *Official Report* as a cock-up in the other place, it so happened that publicans were granted additional time on Sundays.

A feature of the licensed trade today, and Northern Ireland is no different, is that more and more families are going to public houses at weekends. Public houses are offering more facilities than ever before. Many more meals are being served, but Sunday hours, from 12.30 pm to 2.30 pm and from 7 pm to 10 pm mean that one must gallop through lunch in considerable discomfort in order to finish in the time available.

I hope that the Minister will say whether, in order to achieve more balance in the trade, he will consider extending the hours on Sundays so that families can eat their meals and drink their drinks in just a little more comfort.

The hon. Member for North Down mentioned the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its views. What has the RUC had to say about the draft order? Enforcement of this cut-off deadline of 9 pm on off-licence sales will be extremely difficult. Anyone who happens to be seen leaving a public house after that time with drink bought in an off-licence only has to say that he bought it before 9 pm. I do not see how anyone could ever prove otherwise, how those who break the law are to be brought to court or how a prosecution can be made to stick, unless we are to have a system of spies.

Ideally, we should like uniformity throughout the United Kingdom. It took long enough to bring England

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

and Wales more into line with Scotland; perhaps we should now start a campaign to bring Northern Ireland into line with the rest.

I should like the Minister to give an undertaking that the matter will be kept under careful review. The DHSS survey is interesting, because it has provided a datum point. Perhaps some mechanism can be found for an update of those findings: I should like to think that some of the questions that have been asked could be asked again at the end of the year to establish the position, and to find out whether there is any trend in adolescent drinking.

I am glad that the Minister acknowledged the over-18 card initiative by the federation, because it shows that responsible licensees are doing their bit to ensure that under-age drinking is kept under control.

The licensed trade in Northern Ireland is, in a sense, unique. Those of us who represent English constituencies, but often visit Northern Ireland, are struck—as it is impossible not to be—by what might best be described as "sectarian problems". Public houses in Northern Ireland have two main characteristics: first, most are free houses—the landlord-and-tenant system does not exist to the same extent as in England—and, secondly, they are non-sectarian drinking places. They are responsibly owned and run, and people across the sectarian divide can meet and enjoy themselves there. In that sense, the Northern Ireland licensed trade has a unique part to play in bringing the people together more happily than has been the case hitherto.

10.57 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): Perhaps I may take a little of the House's time to support my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker). If the order were proceeding as legislation normally does, we might even congratulate the Minister on its content. Unfortunately, however, we have to point out time and again the unfairness of treating such measures as Orders in Council.

It is true that the order brings public houses into line with off-licences, in that both establishments must now stop trading in off-sales from 9 pm. I consider it fair that two establishments engaged in the same trade should have the same hours—that is an improvement on the previous arrangement—but there is no doubt that the sale of liquor to minors is a big problem in Northern Ireland, and a disgrace to those who run the off-licences.

I hope that the Minister will consider introducing legislation to prevent adults from buying alcohol in off-licences and then selling it to minors outside. The explanatory note in the order says that it is an offence knowingly to sell alcohol to minors. An even greater problem is that adults are buying alcohol in off-licences and then selling it to minors outside the premises. Unfortunately, no one seems to be greatly concerned about this. Many hon. Members have said that it is a disgrace that on some occasions minors can be found lying in the street not far from where they purchased alcohol. It seems to be in no one's power to prevent that. It may not be possible to prevent minors from drinking, but it ought to be possible for the police to find out precisely how minors were able to obtain alcohol. The matter may lie outside the scope of the order, but it ought to be examined.

I welcome the fact that a licensee must now prove that he or she made every effort to prevent the sale of alcohol to under-age drinkers, by notices or other methods. That provision ought to be strictly enforced. It is not the case, as the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) said, that on Sundays families spend a lot of time drinking in public houses. That is not the tradition in Northern Ireland. Public houses can open now in Northern Ireland on Sundays, but many of them do not do so because it is not the tradition there.

Mr. Colvin: It is not the tradition in England and Wales either, but times are changing. Because pubs are now offering a facility, people are starting to do something that traditionally they have not done in the past. That may happen in Northern Ireland, too.

Mr. Forsythe: That is a matter for the people concerned, not for the people who decide to open on Sundays. I assure the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside that that is not the tradition in Northern Ireland and I do not believe that it will ever entirely become the tradition.

I welcome the order, even though I should have preferred to welcome it in a different form. The House ought to change the procedure.

11.3 pm

Mr. Needham: The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) said that he believes that the regulations do not do enough to prevent young people drinking, either outside licensed clubs or in them. The 1987 order that we are amending introduced new rules about the opening time of free-standing off-licences and limited it to 9 o'clock. The police believe that that has made a difference. Surely they are best to judge that. They believe that there has been a decline in the problems associated with late-night drinking since the off-sales hours were reduced for free-standing off-licences. In those circumstances, it would have been irresponsible of me not to take into account off-sales outlets attached to pubs.

The hon. Gentleman then asked how the police would enforce that. The police always have an enforcement problem in matters related to drinking. How do they enforce the drinking-up provisions in pubs? Sometimes they do it with difficulty. I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that I have a different view of the honesty of his constituents. I do not believe for one minute that they will cheat and think that they can get away with cheating. I am referring not only to the drinkers but to the licensees. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlem) nodding her head in agreement. It would cost a licensee a great deal of money and possibly the loss of his livelihood if he were to breach this order and sell drink through his off-licence or over the bar after the permitted hours. I do not think that it is a question of putting in spies, as one or two prosecutions would serve as a timely reminder to anybody who tried to do that.

The hon. Member for North Down then questioned the Government's proposed wording on the sale of alcohol to young people. I can only repeat that that wording now applies throughout the United Kingdom. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is a distinguished lawyer. I am not a distinguished lawyer, but although I listened most carefully to what he said, I have to accept the advice of the Government's lawyers and Lady Masham's lawyers. I hope that the wording will have the impact that the Government and Lady Masham hope for throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kilfedder: I am sure that if the Minister has read Lady Masham's report, he will have noted that the working group was divided on the issue of an absolute offence. The group had the greatest difficulty in making a recommendation and only with reluctance did it decide not to recommend an absolute offence. As for the police, the Minister should talk to the police in Bangor, who have told me that there is a tremendous problem of under-age drinking and they cannot stop some licensees selling drink to under-age people.

Mr. Needham: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I spoke to the police in Bangor recently. I spoke to the new superintendent in the hon. Gentleman's constituency only a week ago and he told me that the police experience difficulties with outside drinking rather than problems in dealing with licensees who break the law.

The hon. Gentleman, whom I listened to most diligently, stressed the need to introduce byelaws on these matters. That is exactly what we have done. We have extended the byelaws because we have listened to what is said in Northern Ireland. I think that we should go down that route and see how it works. I am sure that we shall continue to make progress, as we have so far. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is grateful to the police and to all those responsible that the situation has improved.

Unfortunately, we are not debating constitutional matters, and I am fully aware of the views of the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) about the Order in Council procedure. I am not sure what the views of his party are on a replacement for Orders in Council. As I understand it, it would like orders to be dealt with by a Northern Ireland Assembly, which would gain some support among hon. Members. The Order in Council procedure is the method by which we consider legislation, and as the Minister responsible I must do the best that I can to take everybody's views into account. As the hon. Member for Belfast, North knows, I listen to his views with the greatest possible care, and whenever I can I act on his advice.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Minister acknowledge that the Conservative party was returned to power in 1979 on a manifesto to legislate in the House in the absence of a devolved Parliament? For far too long, we have not had a devolved Parliament in Northern Ireland. If we are not to have a devolved Parliament, is it not time that we legislated in this House?

Mr. Needham: The Government's policy is that there should be a devolved Parliament, and I shall welcome the day when the hon. Gentleman comes round to that view. Until he does so, in agreement with the other parties in Northern Ireland and in the House, we must use the best method that we can.

I use the Order in Council procedure to try to consult hon. Members, and I notice that in this instance hon. Members welcome the order. I do not believe that during the consultation period—I have just consulted the faceless officials—there was any noise, chirrup or note from hon. Members against the proposals. They should either agree with the order or shut up about it. It is obvious that this is a reasonable and sensible order with which they agree.

It is not good enough for the hon. Member for Belfast, North to criticise my civil servants. I am perfectly capable of making up my own mind, but as the hon. Gentleman knows only too well, I have changed my mind about the order, which is why I brought it back before the House. One of the reasons why I changed my mind was that I listened to Official Unionist Members. As a result of listening to the hon. Member, we decided to amend the order, and I am grateful for the support that I am now being given. The hon. Gentleman must not criticise civil servants, who have done everything in their power to bring the order before the House as quickly as possible to ensure that minor errors are corrected and to provide for Sunday opening.

I must say to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) that the order certainly does not help off-licences at the expense of public houses. It brings them into line, and all the evidence that I had showed that what was happening was affecting the free-standing off-licence and not the public house, which was not fair. A pub's off-licence business is ancillary to its usual business. I have done as much as I can to assist the competitive position of pubs in Northern Ireland, not least by allowing them to open on Sundays and to have gaming machines that offer small prizes. It is important to promote the pub in Northern Ireland, which I am doing, but competition must be fair and balanced. *[Interruption.]* I am grateful for the comments of the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan).

We are talking not about under-age drinking resulting from off-licence sales but about reducing the amount of drink that is bought by young people after nine o'clock for taking outside. That does not mean that people buying drink are under age—often, they are not. The move to reduce the amount of drink bought by young people has begun and will continue when the order comes into force.

I listened carefully to what was said about Sunday opening and I have some sympathy with the views expressed about the present hours. I am sure that we will look at that. I have covered the subject of enforcement and I do not need to go over that again.

The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) raised the problem of minors—I assume he did not mean miners—and due diligence. It is an offence to sell to minors and the police are aware of that offence. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence of where it occurs, he should let the police know.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): One of the major problems is not selling alcohol to minors but supplying them. We need to get at the adults, such as winos, who purchase liquor and supply it to young people in exchange for a few cans or a small tip to enable them to buy food or drink. Does the Minister agree also that there are many irresponsible parents who allow their minors to have access to liquor in their own homes?

Mr. Needham: I agree with the hon. Gentleman but we are not discussing that now. The provision of alcohol to minors is an offence. I can remember it happening in the constituency of the hon. Member for Belfast, North. Where it has happened we have been diligent in taking the cases to the police so that they can be investigated. Some of the instances were dealt with strongly and I assure the hon. Gentleman that that will continue because I agree

[Mr. Needham]

that it is wrong. We should do everything we can to deal with the problems of under-age drinking and supplying alcohol to minors.

This is a sensible, minor change to the original order. I am sure that it will be welcomed throughout Northern Ireland for what it tries to do. It places a better balance on competition and I am sure that it will be another step towards sensible licensing arrangements which we will continue to keep under review. I assure hon. Members that we will continue to consult them about what we propose as long as they will talk to us.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Licensing and Clubs (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 25th July, be approved.

Pipeline (Grangemouth)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

11.17 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): From discussing one highly volatile substance, alcohol, we now move to discuss other highly volatile substances—chemicals. I make no apology for telling the Minister of State, Department of Energy that my purpose is to try to persuade his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, through him, not to grant the planning application lodged by Shell Chemicals UK Ltd. to construct a pipeline from Grangemouth in my constituency to Carrington near Manchester and on to Stanlow at Ellesmere Port. The purpose of such a pipeline would be to pipe from Grangemouth the total ethylene output from the Mossmorran chemical plant in Fife.

I thank the Minister of State, Scottish Office for being present, as he recognises that such a pipeline would have serious job implications for Central and Fife regions and beyond. My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) has a constituency interest, as many of his constituents work in the petrochemical industry at Grangemouth. Also, part of the Mossmorran plant is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie). I thank both Ministers and my hon. Friends for their courtesy in attending.

First, I will relate the history of the application. In 1977, when the chemical plant at Mossmorran was first mooted, there was a public inquiry in Dunfermline. That inquiry went on for day after day and the advocate representing the companies involved was Mr. James Mackay, now Lord Chancellor.

Day after day, promises were extracted from Shell UK Ltd. and another company, which is not involved in the pipeline application, that in exchange for permission to construct the chemical plant at Mossmorran in Fife, downstream chemical industries would be established. To date, those industries have not materialised, for good reasons which I understand. That change has come about because, according to Shell UK Ltd.—I accept its view—there has been a tremendous upturn in the demand for products which use ethylene as their chemical feedstock. Those products include low-density polyethylene, which is a base material in the manufacture of the carrier bags used by Marks and Spencer and by other companies in the manufacture of plastic containers. Lubricants and other such by-products are also produced.

Against that background, Shell UK Ltd. lodged a planning application with Fife regional council to double output of ethylene at the Mossmorran site, and permission was granted earlier this year. The company then submitted to the Secretary of State for Energy the application to construct a pipeline.

I say in all friendliness to the Minister of State that if that permission is granted, gone for ever will be the possibility of establishing downstream chemical industries—for instance, factories manufacturing clingfilm and lubricants—in the Fife or Central regions, especially in my constituency at Grangemouth. A promise that was made in 1977 is in danger of not being honoured.

In an exchange of views with Sir George Sharp, the former regional convenor in Fife, Mr. Donald McQuaker, personnel manager of Shell UK Ltd., went on record in the Sunday newspapers as saying that it was true that the company had made those promises to the people of Fife but it had discovered that retired or redundant miners were not capable of the high-skill technology jobs to which I am referring. That is an insult to Fife miners who had to give up their jobs because the pits closed and who gave all that they had to ensure that the chemical plant was constructed at Mossmorran. I therefore criticise Mr. McQuaker's comments about the Fife miners.

There is another piece of the history to the application in which the Minister will be interested. In 1977, when the plant was constructed at Mossmorran, the original application to construct a pipeline to pipe ethylene from Mossmorran was submitted by Shell UK Ltd. on the basis that the pipeline would run from Mossmorran with a landfall in north Berwick, continuing down to Carrington and on to Stanlow at Ellesmere Port, where it is now proposed to construct a pipeline.

Objection was made to the application by the Fife and Central regional councils and those of us who in those days were the parliamentary representatives of the constituencies involved. We took our objections to the then Secretary of State for Energy, now my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who then represented Bristol, East. He refused that planning application and would not allow the company to construct the pipeline along the proposed route.

As a result of that refusal, the pipeline constructed at that time runs from Mossmorran in Fife across the river Forth and follows the same corridor as the oil pipeline to my constituency and the BP refinery and chemical plant in Grangemouth. That is why the ethylene is piped from Mossmorran to Grangemouth. When Shell wants to pipe some of that ethylene south, it rents space in an existing pipeline owned by BP. I understand that, because Shell now has permission to double the output capacity at Mossmorran, the rented pipeline does not have a large enough capacity to permit the company to pipe the whole of the output south. That is a dangerous state of affairs, because if the company is given permission to construct the pipeline, the chances of any downstream industry being established in Fife, in my constituency or in the Central region will have gone forever.

My constituents and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Falkirk, West and for Kirkcaldy have to put up with the environmental inconvenience of chemical plants. We are prepared to do that, and I do not make that comment by way of complaint. In return, however, we want the downstream industries established in our area when there is an increase in demand for the derivatives of ethylene, but we are not getting them.

I sometimes think that, apart from my two hon. Friends who are here, I stand alone on this issue, although my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who spent many days at the public inquiry, has authorised me to say tonight that he supports the stand that I am making.

I do not understand the attitude of Fife regional council. The Fife director of planning produced a document in which that authority said that it would not object to the application. It said that the maximum number of downstream jobs that would be created was "only 200". We in Fife and Central region are not so well off for jobs that we can afford to turn our backs on 200 jobs. Indeed, if the Minister managed to secure 200 jobs in the area, he would be organising a press conference, complete with television cameras, to make the announcement, and I would congratulate him on his achievement.

The Government must examine the position objectively and the Secretary of State for Energy must turn the application down. The whole future of Fife and central Scotland is at stake from the point of view of downstream chemical industries. I do not see why the people there should tolerate the environmental inconvenience, only to find that when downstream industry jobs become available they are not established there. Shell is cheating the people whom I represent. Although that view may not be held generally and may seem a harsh criticism, I profoundly believe it to be true. If Shell had been true to its word, as given to the public inquiry in 1977, the application for the pipeline would not have been made.

The Scottish Office has a part to play in trying to persuade the Secretary of State for Energy not to grant the application. I am talking not just of Fife and Central region, but of the interests of Scotland generally, and I ask that the application be refused because our downstream future is at stake.

I want to give the Minister time to reply to my submission, so I will finish by saying that Grangemouth is a difficult area to which to attract jobs. The Minister of State, Scottish Office knows of our difficulties in attracting alternative industry. Our industry is petrochemical-based and my experience has been that, unless we can attract petrochemical jobs, we have little or no chance of attracting any jobs.

I pay tribute to Asda, which has built a massive warehouse, not in Grangemouth but on the outskirts of the town. However, that is the exception rather than the rule. If we do not get the downstream industries into Grangemouth or Fife, the chances of getting alternative industry are extemely remote. When the Minister reports the matter to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who will make the decision, I hope that he will persuade him to throw the application out and to make Shell UK honour the promise that it made at the public inquiry. My constituents will be grateful to him, and that attitude will go well beyond my constituency. It will continue for years to come among the families who will enjoy employment in those downstream industries.

11.30 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Does the hon. Gentleman have the agreement of the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) and of the Minister to speak?

Mr. Harry Ewing: Yes.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): Yes.

Mr. Canavan: I want to support my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) briefly and to remind the Minister of State that not long ago, there was a Minister of State, Department of Energy called Hamish Gray. He opposed the building of a pipeline that would have brought more jobs for the people of Scotland. Ironically, we now have a Minister of State who is proposing the building of a pipeline that will export many jobs from Scotland. I advise the Minister to beware. What

[Mr. Canavan]

happened to Hamish Gray? He has disappeared into political oblivion, and perhaps the same will happen to the Minister of State.

If the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East on the building of the pipeline come true, it will mean the disappearance of many jobs and potential jobs. I hope that the Minister will bear in mind not only the job and economic implications, but the political implications for his own party, especially in the light of recent events. On behalf of the people of Falkirk district, I urge him to bear these matters in mind and to abandon the ridiculous proposal to build an expensive pipeline which will pipe jobs out of Scotland and especially out of Falkirk district.

11.33 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): I am delighted that the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) has had the opportunity to raise this matter, which very much concerns him and his hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan). It is a serious matter, but on a slightly lighter note, I must tell the hon. Member for Falkirk, West that I have no plans to go into political oblivion just now. However, I have plans to look at every issue carefully and to make a decision having heard everything.

We have an important subject to discuss and I am sorry that the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) has departed, because I know that it is a matter that he takes seriously, which is why he was here earlier.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East has taken a personal interest for a long time in the industrial developments in his constituency. Certainly, the proposed ethylene pipeline is of particular interest to the non. Member, as he pointed out in such a cogent and articulate fashion. As he said, the pipeline will carry ethylene from his constituency to what used to be my constituency before a boundary reorganisation.

Ethylene is a very valuable North sea by-product and the pipeline will carry it, according to the proposals that have so far been put before me, in a safe and economical manner. We have high levels of unemployment in my area and I understand why the hon. Member for Falkirk, East explained that there are potential employment consequences for his constituency if the proposal goes ahead. If I was the hon. Gentleman I would have raised the matter in exactly the way that he raised it. The hon. Gentleman is concerned about the employment prospects in his constituency and I understand, given the potential that may arise as a result of the building of the pipeline, why he has raised the subject tonight.

It is fair to put it on the record that, in the past year alone, the number of unemployed in the constituency of the hon. Member for Falkirk, East has dropped by about 650—about 18 per cent. While we always wish for the number to drop even further, the number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in his constituency has increased by almost 40 per cent.—much more than in Scotland as a whole. In the context of the whole of his constituency, I hope that the hon. Member for Falkirk, East will welcome the improvement in employment prospects over the past year.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East specifically asked me to make a recommendation to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy about the proposed pipeline. Perhaps it will be helpful if I go over the background to the project.

As both the hon. Member for Falkirk, East and the hon. Member for Falkirk, West will be aware, Shell Chemicals UK Limited submitted its application under the Pipe-lines Act 1962, on 1 March 1989 for authorisation to construct a cross-country pipeline from Grangemouth to Stanlow for the conveyance of ethylene. It wishes to start construction in the spring of 1991, finishing in autumn of the same year.

The pipeline would be 406 km, or 254 miles, long and 273 mm, or 10 in, in diameter and it would operate at a pressure of 1,435 lb per square inch. It would be designed to convey 610,000 tonnes per year.

Shell has to date received no objections to its proposals from local planning authorities. However, it does not follow that there will be none, because in a number of cases Shell's proposals have not yet been placed before the full planning committee.

As hon. Members will know, ethylene is a major feedstock for the petrochemical industry and is used in the manufacture of plastics, detergents, paints, anti-freeze, man-made fibres and many other products in everyday use. Ethylene is manufactured at the Fife ethylene plant from North sea oil and gas feedstocks. It is a highly flammable gas at normal temperatures and pressures.

Shell has plans to carry out a major expansion of its polyethylene plant at Stanlow and it sees the pipeline as providing the most economical method of transporting the ethylene feedstock from the Scottish refineries to Cheshire. Shell has considered alternative means of transportation, but they have been rejected on safety or economic grounds. Transport by sea appears uneconomical and less safe, since specialist dockside unloading and storage facilities would be required in addition to the ethylene tankers.

Except at the northern and southern extremities, the route passes through essentially rural, sparsely populated land. Known areas of potential development have been avoided. Remotely operated buried valves for isolation purposes to limit any potential leakage would be installed at approximately 16 km intervals. Two intermediate pigging stations and one pumping station would be installed—the latter approximately 11·5 km south-east of Carlisle.

Shell has indicated that agreement in principle has been reached with 95 per cent. of the owners and occupiers along the route. Shell was required to carry out an environmental assessment and to submit an environmental statement in accordance with the electricity and Pipe-Line Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1989. This has been discussed with interested parties such as the Nature Conservancy Council and its requirements incorporated.

The environmental statement, a copy of which the hon. Gentleman will have, and which will be available to the public, describes in detail the manner in which Shell proposes to construct the pipeline and the steps it would take to mitigate its effect on the environment. Once constructed, the pipeline would not restrict normal agricultural activities.

Shell was required to consider the overall safety of the proposed pipeline in a safety evaluation which was reviewed for us by the major hazards assessment unit of the Health and Safety Executive. Due to the hazardous nature of ethylene, the pipeline has potential for harm. However, on the basis of the safety evaluation, the Health and Safety Executive sees no reason for refusal of the application on safety grounds. As it is entirely without prejudice to the Secretary of State's right subsequently to refuse the application, we decided that Shell's application should be allowed to proceed to the next stage, which involves public notices.

As required by the Pipe-lines Act 1962, Shell has been instructed, first, to place notices regarding its application in the London and Edinburgh gazettes, the major national newspapers, and 30 local newspapers; secondly to serve notice on the 28 local planning authorities along the route; thirdly, to serve notice on every landowner and occupier through whose property the pipeline would run; and, fourthly, to serve notice on a number of utilities and other authorities as directed by the Department of Energy.

Copies of maps showing the pipeline route and of the environmental statement will be available for inspection by the public at the Department of Energy and at local planning authority offices. Objections—this will be important to the hon. Gentleman—may be made to the Secretary of State for a period of 28 days after the notices are published. All representations received by the Secretary of State during the 28-day period will be carefully considered. The notices are to be published commencing with the national press today, as it happens, with final notices on 3 November in local papers.

Shell has identified a growing need for ethylene-based products into the 1990s. It operates in a highly competitive market and it must therefore seek to achieve the most economic solution to the increasing demand in order to meet the challenges of the open European market.

Construction of the pipeline would involve a work force of up to 2,000 for six months or so—of course, not all in the hon. Members' constituencies. Up to 500 might be recruited locally. Although temporary, that would result in a significant injection of capital into the local economy. The number of personnel permanently involved with the maintenance of the pipeline after construction would be approximately six. Shell's existing plants at Stanlow and Carrington currently have spare capacity and are capable of expansion to meet demand. We understand that the number of additional employees required would be approximately 20.

At a time when the Scottish CBI is foreseeing a small downturn in investment and job prospects, it gives me great pleasure to see a major local employer—in this case Esso—planning a £200 million investment for its Fife ethylene plant. The two-year construction of the plant extension will provide work for up to 2,000 people. The development will increase employment at the plant by 10 per cent.—all of whom are being recruited in Scotland —and also lead to a 10 per cent. rise in the number of long-term contractors on the site.

It is clear that the increased capacity planned for the Mossmorran plant, which has led indirectly to Shell's need for a new pipeline, will bring more jobs to Scotland. *[Interruption.]* That is so. It is not realistic to expect the relocation of a major petrochemical complex from the north-west of England, but there is a very positive message for Scotland in Shell's planned investment in the new pipeline. It offers the best possible long-term assurance for the future of the ethylene plant at Mossmorran.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 1 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Monday 6 November.

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a second time on Monday 6 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Caribbean

1. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to pay an official visit to the Caribbean to discuss trade and financial relations.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): There are no plans at present for my colleagues or me to visit the Caribbean.

Miss Lestor: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there is great concern in the Caribbean about the effects of 1992 on bananas, sugar and other commodities? As 1992 comes closer every day, would it not be a good idea for a Minister to visit the Caribbean to discuss some of these matters face to face so that people there know where they stand?

Mr. Redwood: I should be delighted to be invited to visit the Caribbean in due course. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will be visiting some of the islands next week, and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will be leading a delegation to the Miami conference at the end of the month, where they will discuss a number of issues with other countries.

On the hon. Lady's specific point, the British position is that the Lomé negotiations should continue so that a satisfactory outcome can be achieved for the banana producers in the ACP regions, and that will be the Government's prime aim in our conversations with our EC partners. We wish to ensure that after 1992 those interests are safeguarded in the wider European market.

Ms. Abbott: Is the Minister aware that the economies of many of those countries, especially in the eastern Caribbean, will face collapse if there is not a constructive and successful end to the negotiations? Will the Minister give an assurance that the Government are committed to ensuring that, come 1992, those islands' interests will be absolutely safeguarded?

Mr. Redwood: I give the hon. Lady the assurance that the British Government will do all in our power to put the case of the islands forcefully. We are well aware of the importance of bananas and other such commodities to their economies. There are already many areas in which the Government are offering help, and we give a great deal of aid to the Caribbean. The hon. Lady may wish to know that we give the highest per capita aid for any region in the world to the Caribbean area because of our strong interest in and concern for the Caribbean islands.

Defence Manufacturers

2. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with United Kingdom defence manufacturers about developing alternative non-military products, in the light of any possible reduction in demand for weapons.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Douglas Hogg): None, Sir.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that many of our traditional industries have suffered because they have failed to recognise changing markets in the world? Is it not clear that if the east-west disarmament talks are successful, and there is also a reduction in regional conflict, the world's arms markets will be reduced? Does he agree that in those circumstances, it is only commonsense for the Government to discuss with arms manufacturers ways in which they can look for new products and new markets so as to secure the jobs of those who work for them without continuing to be purveyors of death to the world?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is, perhaps, slightly less than candid with the House. The prime motive behind his question is his long-standing commitment to slash defence expenditure. For example, the House might like to know that in July 1983, long before Mr. Gorbachev began his present policies, the hon. Gentleman was seen to be voting against the Defence Estimates. His question exposes the Labour party's long-standing hostility to a credible defence policy.

Sir Peter Emery: Does my hon. Friend realise that nothing in his reply applies to me? As the science and technology committee of the North Atlantic Assembly travelled across Russia in September, it discovered that there was a major move within the Russian nation to reverse the current ratio of 60 per cent. scientific and technological research to 40 per cent. civilian. Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the major difficulties in achieving that is getting industry to bring it about in a five to seven-year period? Would not discussions along the lines suggested by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) therefore have quite a degree of success for the benefit of our industry, irrespective of the defence aspect?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is a great deal more persuasive than the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) because his credentials are so much better. The plain truth is, however, that it is for the defence companies to assess where their markets lie. We are seeing an encouraging move in the direction outlined by my hon. Friend—by Racal and Marconi, for example—but we are not in the business of driving people where they do not want to go.

Dr. Bray: The Minister has been giving singularly stupid replies. Far from making good the cuts in defence research and development that they have made over the past three years—amounting, in real terms, to some 10 per cent.—the Government have added to the problem by cutting their support of civil industrial innovation by 11 per cent. Furthermore, research and development expenditure in 1988-89 was some £40 million below what the estimate provided, so the Government have even cut back on their own plans of just one year before.

Is the Minister not aware that all of that is having disastrous effects, particularly on the profit expectations of the electronics industry? No fewer than five defence contractors, including Ferranti, have been up for sale. Does the Minister not want any British manufacturing industry to survive?

Mr. Hogg: That is a singularly silly question, coming from the hon. Gentleman. He must find his party's defence policy extremely disquieting. The Labour party conference committed itself to defence cuts of approximately £5 billion, which means a reduction of some 30 per cent. in conventional defence spending. Just think of the unemployment consequences of that!

Mr. Devlin: Does my hon. Friend agree that the many defence contractors in the north of England will be extremely wary of any Government who tell them which products they should be making and which they should be getting out of? Does he agree that defence manufacturers throughout the north and, indeed, the whole country will be very anxious about the future if Labour ever came to power and cut defence by £5 billion?

Mr. Hogg: Indeed, and I can be more specific than my hon. Friend. I have a list of six substantial defence contractors in the constituency of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish—Remploy Limited, Thorn EMI, Oldham Crompton Batteries, Rotunda Limited, Robert McArd Limited and Denton Containers, to mention only the largest. I imagine that employees in those companies will be extremely alarmed by the views of the hon. Member who purports to represent them.

EC Meetings

3. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet his EEC counterparts; and what matters will be discussed.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I intend to maintain close contact with all my European Community counterparts, and a whole range of matters will be discussed.

Mr. Michie: When the Secretary of State meets his EC counterparts, will he be communicating the views of the Prime Minister or those of the deputy Prime Minister on Britain's entry into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system?

Mr. Ridley: I firmly believe—as, I think, do both my right hon. Friends to whom the hon. Gentleman has referred—that the right position is the one enunciated at the Madrid summit.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I do not think that my right hon. Friend has any counterpart in the European Community—he is unique. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I mean that in a nice way. When my right hon. Friend meets his colleagues in the European Community, does he discuss with them the Labour party's plans for an industrial investment bank to make dud investments with unlimited supplies of subsidy from taxpayers in this country, and does he think that those plans would meet with the European Commission's approval?

Mr. Ridley: As always, my hon. Friend is right in all that he has said. The industrial development bank proposed by the Labour party would, I am convinced, be entirely against the spirit of the single market and the state aid rules of the Community. Indeed, now that we have an efficient industry which is not subsidised, one of the greatest disabilites of British industry is caused by the behaviour of European countries which continue to subsidise their industries, distorting the competition and costing British firms jobs when they do not win contracts. The policy of competitive subsidisation to which the Labour party tends to seek to return would spell absolute disaster for the health of British industry.

Mr. Ron Brown: Although, for obvious reasons, I disagree with the EEC, will the Secretary of State make it clear to his counterparts in Europe that he and the Government believe that it is in the public interest that public ownership of Ferranti should be supported, preferably with workers' control? Is not that an extension of democracy for which he and others must argue?

Mr. Ridley: As I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), nationalised industries in competitive environments which make losses and then recoup them from the taxpayer are a great device for avoiding fair competition. That device, which the hon. Gentleman advocates, is costing us jobs and orders and is damaging the British economy.

Mr. Gryffs: Will my right hon. Friend take every opportunity to reinforce the message to our EEC partners that the British Government take a dim view of the social charter put forward by the EEC, that British business on the whole regards it as a disaster, that Britain has created 2·5 million additional jobs in the past 10 years by deregulating and operating free markets and that we do not intend to reverse that trend?

Mr. Ridley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, but I could not do nearly as well as he and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment did when they attended the relevant council. My right hon. Friend's rebuttal of the principles of the social charter won the argument but, I am afraid, not the vote.

Mr. Gould: Where does the Secretary of State stand on the vexed question of our membership of the exchange rate mechanism? I hope that he will not hide his light under a bushel. Why can he not tell us whether he agrees with the Prime Minister that, "You cannot buck the markets" or whether he supports the view of the deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer and the CBI that we should join straight away? Could it be that, as on so many other issues, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry shies away from responsibility and has no view whatever?

Mr. Ridley: On the contrary, I take full responsibility for my view, which is that the principles put forward in the Madrid summit are correct and the whole Government agree with them.

Mr. Gow: Will my right hon. Friend cause to be translated into many languages the transcript of our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's interview with Mr. Brian Walden on Sunday? Will he then cause it to be circulated to everyone in Europe, particularly those involved in the ERM?

Mr. Ridley: I shall be happy to bring that suggestion to my right hon. Friend's attention, but I must point out that I have some responsibility in the matter. Until broadcasting is liberalised in the Community, the transcript may not reach all the parts thereof.

"British Business"

4. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why he has ceased publication of *British Business*.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): Following the decision that responsibility for the statistical series with which the Department of Trade and Industry was previously concerned should transfer to the Central Statistical Office, *British Business* magazine lost much of its market and was no longer viable.

I understand that the CSO is about to launch a series of business bulletins containing most of the new data previously published in *British Business*.

Mr. Roberts: Will the Minister admit that *British Business*, which was an information exercise by the Department of Trade and Industry, was cancelled as part of the Secretary of State's policy to turn the Department into a Trappist order? It is similar to the Secretary of State being barred from the Conservative party conference so that he could not make a speech about the £20 billion trade deficit. Will the Minister give an undertaking on behalf of himself and the Secretary of State that when the Chancellor increases taxes, which would be against the policies of the Secretary of State, he and his hon. Friend will both resign?

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may be saintly, but I hope that he will not become a Trappist. The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) did not listen to my answer, which was very straightforward. There has been a perfectly sensible reordering of activities within Government, with the result that figures which were previously available through the vehicle of *British Business* will now be available in an alternative way. There is nothing particularly sinister or difficult about that.

Mr. Marlow: How would British business, which has been publicised quite frequently by the publication *British Business*, be affected by the social charter or, as it has been called, 'the strikers' charter which some Greek lady is trying to impose on Britain?

Mr. Forth: I share my hon. Friend's concern, but I believe that our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has done a magnificent job so far in drawing to the attention of the people of this country and of Europe the patent shortcomings of the social charter. I am sure that all Conservative Members will continue to do that so that people may be clear in their minds that the kind of principles enshrined in the social charter will damage employment throughout the European Community and also the Community's competitive trading position in the world. That is why we are against it and that is why we shall continue to be against it.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Putting the Department of Trade and Industry in the charge of the hon. Gentleman, his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the collection of freebooting free-marketeers sitting alongside him at a time when all our competitor countries are engaged in close collusion between industry and government is an act equivalent to putting King Herod in charge of a day nursery. Is not the particular act of vandalism in closing down *British Business* symptomatic of an approach which will send British industry naked into the Euro/chamber?

Mr. Forth: Even allowing for the hon. Gentleman's tendency to hyperbole, that was a bit over the top. We are talking about a publication which, excellent though it was, was attracting only about 5,000 subscribers towards the end of its life.

Mr. Mitchell: I was one of them.

Mr. Forth: One could hardly say that that made it a major British institution. Nor, however excellent it may have been, was it the main or only vehicle of communication between the Government and business. I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that the figures which created most interest in the business community will be available in very much the same format through Central Statistical Office publications which will fully replace what is no longer available through *British Business*.

Takeovers

5. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received any representations on the creation of near monopolies resulting from the takeover and break-up of United Kingdom industrial groups by Bermuda-based companies.

Mr. Redwood: I presume that this is a reference to the bid by Pembridge Investments, a Bermuda-registered company, for DRG. I and the Director General of Fair Trading have received various representations from hon. Members and others about it. The director general is still considering the bid before giving his advice.

Mr. Stern: My hon. Friend's assumption is quite correct. Does he not agree that there is room for concern when the only basis for a bid is the subsequent break-up of a group, with the resulting sale forming virtually the creation of a monopoly of several parts of the group? If that is the case, will my hon. Friend reassure me that the potential monopoly is taken into account while the bid is continuing rather than waiting until he is presented with a fait accompli?

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his point because I know that he has a constituency interest in the matter and he is right to make representations in any way possible. Were there to be a subsequent sale of an asset after a bid had been successful, that itself would be subject to investigation by the competition authorities and to any advice that the director general might see fit to give my right hon. Friend. I cannot give any further information about the current bid. My right hon. Friend will make his judgment on the basis of all the representations and submissions in the light of the director general's advice.

Ms. Primarolo: Will the Minister declare his opposition to this type of junk bond funding of the destruction of British companies, of which DRG is the latest victim? He is quite right to say that in Bristol the takeover of that company will result in the loss of thousands of jobs in the engineering industry—not just in DRG but in associated companies. Is it not time for the Government to step in and say once and for all that junk bonds and high leverage bids against thriving British companies are not to be permitted?

Mr. Redwood: Junkiness is in the eye of the beholder. The Government believe that these decisions are best made by shareholders and bankers, who have to make important judgments on behalf of the companies in which they are investors or which they are financing. The Government's competition and monopoly policy is clear and consistent. It was last stated in the blue paper on mergers, and was restated subsequently by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in a speech and by myself in a speech to the House on the BAT-Hoylake bid. I recommend that the hon. Lady reads the statement of Government policy, which is clear and gives shareholders and bankers the powers and opportunities that they need to make the right decisions on behalf of the companies in which they invest.

Mr. Barry Field: My hon. Friend will be aware that Sea Containers is a Bermuda-registered company. It announced today that it will be selling its Isle of Wight ferries. My hon. Friend will be further aware that in May I wrote to the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) about a possible bid for the Isle of Wight ferries. I regard it as a considerable injustice, as do my constituents, that British Rail's board of management sold those ferries in the only privatisation in which employees were not allowed to purchase shares in their own company —an incredible reward for many years of loyal strike-free service to the Isle of Wight. Will my hon. Friend keep a weather eye on the sale of the Isle of Wight ferry routes, which are so essential to us, to ensure that this time a United Kingdom-registered company can purchase them and that the employees will have the opportunity of sharing in the wealth that they create?

Mr. Redwood: Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) is a good constituency Member of Parliament. I know that he has taken a strong interest in the Isle of Wight ferry service because he rightly wants a first-class service for his constituents. I understand that officials at the Office of Fair Trading are making preliminary inquiries into ferry services for the Isle of Wight under the competition legislation. Anyone who has views on the subject should write to the director general, as I believe that my hon. Friend has done. Any possible buyer of the ferry services, which according to press reports today are on the market, will be considered in the usual way by the competition authorities, who will make their advice available to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Stott: Is the Minister saying that the Government do not have a view about high leverage junk bond bids against succesful British companies? He will be aware of the problem that this method has caused BAT Industries recently. The leveraged bid for DRG is causing the problems referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo). Is he saying that the Government do not have a view, when successful British companies are being attacked by companies formed offshore in Bermuda with the sole purpose of breaking up British companies and making money for individuals rather than shareholders?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman cannot have listened to my previous reply. The Government have an extremely clear mergers policy, which has been stated on several occasions, and I recommend that the hon. Gentleman reads it. The aim of merger policy is to ensure that the public interest is not damaged. Public and private interests most usually diverge, but not uniquely, where competition is adversely affected by the proposed merger. All considerations can be taken into account by the director general, who gives his advice on any particular bid in the usual way. The question whether people should borrow to buy things is largely a matter for them, for shareholders and for bankers. Where will the hon. Gentleman stop in his investigations into people borrowing to buy things? Does he believe, for instance, that borrowing to buy certain kinds of houses is wrong, which seemed to be what the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was saying in the Walden interview?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Is my hon. Friend saying that there is no national interest in this? How does he define national or public interest? Is it correct for people based overseas, who can remit profits overseas, to take over and break up British companies which are of great value to the economy merely to make money for a few people and not for the general public, bearing in mind that most such companies are owned by institutions rather than the public in general? We must have a national industrial strategy.

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend should take note that the central point of Government policy is to allow shareholders to decide in most cases. They are the proper people to make those decisions and there is no overwhelming evidence to suggest that they are bad at making them. Shareholders should be allowed to make up their own minds. By all means if there are major matters of importance, draw them to the attention of shareholders, the company and the institutions concerned, perhaps through the press and in the normal way. In most cases it is right that people should be free to buy or to sell their assets as they see fit. The public interest is defined in various ways, depending upon the situation, and the director general will give the necessary advice to my right hon. Friend.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand the importance of Trade and Industry questions, but we are making very slow progress. We must get on more rapidly.

Engineering Profession

7. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the status of the engineering profession; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None, Sir.

Mr. Butler: Does my hon. Friend agree that to supply a good, well-trained engineering profession for the future we need to raise the status of that profession perhaps to the same level as it is on the continent?

Mr. Hogg: Yes, I do. My hon. Friend has raised a serious and important issue, not least because engineers are tending to move out of that profession into other occupations. Having read the 1989 survey by the Engineering Council, I am glad to say that I see considerable grounds for optimism, partly in terms of increased remuneration for engineers, partly because of satisfaction with the profession and because of the increasing number of chief executives who are qualified engineers.

Mr. Grocott: Can the Minister confirm that, under this Government, the status and image of engineering, notably in the west midlands, has become associated with building rubble and empty sites where there were previously thriving engineering concerns? Can the Minister give the latest Government estimate of when the number of engineering apprenticeships will reach the level that it was when the Government came to office?

Mr. Hogg: I am able to give the hon. Gentleman good news. Comparing 1986-87 with 1978-79 he will find that students with first degrees in engineering and technology have increased by 26 per cent.

Kemp Report (ECGD)

8. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to implement the recommendations put forward in the Kemp report on status option for the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Ridley: The interdepartmental working group of officials formed to consult interested parties and to advise Ministers on the Kemp review of status options for ECGD has just submitted its report to me. No decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. Cran: Would my right hon. Friend like to take this opportunity to reject the doomwatch notions of those who suggest that the Government are merely using this review to cut dramatically finance for projects business on the premise that only large companies benefit from it? Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is bunkum, particularly against the background of a recent northern engineering industries' report which suggests that a recent Indian order benefited 2,600 small United Kingdom companies?

Mr. Ridley: I have not come to any decision about the report. I will do so as soon as I possibly can. I am interested to hear my hon. Friend's views.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the right hon. Gentleman take into account the fact that the Kemp report asks the Government to take a large-scale risk while introducing private investment into the insurance by ECGD of safe countries? Surely that must be wrong and surely state agencies should be allowed more flexibility to operate so that they can take large risks and benefit from taking the easier option as well?

Mr. Ridley: The Export Credits Guarantee Department does two things. There is the projects group and the insurance services group. It is suggested by Kemp that they should have different futures and that they should go in different directions. It is important to discuss one or the other of those suggestions but we cannot discuss them both at once.

Mr. Page: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the best support he can give British industry on overseas projects and sales is to create a worldwide international level playing field? Will my right hon. Friend work towards that goal? While doing so, will he support the present ECGD aid and trade provisions that are consistent with competition until he achieves that goal of fair international competition?

Mr. Ridley: I agree about the objective which my hon. Friend describes. Our objective in the European single market is to create just that. As for projects outside Europe, it is difficult to align the different forms of aid and credit subsidies that different countries put together. There is no consensus on how they should be constructed. This is a most difficult matter on which to get a playing field without any bumps.

Competitiveness

9. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the competitiveness of British industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Most contacts which my Department has with industry and commerce involve matters having a bearing on United Kingdom competitiveness.

Mr. Mitchell: Will the Minister bear in mind that, measured in terms of unit labour costs, the competitiveness of British industry declined by 9 per cent. in the first quarter of this year? Since the Conservative party came to office it has declined by 21 per cent.—a worse record than for any other country. As it is now official Government policy to crucify British industry with high interest rates, why does not the hon. Gentleman take a leaf out of Government policy in other Departments and simply abolish all figures on competitiveness and anything that is inconvenient on the ground that the situation will get so bad in the next two years, he will have to do that?

Mr. Hogg: It is very nice to see the hon. Gentleman in his place, because I know that his external interests detain him elsewhere rather a lot.

As for competitiveness, yesterday my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his singularly powerful speech, spelt out the fundamental and remarkable transformation in the British economy since the Conservative party came to power 10 years ago. We will not be lectured by the Labour party on questions of competitiveness. Two good reasons for that will suffice for the moment: first, competitiveness declined between 1974 and 1979 by 25 per cent.; and, secondly, inflation touched 27 per cent. when Labour was in office.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Will not industrial competitiveness suffer if the claim by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions for a 35-hour week prevails, because every hour worked over 35 will incur overtime rates, thereby pushing up the cost of goods sold?

Mr. Hogg: I agree, but it is much worse than that. Anyone who has the misfortune to study the Labour party's review will find on page 21, for example, a commitment to a payroll tax. One merely has to contemplate the consequences of that on British competitiveness.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Given the Minister's comments on competitiveness, can he explain the £20 billion trade deficit and reveal the present trend of bankruptcies among small businesses?

Mr. Hogg: I can only suppose—indeed, I fear it to be the case—that the hon. Gentleman was not in his place yesterday when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor dealt precisely with that issue.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: Is it not a competitive reality on which jobs depend that the country cannot afford engineering employees to have a shorter working week than employees in West Germany or in many other European countries as long as productivity in Germany is so much higher than ours?

Mr. Hogg: I agree. It would be extremely helpful if the Labour Front Bench would stop backing inflationary pay settlements in the public and private sectors.

Mr. John Garrett: Does the Minister agree that our loss of competitiveness has meant that the share of imports of manufactured goods in our home market has risen from a quarter to a third in the past decade? Does that not show that we are so uncompetitive that we cannot even compete in our home market? Would the cut by the hon. Gentleman's Department of 30 per cent. in support for industrial research and development have anything to do with that?

Mr. Hogg: Here is another hon. Gentleman who was not paying much attention to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday when he drew careful lessons from the strength of growth, especially in investment and output, since the Conservative Government came to power. However, as the hon. Gentleman has got to his feet, may I ask him what he supposes that a substantial increase in national insurance contributions will do to competitiveness? In case he has not read that proposal, it is to be found on page 33 of his miserable policy review.

Credit Cards

10. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on credit cards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have received 370 representations following my request for views on the "no discrimination" rule, which requires traders to charge the same price for purchases made with credit cards as for those paid for by cash or other means. I am still considering these before reaching a decision.

Mr. Franks: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his statement. As and when a decision is taken, will he ensure that the interest of the consumer is paramount? In this context, the consumer is not only the individual who uses the credit card, but the supplier who looks to the credit card company for payment.

Mr. Ridley: I agree that the interests of the consumer are paramount. The difficulty in this case is to decide which alternative best serves the interests of the consumer.

Mr. Loyden: Would the Secretary of State like to comment on the suggestion that credit cards should be made available to 12-year-olds?

Mr. Ridley: If they have sufficient credit, it would be possible, but I doubt that they would have.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend recognise that outstanding credit on a monthly basis in relation to credit cards equals only 6 per cent. in comparison with the total credit outstanding? Will he note, therefore, that the Labour party's attempt to penalise credit in relation to credit card holders is extremely marginal, like the rest of Labour policy?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right. The point here is not credit control, but what is in the best interests of consumers, as my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) said in his supplementary question.

North East Shipbuilders Ltd.

12. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are his latest intentions concerning the future of North East Shipbuilders Ltd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British Shipbuilders will continue discussions with those who have shown interest in purchasing parts of North-East Shipbuilders Ltd., following the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security who was then Chancellor of the Duchy, on 13 July, with a view to a speedy resolution of the future of the NESL sites.

Mr. Clay: Does the Minister accept that it is nonsense for his Department to tell British Shipbuilders that in the case of the Anglo-Greek bidders, who are bidding for the North Sands yard for ship repairs and conversion, they have to sign a legally binding agreement not to construct ships there until December 1993 at a time when they require no subsidy from the Government to build ships, as they want to build them on their own account? Britain has a rapidly mounting trade deficit which will be made worse by the closure of our shipbuilding capacity. Given that the

Minister admitted a fortnight ago to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry four different points that the Government had got wrong about this tragedy and farce, is it not time that he recognised that he has got the whole thing wrong and allowed people who want to build ships to get on with it, and to re-employ workers in Sunderland?

Mr. Hogg: Until the hon. Gentleman reached the penultimate and last parts of his question, he was doing rather well because he was asking a perfectly respectable question. It is nonsense to attribute four errors to me and it is even more foolish to attribute a total error to the Department.

On the substantive question, the hon. Gentleman will recall that I gave evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on 18 October and that I gave an extremely full response to questions such as the hon. Gentleman's. The plain fact is that I would not support any shipbuilding project in Sunderland in the next five years because it would result in an unpicking of the package of remedial measures put in place in December 1988. The future of Sunderland lies with that package rather than with a small shipbuilding venture.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend remind the House of the amount of money that taxpayers lost since the shipbuilding industry in Sunderland was nationalised?

Mr. Hogg: I do not have the exact figure in my mind, but I know that no contract has been built to cost in the recent past, and during the past five years Sunderland was losing 50 per cent. on each contract.

Mr. Henderson: Does not the Government's latest provision finally prove to the House that they have been trying to assassinate not only Sunderland but all British merchant shipbuilding?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman does not do himself credit. If he had listened to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy in December 1988, he would recall that the remedial package that was put in place provided for about £45 million worth of expenditure or forgone tax, most particularly an enterprise zone, and £10 million for retraining for the assistance of small business. To try to characterise that as assassination is plain nonsense and does the hon. Gentleman no credit.

Regional Stimulation

13. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new plans for stimulating industry in British regions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Changes in the focus of our regional policies were made early last year. There are no plans for further changes.

Mr. Barnes: In the Derbyshire, North-East constituency in recent years, there has been a decline in coalmining, which will be exacerbated by the ports Bills that hon. Members are due to discuss and a reduction in employment caused by declining railways. The decline in employment is due also to the steel industry in the travel-to-work area and the rationalisation that is taking place in the chemical industry. What has the Department of Trade and Industry done to help my constituents and similar constituents? The Government have cut regional funding by 72 per cent. since 1979. Will they alter their policy in the run-up to 1992, or are we to expect the same policy from the free enterprise fanatics on the Government Front Bench?

Mr. Hogg: Once again we have a case of an hon. Gentleman who has not reflected on his question before asking it. I was disappointed that he did not pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy, who managed to get the Chesterfield travel-to-work area made eligible for European structural grants. It would have been at least charitable to reflect on that. The Government's substantial instruments of policy are selective and effective. The principal Department of Trade and Industry instruments are regional selective assistance, regional enterprise grants, the consultancy initiative and the ability of English Estates to build in deprived areas. That is a powerful and carefully targeted arsenal of policies.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does not the Opposition's pose as the friend of manufacturing industry in the regions wear a little thin when hon. Members bear in mind that the Opposition have opposed every one of the Government's supply side reforms aimed at increasing the competitiveness of manufacturing? Manufacturing output fell under the last Labour Government, whereas, under this Government, it has risen, particularly in Derbyshire, where manufacturing output and employment have risen faster than in most other regions.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is wholly right. It is because we have adhered to our policies that we have seen dramatic downturns in unemployment, which would have gone up had we accepted the policies of the Labour party. Between March 1986 and September 1989 in the northern region unemployment fell by 18·1 per cent. to 10·4 per cent. In the north-west region it fell from 16·6 per cent. to 9·2 per cent. In Yorkshire and Humberside it fell from 15 per cent. to 8·3 per cent. That is a tribute to the Government's regional policy.

Mr. Wigley: In view of the potential importance of projects in companies such as Nissan and Toyota, does the Minister accept that one way of trying to stimulate employment in manufacturing in areas of high unemployment is to encourage joint ventures between those companies and component manufacturers within the United Kingdom? Does the Minister accept also that it would be particularly helpful if there were positive incentives to locate such developments in areas of high unemployment?

Mr. Hogg: Such joint ventures are indeed, extremely valuable and they may well be eligible for, for example, regional selective assistance.

Mr. Riddick: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most destructive policies for industry in the regions would be if the Government were to impose economic sanctions on South Africa, a policy advocated by the Labour party? Does he realise that such a policy would throw hundreds if not thousands of engineering workers in Yorkshire on to the dole queue? Will he assure the House that the Government will never adopt such a destructive and counter-productive policy?

Mr. Hogg: This afternoon we have identified two policies of the Labour party which would be extremely damaging in that respect. The first is its policy on defence cuts and the second its policy of economic sanctions against South Africa. The mainstream policies of the Labour party would result in a substantial increase in unemployment.

Mr. Caborn: In the absence of any co-ordinated regional policy, is the Minister aware that all the reports from Europe clearly show that the industrial regions of the north will feel the winds of 1992 quite adversely? Is he also aware of the Audit Commission report "Urban Regeneration and Economic Development" which in its conclusion says:

> "Government support programmes are seen as a patchwork quilt of complexity and idiosyncrasies. They baffle local authorities and business alike."

There are now 14 instruments in the urban and regional and regeneration programme which nobody can understand and their funding has gone down by 72 per cent. on the 1979 figure.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman's longwindedness does not improve his argument. He and his hon. Friend's were clearly not paying attention when I identified the carefully chosen selective instruments of policy which we have put in place. The consultancy initiative in particular is directed to the problems that will arise in 1992 and thereafter.

Loss Adjusters

14. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to regulate the conduct of loss adjusters.

Mr. Redwood: It is the responsibility of the professional associations of which they are members to maintain the professional standards of loss adjusters.

Mr. Baker: Is my hon. Friend aware that loss adjusters acting for insurance companies frequently browbeat and bully innocent claimants? Will my hon. Friend remind insurers that their duty is to recompense people who have suffered losses that are covered by insurance policies? Does my hon. Friend agree that practices of the kind that I have outlined should be drawn to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading?

Mr. Redwood: I am disturbed to hear my hon. Friend's accusations. If he has a particular case in mind he should refer it to the professional body concerned because such bodies have disciplinary powers over their members. If my hon. Friend thinks that the abuses are widespread, he should talk or write to the Director General of Fair Trading because he has powers to negotiate a code of conduct with the professions if he thinks that that is necessary.

Dr. Reid: Many Opposition Members would like to be associated with the genuine compliments paid to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry by his Conservative colleagues because we have found out that such compliments are the political equivalent of the last meal of a condemned man. The Secretary of State is not only unique, he is quite brilliant. I would have said "unassailable" but I think that unsaleable——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I gave the hon. Gentleman a chance to ask a question about loss adjusters.

Dr. Reid: Is the Minister aware that if a loss adjuster visited the Clydesdale tube works in Scotland he would find that less damage had been caused over the past five years by accidental death, burglary and fire than by the absolute refusal by British Steel to invest in that tube works? Will the Minister encourage British Steel to put in some investment?

Trade Statistics

15. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have a trade surplus or a smaller trade deficit as a proportion of gross domestic product than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: All OECD countries except Portugal, Greece and Spain were in one or other category in 1988, the latest year for which complete figures are available.

Mr. Williams: Is it not an appalling comment on 10 years of Thatcherism that we are almost at the bottom of the world league and that we have the largest balance of payments deficit of any advanced country and the largest in our post-war history? Why is the country so economically weak and defenceless against that invasion of imports? How will the Government's policy of high interest rates and an overvalued pound help us out of that mess?

Mr. Redwood: I am not surprised that the hon. Gentleman should highlight that particular issue rather than the many good issues that should be highlighted about the state of the economy. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the latest figures show that the unemployment rate in the Carmarthen travel-to-work area is down to 3·5 per cent? That is a fine tribute to the success of the Government's economic policies and I should have thought that he would want to say someting positive about that.

The hon. Gentleman must look more carefully at the state of the British economy to see the many good things that are going on. Why, for example, does he make no reference to the fact that we have the highest stock of overseas assets relative to our GNP of any country? Why does he not refer to the largest invisible surplus of any country? Why does he not refer to the fact that export volume is now up 11 per cent. on—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We should have the answer to the question.

Mr. John Townend: How long will it be before the import penetration in the automobile industry is reduced as a result of the massive investment, particularly from Nissan, Toyota and Honda? What effect will that have on the balance of trade?

Mr. Redwood: I was hoping to come to that in answering the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) more fully. Export volume has grown by 11 per cent. in the past three months. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) rightly says, major investments have been announced by three large Japanese motor manufacturers, which will make a substantial increase to car manufacturing capacity in this country in the early and mid-1990s. As a large element in the deficit on manufactured goods lies in the vehicle sector, my hon. Friend is right to look forward to much better trading conditions in manufactured motor vehicles as a result of that positive inward investment.

It is a sign of the times that we are attracting a large amount of inward investment as people recognise the strengths of the British manufacturing base and the potential here for selling into 1992. A few years ago the Opposition were complaining when we were in the reverse position—when we had a surplus and were investing overseas. Now people are investing here to cure our balance of payments and trade deficit.

Mr. Gould: Given the appalling deterioration in our trade performance, which the Minister has been obliged to reveal in his answer—incidentally, that gives the lie to the blusterings of his hon. Friend the Minister about the competitiveness of British industry—what explanation does the Minister offer the House for what has happened, or in common with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, does he have no view to offer?

Mr. Redwood: I thought that Opposition Members were complaining that I had too many views as there is a lot to say about the strengths of the British manufacturing economy. I repeat that it is a sign of strength that people want to invest here. We have had a deficit in recent months because demand has outstripped supply in the short term. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has taken the prudent course of raising interest rates to slow the rate of growth in the economy, so that the supply side can catch up. I am sure that, in due course, that policy will be successful. I am also sure that inward investment will make an important contribution to changing the balance of payments position.

Timber Industry

16. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received regarding alleged unfair competition in the timber industry as a result of subsidies to sawmills in Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Save for my hon. Friend's letter of 31 August, I am not aware of having received any other representations about unfair competition in the timber industry.

Mr. Gill: Does my hon. Friend accept that there is documented evidence that shows that elements of unfair competition have been introduced into industries, notably the timber industry in this case, as a result of decisions made under regional policies? Will he take this opportunity to deprecate those instances of interventionism?

Mr. Hogg: I cannot do that as I believe that there are powerful economic and social arguments in favour of our regional policy that I outlined in answer to an earlier question. I recognise that when deciding whether to grant aid in particular cases a number of criteria must be taken into account. One of them is, necessarily, the effect on indigenous industries.

Consumer Protection

20. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has concerning manufacturers' obligations to provide United Kingdom consumers of motor vehicles and major household appliances with reliability and after sales service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The consumer contracts with a supplier, who is normally a retailer not a manufacturer, and it is against the supplier that the consumer has a right of action under the Sale of Goods Act 1979 for defects in the goods supplied. Manufacturers who provide consumers with guarantees of reliability or with after sales service, do so voluntarily and in addition to the consumer's statutory rights against the supplier.

The Government intend to implement by means of legislation recommendations by the Law Commissioners which clarify and strengthen the consumer's rights under the Sale of Goods Act.

Mr. Shersby: My hon. Friend's reply will be most welcome. However, will the legislation incorporate the proposals which have been prepared by the National Consumer Council and will those improvements be harnessed to serve the needs of the consumer?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I can certainly confirm that we are studying the recommendations of the National Consumer Council most closely, as we do all the work of that excellent organisation. I am not yet in a position to say what, if any, elements of its recommendations will be incorporated in future legislation. I am aware that when we legislate we should put together the most effective and up-to-date package in the consumer's interest, and that we shall do.

3.32 pm

Mr. Wareing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed that at the end of the list of questions to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry there are no fewer than 14 questions about this country's trade deficit which have been transferred to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I understand from a spokesperson at the Department of Trade and Industry that this is because the Central Statistical Office is now responsible for trade figures. First, hon. Members should have been notified, and secondly, these questions should rightfully be answered by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. This is yet another attempt by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to evade answering questions. When I received a written answer to my own question it was an answer about the deficit in the balance of payments, which was not what my question was about. Right hon. and hon. Members have a right to have trade deficit questions answered by the Minister responsible, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Speaker: I should like to be able to help the hon. Gentleman. I refer him to the 21st edition of "Parliamentary Practice" which has just come out. On page 286 it states:

> "It is a long established principle that decisions on the transfer of questions rests with Ministers and it is not a matter in which the Chair seeks to intervene."

I am sorry.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed that a significant number of Labour Members have put down questions on today's Order Paper and then failed to turn up. Would you be good enough to deprecate that because it is not only an insult to you in the Chair, but unfair to hon. Members from both sides of the House who, having seen a question on the Order Paper, hope to catch your eye on a supplementary question but find that the original questioner is not here?

Mr. Speaker: It is a courtesy to the House if the Chair is told when Members are unable to be present for the very reasons mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. Of course, the fact that some hon. Members are not here today has meant that we have been able to reach question No. 20, which was a bit of good luck for the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby).

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have heard today the utterly outrageous statement by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that 12-year-olds should be able to use credit cards. I wonder whether—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a clear continuation of Question Time and not a matter of order for me. An Opposition day prayer has been set down and if it were possible for me to limit speeches I would do so today because such a large number of hon. Members wish to participate. Points of order which are not points of order are a disservice to the House.

Points of Order

3.34 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I obtained a letter from the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, inviting me to donate more than £200 to attend a dining room function on the Terrace. That document carries the House of Commons logo. It comes from an hon. Member, but it invites me to send my cheque for £200 to a Conservative association. That is a grievous misuse of the House and an attack on the rights of hon. Members. I would ask for the matter to be investigated and for you, Mr. Speaker, to report back to the House.

Mr. Speaker: That matter has already been reported to me and it is now in the hands of the Services Committee, which is looking into it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to refer to the use of stationery and House of Commons envelopes in a different case. A letter was sent out to general managers of district health authorities in England and Wales by the shadow Secretary of State for Health on House of Commons notepaper. Paragraph 5 of the leaflet issued by the Serjeant at Arms on the use of the House of Commons emblem, stationery and post-paid envelopes says:

> "Members who wish to send out circulars may purchase original House stationery, or, at their own expense, may photocopy or by other means reproduce that stationery."

It then goes on to describe what a circular is——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We all know that. Every hon. Member has that leaflet. In view of the pressure of time, I should say that the same rule applies to every right hon. and hon. Member. It is not in order to use House of Commons stationery for party political purposes. Complaints should be made to the Services Committee, not to me.

Mr. Bennett: There are two points——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already dealt with that matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know that when private Bills are brought before the House they sometimes have to go back for re-examination. At 7 o'clock today we are due to discuss the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. That Bill started its progress two years ago when there was a balance of payments surplus. It was tiny, but nevertheless it was a surplus. During the Bill's passage we have acquired a £20 billion trade deficit.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me. There is to be a debate on that very matter later this evening. It is not a matter of order.

Mr. Skinner: Of course it is.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The opposed private business has been put down by the Chairman of Ways and Means. It is in order, it is on the Order Paper, and it will be debated later tonight. It may well be a matter of argument later on tonight.

Mr. Skinner: No, it is a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not the function of points of order to raise matters of a party political nature across the Chamber. They must be matters of order on which I can rule. The hon. Gentleman well knows the rules in that respect.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You say that you have referred the matter raised in the earlier point of order to the Services Committee. Does that mean that the Committee will report back to you so that you in turn can report to the House? This is a matter not just for the Services Committee but for the House, and it is you, Mr. Speaker, to whom we look to protect the interests of the House.

Mr. Speaker: No doubt if the Services Committee feels it is appropriate to report to me it will do so, and if I am asked to do so I will make that statement.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking any more points of order which are not points of order for me. We cannot have party political arguments across the House on any day, and especially on a day when we have great pressure.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance on a matter which is vital to the running of the House. Is it in order for Front-Bench spokesmen, particularly the Opposition spokesman on health and social security, to send out in House of Commons post-paid envelopes, to every health authority in the land——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As I have already said, this matter has been reported to the Services Committee. A Select Committee is looking into the matter. I cannot say any more. I have already answered the point of order raised by the hon. Members for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) and for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer).

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already stated the rules, and I repeat them. It is not in order for hon. Members to use House of Commons stationery, or even the House of Commons facilities, for party political purposes.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raise a matter concerning the prayer against the National Health Service statutory instrument. The Order Paper states:

> "The Instrument has not yet been considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments."

The Government organise the business of the week. The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments met yesterday and that item was not on the agenda. Under Standing Order No. 124, a duty is imposed by the House on the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments to consider a statutory instrument

> "with a view to determining whether the special attention of the House should be drawn to it"

on a number of grounds which are listed in the Standing Order.

There does not seem to be much point in having a Joint Committee set up by the House to consider statutory instruments if the Government insist on putting on the Order Paper an item that the Joint Committee has not considered. We cannot possibly report the matter to the House and engage in deliberations. If we want any

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information, the Standing Order requires us to give the Government the opportunity to present evidence to the Joint Committee. So we must take at least a week over the matter. Therefore, the Joint Committee's work is being deliberately frustrated by the Government not saying that, until the Joint Committee has reported, it will not be possible to debate the matter. It is quite outrageous that the Joint Committee, established by the House should be ignored in this way and specifically deprived of the opportunity of presenting a report on the statutory instrument.

Mr. Speaker: The House appreciates what the hon. Gentleman does for the House as Chairman of the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments. But today we are not to debate an affirmative order; we are to debate an Opposition prayer and there is a rubric on the Order Paper to the effect that the instrument has not yet been considered by the Joint Committee. The prayer is in order.

Termination of Tenancy

3.43 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to empower councils and housing associations to terminate tenancies where the dependants of a tenant have been rehoused on account of the tenant's violence.

Last Saturday I was visited in my surgery by a young mother of three children. She and her youngest child, a baby, are currently living with her parents and two other adults in a three-bedroomed house. I have a report from Kent social services saying:

"In 1988 it was discovered that"

the two older children

"had been sexually abused. They were interviewed and disclosed that they had been abused by their father. Although he was interviewed by the Police no charges were laid as it was felt that they were too young to give evidence in Court. However, the disclosures were specific enough for Care Orders to be obtained on both".

Needless to say, the lady who spoke to me is most anxious to obtain a council house so that she can reunite her family. One might ask what has happened to the family home. The answer is that the husband continues to occupy the home. He is entitled by law to continue to occupy that ratepayer-subsidised home for the rest of his life if he so chooses. Even if he had been convicted and sent to prison, he would still have that right for up to a year and the ratepayer would have to pay for housing benefit to pay his rent.

Battered wives and abused children live in a grey statistical area; there are no firm statistics. We can study surrogate statistics—for example, the Children's Society says that almost 100,000 children left home last year, for one reason or another. We are aware of the growth in convictions for marital violence and we know of the tremendous increase in divorce, currently running at about one marriage in three. However, there is no way by which we can obtain accurate figures for offences committed within the home.

However, we can say with certainty that the case to which I have alluded is not an isolated example. There is a home for battered wives in my constituency where volunteers do excellent work. From time to time ladies in that home ask me to try to assist them to obtain a council house. Many of them come from local authority homes, and in almost every case the husband or common law husband continues to occupy the original home. Surely that is a great injustice. A man is given a subsidised tenancy so that he can house his family. That was the purpose of his being given the asset, but that purpose has now lapsed because—I must be blunt—of his wickedness. Is it right that he should continue to enjoy it?

Council officials tell me that in many cases the problem takes a second, sick twist. Possessed of that asset, the man is well placed to install another woman, who may not even know the story of the first family, and so the same sick cycle starts again. In effect, child abuse or wife battering is paid for on the rates, with the council being powerless to do anything about it.

What legal remedies are available? There are two. The first is the ouster order, under which a court can evict the husband or common law husband and can also make a banning order to keep him away from the home. That has two defects. First, it puts the onus of the legal action on the shoulders least able to carry it—those of the wife. In many cases the principal witnesses are the children, and even if the wife plucks up the courage to apply for the order the last thing that she wants to do is to involve the children. Secondly, she would then be in the same home, when what is obviously needed is for the council to rehouse her so that her husband does not know the address. The council could then recover the original house so that its stock would not be one house down.

There is a second option. In the Housing Act 1985 the Government made a sensible stab at trying to do something about the problem and included provisions in a tenancy agreement to deal with that sort of case. Unfortunately, that also has serious defects. First, it cannot apply to any tenancy before 1985. Secondly, many councils have not yet amended their tenancy agreements, so even those with the most recent agreements cannot take advantage of the Act.

My proposed Bill would cut through all that. If the family had to be rehoused because of the misconduct of the husband, who was the tenant, my Bill would make that a prima facie ground for eviction by the local authority or by a housing association which also provides subsidised housing. It would be a civil measure, as is schedule 2 to the 1985 Act, so that there would be no need to prove criminal charges against the man.

I have received an early and constructive response from the Government, and I am grateful to note that two Ministers from the Department of the Environment have taken the trouble to be on the Front Bench. I am delighted to hear that they will consider the matter. I leave them and the House with this thought. The course of action that I have proposed would have four advantages. First, it would make it much easier for councils such as Canterbury with long housing lists to rehouse those unfortunate families. Secondly, it would take the legal burden from the wife, as the council could take the necessary action. Thirdly, it would eliminate the absurd expense to the ratepayer of having to keep a house going with only one person in it. Fourthly, it would send a clear message to violent husbands that the community is no longer willing to subsidise their activity.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Julian Brazier, Mr. Alan Amos, Mr. John Bowis, Mr. Matthew Carrington, Mr. Neil Hamilton, Mr. Edward Leigh, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Iain Mills, Mr. David Tredinnick, Mr. Ian Taylor, Mr. Roger Gale and Mr. Ian Bruce.

TERMINATION OF TENANCY

Mr. Julian Brazier accordingly presented a Bill to empower councils and housing associations to terminate tenancies where the dependants of a tenant have been rehoused on account of the tenant's violence: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 211.]

National Health Service

3.50 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989, No. 1897), dated 15th October 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th October, be annulled.

I was much entertained to read in last week's *Health Service Journal* that a senior official had told the journal that the Department of Health expected Opposition Members to come out with all guns blazing in today's debate. I am much obliged to the Department for the constitutional innovation of informing the press of the tactics to be used by the Opposition.

I am being invited to come out firing to defend a profession which—as the whole House knows—voted overwhelmingly Conservative at the last election. I accept my democratic duty with a familiar resignation, as I know that, having accepted those votes, Conservative Members have no intention of defending that profession. I bring to the task a cold and clear perception that there is no prospect of support from them. I am well aware that, had the Secretary of State and I reversed roles and had I occupied his office during the past six months, there would have been no prospect of the BMA's senior negotiators rolling over and playing dead as readily as they have been doing since his announcement that he would ignore them and impose the contract regardless.

The Secretary of State and I are, however, probably in agreement on one matter. The important question is not whether the contract will inconvenience GPs, but whether it will affect patients: that is the issue on which the debate must turn. As I said in the July debate, there are areas of congruence between the Secretary of State and myself on the contract. For instance, I see every reason why GPs who arrange to make their own night visits should be paid more than those who do not; nor do I see any objection to GPs being required to provide leaflets setting out the nature of their practice. I also find it impossible to oppose the proposal that the maximum holiday to which a GP is entitled should be cut—or, as one GPs' paper put it in a headline last weekend, slashed—to six weeks a year. I am happy to support such a suggestion, even when it is made by Ministers who have achieved some notoriety on account of their own holiday arrangements.

These issues, however, are not the core of the new contract; they are the lace trimmings intended to make it more appealing to the eye. The key issue—the key clause—which has caused most GPs to decline to sign on the dotted line is the fundamental shift that it represents in the increase in the capitation element from 46 per cent. to a figure which, although undisclosed, will be at least 60 per cent.

The effect—which we must assume to be deliberate—is to provide an incentive to lengthen patients' lists. I am familiar with the riposte from Ministers that the average list cannot lengthen because, as patients are poached from one GP by another, the average must stay the same. That is merely to restate the laws of arithmetic.

Patients may choose. I do not wish to be contentious on that point. I am happy to accept that patients should have the choice. My contention is that whether patients choose or are poached, the average remains the same. That

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conceals the fact that the contract is clearly designed to result in a smaller number of practices with longer patient lists. That is in flat contradiction to the policy pursued for the past 20 years by successive Governments, of encouraging smaller patient lists. In fairness to the Government, it also contradicts the trend of their policy throughout the past 10 years towards smaller lists.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why he objects to patients choosing their GP? Is he saying that the principle of smaller lists, which he believes to be common to both the Conservative and the Labour party, gives the House the right to direct patients to stay with a doctor whom they do not like rather than go to the one of their choice?

Mr. Cook: Absolutely nothing I said suggests that I object to the concept of choice. Patients have choice now and I am in favour of making that choice easier. However, I am not in favour of giving GPs an incentive to seek a longer patient list and of penalising those who, sensibly and in their patients' interests, decide not to take on more patients than they can handle, which would result in their having less time for their existing patients. That has nothing to do with patient choice, but everything to do with the incentives to be offered to general practitioners.

As recently as 1987, consensus on this matter was restated by the Select Committee on Social Services. Commenting on the then White Paper on primary care, it said:

> "The proposal to increase the proportion of GP's income derived from capitation was universally opposed."

Patients' associations were among those opposing it. The statement continued:

> "The case for further reductions in the GP's list size seems unanswerable."

It would be unfair to suggest that the Secretary of State has answered the case. He has chosen to ignore it. It is a powerful case. More patients on a list mean less time for each patient. The case is all the more powerful as we know that patients want more time with their GP.

The magazine *Which?* carried out a survey last month which concluded that nine out of 10 patients expressed a preference for more time with their GP. That is entirely reasonable because seven minutes, the average consultation time in Britain, is the lowest in Europe.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No. I wish to finish my point.

The Secretary of State is well aware of the *Which?* survey. We know that, because he quoted from it at the press conference when he announced that he was to impose the contract. He quoted the following:

> "We think the new contract is likely to expand the services available to patients."

It is a pity that he did not quote the next sentence:

> "We think the Government may have misunderstood how highly patients value the time they spend with their GPs. We do not think that you will get more time with the GP in the surgery. Less time with the GP may mean more time with the nurse."

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Gentleman has nearly shot the fox but not quite. *Which?* said:

> "We think the new contract is likely to expand services to patients."

Surely that is crucial, because patients will get more choice. It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to complain about practice teams, but through family practitioner committees the Government will give the teams better opportunities to help the GP in the practice. Surely that should be welcomed.

Mr. Cook: Hon. Members will observe that I quoted the passage that the hon. Gentleman was so anxious to put on the record. On his second point, it is ironic that he should make the case that the Government will rely on primary health care teams using other professionals and employees to provide services when, from 1 April next year, for the first time in the history of the NHS, his Government will place cash limits on exactly those professionals.

Apart from the *Which?* survey, there is also a study by Wilkin and Metcalfe of what happens when patient lists lengthen. It discovered that, as patient lists lengthen from 2,000 to 3,000 patients, the average contact time per patient falls from 30 to 20 minutes a year. There are already 3,000 practices with more than 2,500 patients per GP. Any contract that tried to meet what we know patients want would set out to reduce the number of practices with large lists.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Is not the answer to the hon. Gentleman's point to increase the number of doctors? Is he able to explain how doctors' patient lists will be expanded along his lines if more and more doctors will be available to share the work load?

Mr. Cook: The number of general practitioners has increased during the last 20 years. However, during the last 12 months, the period during which we have been debating the contract, the number of trainees in general practice has fallen. I shall express grave anxiety later in my speech about the fact that many of those trainees are now finding it increasingly difficult to enter general practice precisely because of the contract that is now before the House.

Any contract that sought to meet patients' needs would seek to reduce the number of practices with large lists. Instead, the Secretary of State is seeking to increase their rewards. Logically, therefore, he expects the number of practices with long lists to increase. If the Secretary of State continues to deny that that is what he expects and wants, there is a simple way to convince us that that is not what he seeks.

I put to the Secretary of State the question that I put to him last July: if he does not wish patient lists to lengthen, and if he shares the consensus of the last 20 years that patient lists should be reduced, why does he not accept the BMA's proposal, which is on the negotiating table, to reduce the maximum number on patient lists from 3,500 to 2,500? Will he not accept that basic step, which would provide some protection to patients against general practitioners deciding as a result of this contract that the sensible and rational response is to hold as many patients as possible on their lists?

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that that would impose an artificial constraint upon doctors? It would prevent a GP from taking on to his list a patient who wanted to go on to his list because the patient was satisfied that he or she would get good service from that GP. How does that equate with the hon. Gentleman's unconvincing assertion that patient choice is one of the issues that he is bearing in mind?

Mr. Cook: No, it would not have that effect. The artificial barrier of 3,500 patients is already there. When a GP hits the 3,500 barrier, the practice takes on another partner. Under our proposal, practices would not be obliged to turn away patients. High patient list practices would be provided with a financial incentive to take on additional partners, thus increasing the tendency to reduce patient lists by increasing the number of doctors. That would provide greater, not less, choice to patients.

Patients are not the only victims of the proposal. The growing number of women GPs is another casualty. In parenthesis, may I say that I welcome the advent to our debates of the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley). I hope she will forgive me if I say that our welcome to her, warm though it is, is as nothing compared to the unfeigned welcome that we give to the departure from our debates of her predecessor. Conservative health policies certainly can do with a woman's view.

I noticed the unfortunate statement earlier this month by the Conservative Medical Society, which urged an increase in Britain's population. It says:

> "A return to enhanced birth rate would eventually allow more women to return to their prime task of bringing up their families as their profession whilst the young as yet unmarried provide the recruits to the health care profession as in the past."

I suspect that that passage was not drafted by the Secretary of State. He will be aware that, as a strategy for filling GP vacancies, it is deeply flawed. It requires six years at medical school, followed by a year in a hospital, followed by a year as a GP trainee to qualify as a GP. By the time that a woman has completed that, she will be in her late 20s, most likely be married and probably starting a family. Therefore, on the whole, women GPs seek more moderate list sizes. The average list size of women GPs is 35 per cent. below the national norm.

The fear is that, under the new entrepreneurial age being ushered in by the Secretary of State's contract, practices will want to take on not a woman partner but a partner who will play his full part—it will be "his" full part —in the competitive struggle to maintain income by pushing up patient lists.

I acknowledge that the contract contains new arrangements for part-time GPs, but that overlooks the fact that in the new war to attract and retain patients practices will not want part-timers. Since the first draft of the contract was published in the spring, there has not been a single part-time partnership advertised in Scotland. Curiously, much of the stress in the rest of the contract is to provide services for women and children, such as screening, immunisation, well-woman clinics and child health surveillance. All the evidence shows that women find it easier to accept those services from women doctors. If the Secretary of State is to meet his targets, the hon. Member for Surrey South-West had best take him aside and explain to him that he should make it easier, not more difficult, for women to enter general practice.

The issue whether GPs should be rewarded by numbers goes much deeper than whether there will be enough time for each patient or whether patients will have the right of access to a woman partner. At the heart of the debate is how we motivate the medical profession. The current edition of "Pulse" contains a profile of a GP practice in Bristol. It is located on a council estate called Hartcliffe, which scores high on the deprivation scale. It has an unemployment rate of 30 per cent., and 48 per cent. of families are single-parent households. The practice does not believe that it will qualify for the new deprivation allowance because it is allocated on a ward basis and, because of affluence elsewhere, their wards score below the Jarman scale.

There are intense demands on the medical practice; 70 per cent. of the children registered with it come from families in which one parent is under 21 and require considerable support. The practice has therefore adopted the conscious policy of reducing the patient-doctor ratio. It has succeeded in reducing it by 25 per cent., with the objective of increasing the amount of time spent on each patient. Far from rewarding it for that ethical decision, the contract will penalise it for not getting stuck into the competition to maximise list size. Here we glimpse the long-term damage of the contract.

The Secretary of State has based his contract on the explicit premise that the only motivation he can recognise is a financial incentive. The majority of GPs spend most of their day not on activities that they have calculated will maximise the revenue of their practice but on activities that in their view best meet their ethical duty to their patients. It is clear from the many conversations that I have had over the past two weeks that many GPs feel deeply the insult that they saw in his comment that he is asking them to do only 26 hours a week. The majority of GPs do well over 26 hours a week, and many work easily twice those hours.

Yes, there may be a few passengers, and, yes, it may be that the only thing that will prod those passengers into greater productivity is the sharp stick of hard cash, but the tragedy is that the Secretary of State has drafted his contract to address the motivation of the minority. The danger is that he will therefore undermine the much finer performance of the majority of GPs, who are motivated by a sense of ethical duty and the public service ethos. If all that matters is meeting the minimum for financial reward, that minimum may become the maximum that anyone does.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): If the contract is as misconceived as the hon. Gentleman has said, why did the BMA negotiators agree it?

Mr. Cook: I am sorry to have to advise the hon. Gentleman that the BMA negotiators did not agree to the contract. They recommended it to their members because there was an explicit understanding that if their members did not vote for the contract the Secretary of State would withdraw the concessions that they had negotiated. That was the precise basis on which they agreed to recommend it in the ballot.

The hon. Gentleman's intervention brings me to my next point, which concerns, not the contents of the contract, but the style in which it has been negotiated. As the hon. Gentleman has reminded us, the contract was put to a postal ballot of BMA members. We have been repeatedly led to believe by Conservative Members that postal ballots are the model of modern trade unionism. In the postal ballot on the contract, the membership, in an 82 per cent. poll, rejected the contract by 76 per cent. to 24 per

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cent. As the hon. Gentleman has reminded the House, that was in a ballot where the Secretary of State had the BMA negotiators on his side, recommending a yes vote.

A word other than "contract" is needed to describe this document. A word that captures more honestly the authoritarian, centralising nature of the Government who are imposing it would be "edict" or "decree". Those words more accurately capture the flavour of the document that the House is debating.

Perhaps it is a matter of indifference to patients whether the contract is negotiated or imposed. Contracts that are imposed have to be written in a bunker because they cannot go through a process of full consultation which involves taking the people on whom it will be imposed into one's confidence.

We are debating a detailed manual of how doctors should practise medicine daily in their surgeries, which has been written by civil servants in an office in Whitehall. When I read comments in the medical press about the contract, I was struck by the fact that, often, doctors who agreed with parts of the contract were appalled, nevertheless, at how amateurish the contract was in setting them out. For example, on child health surveillance, Dr. Curtis, of the British Paediatric Association, said:

> "the proposals have been ill-thought out, not properly worked through and I am appalled at the rate at which they are instituted".

Dr. Wilson, a pioneer in developing annual reports for practices, who voluntarily produced an annual report on his practice for five years, said:

> "The information which the regulations demand is of little use. It seems to have missed the mark and instead of being for the field workers it is for the administrators back at head office."

Dr. Brian Wiggins, who has specialised in minor surgery at his practice and has his own specially constructed surgery unit, says that he believes that the list of minor surgery has been drawn up by a bureaucrat with little surgical experience.

Fortunately, the bureaucrat in question broke cover last week. Mr. John Shaw, the under-secretary in charge of family practitioner services, addressed the family practioner committees' annual conference last week and explained why he had not felt able to indulge in face-to-face discussions with GP leaders on the new contract. He said:

> "I took the view that in dealing with such detailed fine print the most effective way was to do it in writing."

So there we have it.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman has entered unusual ground by attacking one of my civil servants by name and by quoting him out of context. The two areas that he refers to—child surveillance and minor surgery —were put into the contract at the request of the BMA. Mr. Shaw engaged in about 100 hours of negotiations with doctors on those services and on the details of how they would be described in the contract. The quotation he has just used describes what was happening at the later stages when we were drafting—crossing the t's and dotting the i's. Criticism should be aimed at the doctors who were closely involved, on the BMA side and on mine, in drawing up the details. The hon. Gentleman should not make cheap attacks on the civil servants involved when he is trying to find a reason to argue this patient-friendly contract.

Mr. Cook: I am sorry that the Secretary of State believes that to quote his civil servants is to attack them. I was quoting the observations of those doctors who practise medicine, who have carried through exactly the kind of innovations that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is now making mandatory and who clearly from their comments do not believe that the regulations which are now being imposed upon them reflect medical expertise or advice.

The House is invited to pass this edict, which is being imposed despite the rejection of the profession and which was drafted on the explicit basis that it had best be done in writing. When they come to put up a museum to the Government, there should be a special place for this statutory instrument as a document which is one of the finest demonstrations of the Government's style, based on the conviction that the Government know what is good for the rest of us and on the belief that the more one ignores advice, the more one demonstrates the strength of those convictions. Fortunately, the day when the Government can be consigned to that museum is approaching.

There is a sad irony in today's debate, which I am sure has not escaped the Secretary of State and which must privately trouble him. He has chosen to copy the Prime Minister's style of management at the very moment that his colleagues are queueing up to beg her to change it. We are told that the Conservatives want more consultation, listening and sensitivity. They are about to hear a speech from the Secretary of State which all experience warns us will show that he revels in the fact that he is ignoring the doctors' ballot and relishes the idea that he knows better than the GPs in their constituencies what is good for their patients.

The Secretary of State will then invite Conservative Members for the first time in the 40 years of the NHS to impose a contract against the will of GPs. That vote provides an interesting footnote to the turmoil of the past week. It is the opportunity for Conservative Members to show whether they really meant all those fine words about more consultation and listening, or whether the Prime Minister got it right, in that it will be "business as usual". Business as usual means that the Secretary of State knows best—better than the 75 per cent. of GPs who rejected his contract and the 70 per cent. of the public who consistently rejected his White Paper. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman's colleagues fall for that, those GPs and that public majority may well conclude that the Government do not know how to change their style. If people do not like the style, they had better change the Government.

4.17 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): There should be a wide measure of agreement between myself and the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on large parts of this contract. I suspect that there is a much wider measure of agreement between us than the weasel words that the hon. Gentleman has chosen to use would show to the outside world. I am sure that he agrees with me that we are dealing with one of the most important parts of our National Health Service—the family doctor service. I have said many times and am happy to say again that the British family doctor system is the particular feature of the British health care system that in large part accounts for the particularly high quality of health care which we achieve in this country.

I begin gladly by paying tribute to the contribution that family doctors make to the Health Service. We have spent the past 10 years increasing the numbers of those family doctors. We have increased the number of people in their support teams and expanded the service that they provide. When we return in later debates to the details of the White Paper on the wider NHS reforms which I am putting forward, I shall repeatedly emphasise the key role that we will expect GPs to play in the new National Health Service in influencing decisions on implementing provisions for the development of services and the distribution of resources in their locality as never before. Where money follows their patients, the hospitals and community services will respond to GPs and their pattern of referrals even more than they have in the past. They will be the patients' advocates and guides within the NHS even more than they have been before.

We begin, I am sure, by agreeing that the majority of general practitioners work extremely hard. Many of them are workaholics and they are certainly completely dedicated to their patients and to the NHS. In putting forward a new GP contract, my aim, which should be shared by all hon. Members, is to raise the standards of our family doctor service still higher by getting rid of the unevennesses that we all know exist from place to place. My other aim is to reward more fairly those who work most effectively in the family doctor service and to give incentives to best practice, new services and higher levels of performance wherever they are achieved.

We ought to remind ourselves throughout the debate —although we have not forgotten so far—that we are not deciding how much family doctors should be paid. That will be determined by the Government—as it always is —on the advice of the Doctors and Dentists Remuneration Review Body. Family doctors can be very well paid and deserve to be when they make the full contribution that the best undoubtedly do to the National Health Service.

These regulations and the debate look at the subject from the patient's point of view. The House is deciding whether the Government are right to specify more carefully what family doctors should be paid for in future. The effect of our decision will influence the income of individual family practitioners, because it will determine to a large extent which of them are paid more than the average net remuneration recommended by the Doctors and Dentists Remuneration Review Body and which are paid less. That will be a fair reflection of the contribution that each doctor is making and the services that he or she is providing.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that one of the practices in my constituency has set its face against increasing the patient list size? However, it has already worked out that, under the terms of the new contract, by providing the level of service it already provides, every partner in that practice will be about £4,000 better off.

Mr. Clarke: In assessing the impact on their incomes, doctors will look not only at the number of patients they have, unless they have an exceptionally low number of patients that could be expanded, but at the type of services they are providing, the targets they can hit and the new services they can add which will be encouraged by the contract because they will be better rewarded.

Why are we introducing a new contract? There has been a difficult and protracted process of consultation and negotiation. The present contract is 25 years old and its weakness is that it does not reflect the huge changes that have taken place over that quarter of a century.

We are looking back to a contract that was drawn up by a Labour Minister who eventually introduced regulations that he had been induced to draw up in the face of the threat of industrial action with which general practitioners were confronting him. It does not specify clearly what services doctors should provide. There have been many changes in the past 25 years. I will remind the House of the key changes that have taken place during the years for which we have been responsible. They underline our motives which have been challenged by the hon. Member for Livingston.

Since 1979, the number of GPs in the National Health Service has increased by 20 per cent., from 25,614 to 30,789. Those numbers are likely to continue to increase. The average list size has fallen from 2,229 in 1979 to 1,928 now and that decrease in average list size is plainly going to continue. The number of practice staff—nurses, receptionists and other support staff—that make up the primary care health team has increased by 70 per cent. since 1977. We are introducing cash limits to target that help better, and the Government have made it clear that they intend to expand those primary health care teams and increase the help available to doctors to help them expand their teams by removing some of the limits that specify the type of staff who can be employed on primary health care teams.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Some of my doctors are worried that in future they may have to justify the employment of one of those members of staff. They feel that in those circumstances it would be difficult for them to plan ahead, because they would not know what they would be planning for.

Mr. Clarke: The Government will honour the commitment into which we have always entered, to reimburse 70 per cent. of the cost of all the staff employed by GPs from the relevant date, which is next April. Thereafter, when a post falls vacant, GPs will have to notify the family practitioner committee and the committee will have to endorse the continuing need for that post. The reason for that is that 70 per cent. of the cost of those jobs is paid out of public funds, so it is only fair that when the post is renewed, somebody should be given the opportunity to confirm that it is a justified use of public expenditure. I do not envisage that the average family practitioner committee will go around cancelling nurses' posts and rejecting receptionists or practice managers. However, we cannot simply say to the GPs that they can carry on hiring whoever they want and that the family practitioner committees will write off the cost. The post should be checked as it comes up for renewal when the existing contract holder withdraws.

There have been substantial increases in the number of doctors and their support staff, and there has been a dramatic decline in average list size. The last survey also showed the effects that had had on the work load of family doctors. The last survey was carried out in 1985-86 and showed that the average family doctor worked 38 hours a week on general practice. That 38 hours included calls made by the doctor when on call. That average will strike

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all of us as low. I agree with the hon. Member for Livingston that it is easy to find general practitioners who are working many more hours than 38 a week on their practices. The reason that the figure is low is that there is a huge variation in time from one doctor to another. When one finds a doctor who says that he genuinely works double those hours, it has to be borne in mind that almost one in four of general practitioners were found to work fewer than 30 hours each week on general practice, and the remuneration system should reflect that.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): On the question of the GPs' work load, does the Secretary of State care to comment on the fact that a Doctor Kermani at a health centre in Essex has stated that the Government will give GPs more work? He is being told by the Government to give information which is normally confidential between patient and doctor on the patient's housing, employment and family problems. Is that true?

Mr. Clarke: It is not, unless the doctor has the patient's consent to do so. The doctor's comment no doubt refers to the surveying of elderly patients when they are visited. That is an extraordinary description of the service, to which I shall return in a moment. The work we are specifying is work that is being carried out in every particular by practices somewhere in the country already.

There is a great variation in the hours worked, and the remuneration should reflect that more accurately. Overall, remuneration has risen dramatically under this Government. We now have 20 per cent. more GPs.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: No, I will not give way or I shall be giving way after every other sentence.

Doctors' remuneration has increased as well. We have 20 per cent. more doctors than when we took office and the average total remuneration is up by 37·2 per cent. ahead of inflation, to £67,066. The net remuneration—I am not entering into the argument about the value to doctors of many of the indirectly and directly reimbursed expenses which, as self-employed men and women, they are also given—is up by 22·3 per cent. ahead of inflation to £31,105.

Our policy in government has been to increase the number of GPs dramatically, to increase the number of their staff, to bring down patient list sizes and to extend the range of services available by taking on nurses and support staff. We are paying doctors very much better than did the previous Government who, in their last years in office, allowed doctors' pay to drop. The numbers are continuing to rise and all those trends will continue.

Against that background, it is wholly reasonable to stipulate the patient services that we expect should be provided and to lay down some tighter stipulations about the availability to patients of individual doctors. That brings us on to consider the requirements of the contract. I described the hon. Member for Livingston as having used weasel words because he hardly addressed himself to any aspect of the contract. I suspect that, when we examine the items that we are specifying, almost all of which have been challenged by some of the GPs whose cause the hon. Gentleman is advocating, we will see that he actually agrees with them. Every time he mentioned en passant night visits or something of that kind, he accepted that. The Opposition dare not oppose the great bulk of the real content of this contract. They accept that it is in the patients' interest, and they know that they should support it.

I shall deal briefly with some of the things that even the hon. Gentleman would not have the nerve to challenge. One is the minimum 26-hour availability for patient services at times convenient to the patient. That is a minimum. Of course many doctors will be more available than that, particularly if they have large lists. A 26-hour minimum stipulation is not unreasonable for someone in full-time practice. Higher fees for night visits were agreed. Plainly, patients prefer that if they must have a night visit it should be made by a doctor whom they know or one of his partners or close colleagues. When the doctor carries out that work, it is right that he should be paid more than someone using a deputising service.

I am sure that payments for minor surgery are agreed. The new arrangements for payment of child surveillance should certainly be agreed. As I said, that provision was inserted at the request of the British Medical Association. The details were worked out with the BMA over an enormous period to reach their present stage.

We are giving a higher capitation payment to GPs for their patients over 75. When we pay that higher capitation, it is right that the GP or a member of his team, such as a practice nurse, should try annually to check the home circumstances of the elderly person. It is not enough to say, "We will pay you more for having somebody over 75 on your list whom you might know little about and see rarely." It is a reasonable stipulation to have an overall picture of how that person is coping. Somebody should visit the home and make sure that the home conditions are all right, that the patient is coping with the shopping and cooking and that, generally, nobody else's attention needs to be drawn to that elderly patient.

All those services cannot seriously be challenged. At some of the meetings I have attended, some GPs have queried the need for me to specify that they might do some of those things.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): My right hon. and learned Friend is defending his case very valiantly. Will the 26-hour availability that he mentioned for general practitioners, particularly those in large rural areas, include travelling time and not just availability in surgeries?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): He has made that concession.

Mr. Clarke: Yes, that is correct. I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). It is a concession which I made in negotiations with the GMSC. I made it largely at the behest of Conservative Back-Bench Members from rural areas who challenged me about the 20-hour requirement without travelling time for home visits—a proposition I originally made.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): On availability to patients, my right hon. and learned Friend referred to 42 weeks, which is accepted, and 26 hours. Is he aware that, if five days occur alongside the 26 hours, a general practitioner on call over a weekend will work for 12 days without a break?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out that they are required to work for 42 weeks of the year. The hon. Member for Livingston shares the problem of several of my critics—he has not read the contract. He thinks that we are slashing holidays to six weeks. Ten weeks are available, not only for holidays but for study leave and other things. Nevertheless, the six weeks have nothing to do with the contract.

On my hon. Friend's second point, yes, that can happen, but it is when the doctor chooses to be on call because he or she wants to give that service and wants to be paid more and not use a deputising service. We are not saying that they cannot use deputising services sometimes, but, when they are on call themselves because they choose to be, they should be remunerated more for those calls than for using the deputising service. That will be in the hands of the doctor.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): How does the Secretary of State propose to enforce the contract?

Mr. Clarke: The role of FPCs will be greatly enhanced. For example, on the 26 hours—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) laughs at the idea that any of this might be enforced. At least he is not claiming that it is onerous—yet that was the argument, by implication, of his hon. Friend the Member for Livingston. I am greatly strengthening the family practitioner committees because they have a duty to manage and develop primary health care services in their areas. The committees will be notified by GPs of their ordinary availability to patients. That will mean that, if someone is not making himself available for the minimum 26 hours at times that are convenient to patients, he can be challenged by the family practitioner committee.

The Opposition will not have the nerve to attack the new requirements to strengthen the activities of GPs on health promotion and disease prevention, which is an important part of our contract. Some doctors are against that, but I do not think that many members of the public oppose it. Plainly, the family doctor service is an important arm of the NHS in health promotion. As a result of the contract, when patients first register with their GP they will be offered a check-up and three-yearly check-ups thereafter. The check-ups will be fairly minimal, but will provide an opportunity to give advice on developing problems and to detect problems early.

We have also set targets for proper levels of child vaccination and for screening for cervical cancer. The targets that we have set for vaccination are those recommended by the World Health Organisation. I do not see why we, with our National Health Service, should not set ourselves the objective of attaining World Health Organisation recommendations. Targets for cervical cancer are also important and make allowance for the fact that some women may refuse such tests and some may not require them. The 50 per cent. lower and the 80 per cent. higher targets reinforce all that we have done in recent years to improve screening for cervical cancer which, I remind the House, still causes about 2,000 deaths a year, most of which are wholly avoidable.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My right hon. and learned Friend makes an extremely good point and is developing his argument carefully and constructively. What happens if a doctor does his utmost to reach the target but does not do so, through no fault of his own? Is it right that, after all the effort and time the doctor has put in, he should not receive the full remuneration?

Mr. Clarke: All doctors are paid for vaccination and for cervical cancer screening. Those things are now an ordinary part of a doctor's duties. We are talking about a kind of bonus payment for hitting particular targets. We are trying to encourage a positive effort by all doctors, which many of them now make, to advise and encourage patients to vaccinate their children or to undertake screening tests at the required intervals. There are still some doctors who challenge the requirement to drive ahead with cervical cancer screening in the way that we have suggested. I had such a challenge from a doctor yesterday. However, most doctors do not object to that.

The only argument was about how the doctors are paid. There is a big difference between paying people for each item, according to the number that they do in a year, and the system that we propose, which sets a target level at which a bonus will be paid because all the efforts of the practice have succeeded in encouraging people to take steps that are in their interests and the interests of their families.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I must press my right hon. and learned Friend on this matter. I understand that the maximum bonus could be about £1,300. That is quite an amount of money to anyone, and certainly worth earning. If a doctor contacts every patient about cervical cytology or the immunisation of children but, because of religious or other grounds, does not achieve his target, is there any reason why that doctor should not be awarded the top bonus? He has done everything possible to reach the target.

Mr. Clarke: We shall measure the effort, and someone who is making such an effort has little to fear from our targets. We do not say 100 per cent. because we anticipate that some people who have religious or personal objections, which they are entitled to have, will not wish to undergo screening tests. That is why we have gone for 90 per cent. in one case and 80 per cent. in the other. Those are reasonable targets, which should certainly be reached by the most active practices.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. I should like to get on. I am sure that this matter will be raised later, and I shall deal with it then.

When I set out the contents of the contract, I do not believe that many speeches will be made in the House—whatever letters hon. Members may have received from a few GPs—to challenge much of it. The hon. Member for Livingston, in an attempt to achieve topicality, suggested that the way in which we set about achieving that contract somehow reflects an unfortunate style on the part of the Government. Over the years, I have been engaged in the process of negotiation and consultation many times, but I have never been engaged in one that has been so tortuous and protracted as our consultations on the contract. I have not been engaged in many negotiations where I have made more concessions than I have in this respect.

The distant origins of this process lie in the time when I was Minister for Health—I am glad to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) now holds that post—and I tried to raise the

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question of improving the contract with the royal college. The process got going with the 1986 Green Paper on primary health care. The Government then held 10 public meetings in consultation on those proposals and we received more than 2,000 representations. The overwhelming tenor of those representations was that the contract should be addressed to improving health promotion and disease prevention. There was a great deal of public response and that response was channelled into the White Paper. We then had more than 100 hours of negotiation with the BMA negotiators to discuss all the points.

On 4 May, I had a long meeting with the negotiators, who are extremely tough. The hon. Member for Livingston claimed that those negotiators "rolled over". That is a surprising description given my experience of the general demeanour of the GMSC negotiators. In their opinion and in mine, however, we reached a settlement on 4 May. On behalf of the Government, I made some substantial concessions to reach that position.

I wanted to get rid of seniority allowances—I have Labour predecessors who tried to do the same—as I do not believe that they are performance-related. All they show is that one is growing older. I conceded on that, however, and so long as doctors keep their full seniority allowance, we required that people should go in for the postgraduate training allowances that we are now introducing. I conceded on the basic practice allowance figures, partly in response to arguments, which I did not altogether accept, about the impact of that allowance on women doctors. I was also pressed on the rural practice payments scheme, as I was by a number of my hon. Friends. I agreed to abandon my proposals on that, although I believe that they were advantageous to doctors living in sparsely populated areas. We have agreed to refer that matter to the central advisory committee and it will come back to us on it in due course.

Target payments are an important part of the debate, and I conceded on the lower levels of target payment. That is an important concession as, especially with vaccinations, a high proportion of practices will hit the lower target payment.

On 4 May, I proceeded on the basis of the concessions made. The negotiators then recommended the resulting agreement to their members, but, because of the internal politics of the BMA, unfortunately, all that went wrong and there was subsequent controversy about the contract. *[Interruption.]* According to the medical press, the vote was conducted in extraordinary circumstances. Long after the vote had been taken, I had meetings that were full of reasonably friendly rural doctors. They all told me that they had voted against the contract because they should be able to keep their rural practice allowance. They were astonished when I told them that we were not withdrawing that allowance. The level of knowledge, among all the campaigning, was slight.

Many of the people who forced the vote were attacking the negotiators as much as me. Given that I have had my difficult times with the negotiators I sometimes feel sympathy for them when I see the attacks upon them. Only yesterday I read *The Journal* of the Dispensing Doctors Association, which contained an editorial and an amazing article entitled "Willigo Wilson", both by Mr. Roberts and both of which attacked the chief negotiator of the GMSC, Dr. Michael Wilson. He is a pleasant and friendly man, but an extremely tough negotiator. I shall give a flavour of the type of attacks that he has faced.

The Journal suggested that "Willigo Wilson" should go because he had surrendered so miserably to the Government over the contract, and stated:

> "A further contribution to the ensuing disaster for general practitioners was that Dr. Wilson accepted that the emphasis in the fight should be almost solely on the effects of the Contract on patients".

The article set out what the themes and aims of the GMSC should be and asserted:

> "The interests of doctors and patients do not always coincide!"

Having agreed that the interests of patients should be put first, the author of the article advises Dr. Wilson:

> "I would remind him, as he splutters over his morning cornflakes, that military leaders have shot themselves for less!"

for conceding to the position reached on the contract. The editorial addresses me by saying:

> "Yes, Mr. Clarke, the 1990 Contract will hit our wallets and I am not ashamed to admit it"

I have good news for the rather unpleasant Mr. Roberts —he is wrong. As I have already said, the new contract will not hit his wallet. The rubbish in *The Journal*, which is sent to all members of the association, no doubt inspired those members to cast an unreasonable vote against the contract and to mount unreasonable attacks upon Dr. Michael Wilson. He is an honourable man who defends doctors' interests, but, to be fair to him, he also remembers the interests of patients.

To be fair to the profession, I should note that doctors have re-elected Dr. Michael Wilson, who recommended the contract to them, as their leader. We all know that feelings about the contract are fading away rapidly as individual doctors find out more about it. With stuff such as that which appeared in *The Journal* still being written I wonder who advises the Opposition. Which section of the medical profession does the Labour party listen to when it trots out all its opinions? It is obvious that that medical opinion is not speaking on behalf of patients, but on behalf of the more hot-headed members of the BMA. Such people give the Opposition an inadequate briefing so that they can make selective attacks on parts of the contract.

Mr. Robin Cook: Since the Secretary of State has been so kind as to ask who advises us, will he state just which organisation, whether medical, the BMA, one representing patients or any other organisation concerned with health policies and medical politics, supports his proposal to increase the payments by capitation fees and increase the incentive for longer patient lists? I just want the name of one organisation.

Mr. Clarke: I do not believe that what we have done increases the incentive for longer patient lists. The Labour party's approach to the Health Service debate is to talk in terms of organisations. All it needs is for a couple of trade unions and associations to give their views and the public interest, public advantage and patient interest are instantly forgotten. The hon. Gentleman cannot challenge the patient advantages of the contents of my contract. All it needs is for a trade union to oppose it and he will vote against it. He cannot argue against the public interest involved.

The hon. Gentleman claims that capitation will encourage less time to be given to each patient. The main effect of increasing the capitation element is that it will give added reward to doctors who attract and retain their patients. The idea that we should turn away patients from a particular doctor when those patients want that doctor is extraordinary. I also find it extraordinary that patients will be attracted to a list of doctors who give less and less time to each patient. That is the argument that the hon. Gentleman has tried to put together.

If a doctor has a large list, it is unlikely that he will want to increase it—a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) has already decided not to. If a doctor wants to increase his list size, however, he must attract the patients on to his list. He is more likely to attract them if he offers them more time rather than less. If a doctor already has a large list, he is unlikely to want to increase it; instead, he will consider the services offered.

At the moment, nearly a quarter of our practitioners work more than 30 hours a week. If a doctor is induced to try to expand his list, I do not believe that he will say that at least seven minutes for each patient is not available when that patient comes in for a consultation. Doctors must decide whether they will be able to put in the increased work to justify the increased list. The judgment of the attractiveness of a particular practice will be made by the patients.

I agree with *Which?* and everyone else that most patients want more time with their doctor. Therefore, the ones that offer more time are the ones most likely to attract patients. The hon. Member for Livingston has already conceded that the idea that most lists will go up is a mathematical impossibility. I advise him to talk to some of the medical lobbyists about that, because I have been unable to persuade some of them that the lists of all doctors will not rise as a result of my proposals.

The female doctors point is an important one. I am glad that the hon. Member for Livingston anticipated that I had never heard of the extraordinary sentence which he read from a publication of the Conservative Medical Society. To be fair to the society, it may have been written by an individual member; I cannot believe for one moment that it represents the policy of the CMS.

We are seeing an every-increasing number of women GPs and wish to do so. Without doubt, we shall see an increasing proportion of women GPs because, at the moment, about 40 per cent. of the trainees up and down the country are women. There are changes in the contract which make it easier to employ women. Part-time contracts are to be allowed for the first time. The valuable concept of job sharing, which professional women of this sort are perfectly capable of organising, is introduced for the first time into the family doctor service. It has been made easier to employ a locum when a women doctor is absent on maternity leave.

I have never been able to understand the argument that the contract is hostile to female doctors, unless it is argued that the contract must be so constructed that male doctors will be given a financial bonus for taking on a woman doctor. I have faced arguments in which that seems to be the proposition. The contract is so based on consumerism and patient choice that rising patient demand for more women doctors and patients' preference to go to practices with women partners will have a key effect and make career possibilities in the family doctor services ever more attractive to women.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I am near the end of my speech and shall not give way as I have taken longer than I intended in this short debate.

This contract is much more attractive than the previous one and for the Opposition to vote against it is perverse if they really mean it when they say that they are in favour of a patient-oriented service.

What if some of the details are wrong? There is not much wrong in the drafting. There should not be, because, after we had reached the 4 May agreement, the consultation at the final stage of the drafting took months. The GMC was helpful and made helpful contributions to the drafting before we reached the present stage. Parts of the contract may be wrong and it may not be exactly as planned, although I believe that the impact on consumer patient services will be beneficial.

Sooner or later, the contract may be revised when new developments in practice come along. We shall take a look at the targets and consider which other services we should be encouraging. We should not wait another 25 years before doing that. If, in a few years' time, a successor of mine decides to take another look at the GP contract and start negotiating amendments to it, I hope that he will have less of a pantomime and a farce and can make more sensible progress than I or my predecessors at the Department have been allowed to make during the past two or three years. I also hope that he faces an Opposition who at last realise that all parties should be substantially on the patient's side in the disputes about the family practitioner service.

The patient must take advantage of the contract. We have taken the opportunity to make it easier for the patient to judge practices and choose a family doctor who exactly suits his or her family. The regulations will make it easier to change doctor, and this part of the contract will come into effect earliest. From 7 November in England and Wales and 22 November in Scotland, patients will be able to change doctors simply by registering with a new one. That removes the existing need for the patient to obtain the permission of his or her present doctor or family practitioner committee. That change was opposed by the negotiators during our discussions, but we have put it in place.

Under the regulations, GPs will have to provide practice leaflets. The last letter that I received on the subject was from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell). One of his constituents wrote to me enclosing a copy of a practice leaflet that he had received. He said that this was the first time he had had any contact with his doctor for many years and thought that this was a highly desirable outcome of the discussions in which we have been engaged.

All over the country, GPs are producing leaflets and, from the information which the GPs will have to provide, family practitioner committees will produce local directories setting out the services available throughout their area. I hope that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission proposals to the profession are soon accepted, so that the information can be made available to the public, and doctors, if necessary, can promote their services, as long as they do so in a responsible and professional fashion. That will ensure that, once we have created a more consumer-oriented family doctor service, patients will be in the best possible position to take advantage of it.

[Mr. Clarke]

Therefore, I recommend the regulations to the House and ask for their endorsement. What we have done is wholly consistent with the Government's overriding objective of strengthening this vital public service and making our great National Health Service a better Health Service in relation to the family doctor service.

4.55 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The Secretary of State for Health is to be congratulated on his characteristically skilful advocacy of his case. However, in these affairs, he represents a somewhat Jekyll and Hyde character. This afternoon we have heard a different Secretary of State from the one whom we have seen and heard talking about doctors over the past few months on national television screens, on national airwaves and in the press.

When the original agreement was concluded, I sat and watched the Secretary of State on Channel 4 news. The language he used was blunt and straightforward. He said that he had won his case against the BMA. That was not the tenor of his remarks this afternoon, because he has had some time to reflect. I dare say that passions have cooled on both sides of the negotiating table, but that was his frame of mind when he first approached the matter.

The Secretary of State this afternoon was not the man who enraged medical opinion—not just professional BMA opinion, but the very patient opinion the importance of which he was at such pains to stress in the later stages of his speech today. He was not the man who, on that infamous occasion, spoke of GPs being more interested in their wallets and incomes than in patient care and patients' standard of service. He presented a different face to us this afternoon. The negotiations are complete and the Secretary of State was right to say in his concluding remarks that there are significant passages of this contract which all of those who want to see an improved National Health Service, improved accountability, choice and sensitivity towards the patient as the consumer—in the non-profit sense—would wish to embrace.

There is more than a suggestion in the behaviour and oscillations of the Secretary of State in recent months to suggest that this is one example where the Government, who have benefited so much from high-profile media advertising have, for once, found themselves at the sharp end of that type of advertising. The Government—perhaps all parties, given that we debate health issues year in and year out—have learnt an important lesson. The lesson is certainly relevant to the Government, who have been at pains to stress how much they are doing for the National Health Service, although, apparently, they are not persuading the public of that—they cannot turn around the political opinion polls on that issue.

Some of us criticise the Government year in, year out, about the damage done to the Health Service. Perhaps that has some effect in persuading public opinion. Once doctors began to tell patients of the damage and potential damage being done to the Health Service, they carried more credibility than any elected Member, and certainly any member of the Health Department, whether official or ministerial.

The rash, intemperate and thoroughly provocative approach adopted by the Secretary of State over the past few months made what would always have been a difficult, convoluted and intricate negotiation—there is no debate about that—a far worse task. In part, that was due to the deliberately provocative style adopted by the Secretary of State. To a certain extent, the Secretary of State has got his comeuppance.

Mr. Devlin: Will my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State comment on the fact that the House is substantially empty this afternoon? From what has been said, it seems that this matter should be one of great concern to hon. Members from both sides of the House. Perhaps, with the increased interest in the economy and the counter-productive propaganda put out by the doctors, particularly the BMA, which has turned hon. Members and people outside the House against the BMA, the contract which we are debating today—in which all of us are so interested—has ceased to be a controversial issue and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has won the argument.

Mr. Kennedy: I shall be generous to both sides of the House and assume that, as hon. Members can now stand in the Lobbies and watch live broadcasts of these proceedings, hundreds of hon. Members on both sides of the House are gathered round the television screens hanging on to every word of those contributing.

I saw for the first time today an example of "doughnutting", whereby the few Opposition Members present congregated around their Front-Bench spokesman. We also had a little bit of that around the Secretary of State, but there was a bigger hole in the middle. *[Interruption.]* I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) has just joined me. I am sure that hon. Members will agree that he makes a convincing doughnut. Let us put down the somewhat meagre attendance to the televising of our proceedings.

If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the heat has gone out of the issue, he is somewhat misguided. When the new Session begins later this month and the new Health Service legislation is introduced, he will find that, although the contract issue will be over from a legislative point of view, the rumblings and knock-on effects will be with us for some time.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kennedy: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I will not give way, as many hon. Members wish to speak.

As one would expect, the Secretary of State referred to capitation fees and to the effect of likely increases in list sizes, which he dismissed. It is important to mention that both salary and allowances are included in the capitation element of a GP's income. The Secretary of State has been tempted to reflect the tendency on the part of the press to total all the available allowances plus the salary of Members of Parliament and say that that is our effective gross income. The Secretary of State has been slightly guilty of that at times, but it is not fair.

The capitation element will increase from 46 per cent. to 60 per cent. Much as the Secretary of State may try to reject or counter the argument, the near-certain effect of that will be to increase list sizes. Surely it is not desirable for GPs, who should be spending more time with their present patients, to end up spending rather less time with more patients.

The Secretary of State tried to counter that, particularly in response to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), by talking about the extension of the range of services and how that would make general practice more attractive. I welcome further information for patients and the greater ease with which patients will now be able to change from one surgery to another, although that is much overdue. But the logic of the funding arrangements that the Secretary of State is modifying under the new contract is that the greater the demand for the range of services being provided by a given practice, the greater will be the increase in the list size and the less time there will be available for each patient. I do not see how the Secretary of State can make the kind of case that he attempted to make in a rather mollifying way this afternoon and at the same time be consistent on the arguments that he is otherwise praying in aid for the new contract.

The Secretary of State referred to immunisation and the system of bonuses in the new contract, with lower bonuses for 70 per cent. vaccinations and 50 per cent. smears, and higher bonuses for 90 per cent. vaccinations and 80 per cent. smears. A key consideration here is how one defines a target population, as the Government have been at pains to do. That is particularly true in areas of rapid population change, not least in the inner cities.

The clear evidence of the Black report's in-depth analysis of take-up levels and health deprivation shows how difficult it is to get through to the very target groups that one is trying to reach on matters such as immunisation, preventive medicine and recall facilities. All too often it is likely to be the more socially confident, the better educated, those with slightly better incomes and so on, who take advantage of any additional facilities that are offered. Despite the best efforts of GPs, health authorities and the Department of Health, the people who are considered to be the most vulnerable, and so the most valuable to reach, are missed as a result of the demographic and practical difficulties that the Government are trying to address.

A great deal needs to be done to overcome problems created by lack of knowledge and fear about, for example, immunisation. It is clear that the Government have a major role to play in health education. The rather worrying suggestion that has emanated from the Secretary of State, not so much this afternoon as on previous occasions, is that almost all the responsibility for that can be landed in the front line at the feet of the general practitioners.

In deprived areas, or among the more deprived categories of the population, the direct patient-doctor contact may come only at the point of acute illness. In the build-up period, where preventive measures could be taken rather than waiting for the crisis, intervention and cure, all too often related social conditions, such as housing or the environment generally, play a stronger part than the general practitioners in the front line. The Secretary of State has given insufficient attention to that fact.

Mr. Devlin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. Representing, as I do, part of inner-city Teesside, I am, like him, concerned about this matter. A point that he has omitted to mention, which he might like to consider, is the additional funding that will go to GPs under the Jarman index of social deprivation, which is one of the new features of the contract. Will he also comment on the new system of visiting and inspection for the over-75s, a particular target group which is often overlooked in inner-city areas?

Mr. Kennedy: The Secretary of State said that the measures taken for the over-75s meet with general approval, and they have not been a source of any serious or significant contention. They are to be welcomed. I have no criticism of that. That section of the population will grow as people live longer, more active and healthier lives, and that is a welcome trend. Therefore, those measures do not go to the heart of today's debate.

With regard to social deprivation and the indices that can be used to show it, we have still not overcome the fundamental difficulty that Black discovered, to which I referred earlier. The problem will not necessarily be conquered by a simple statistical change. An increase in the range of services, material on those services and increased patient choice in the GP's surgery cannot be expected to overcome fundamental social problems which prevent people from going to the GP's surgery until illness strikes, as a result of ignorance, lack of education and counselling from an early age, when most of the interface can and should take place with the family doctor service. That fundamental difficulty cannot be overcome without going much futher than the measure we are discussing this afternoon.

I do not wish to detain the House, so I shall conclude with one issue which the Secretary of State mentioned towards the end of his speech—the position of female general practitioners. He was quite right to mention the increase in the number of women GPs, which has almost doubled in the past 10 years. They now represent 22 per cent. of all general practitioners in Britain and 25 per cent. of general practitioners under the age of 40. The demographic shift is most apparent and is to be welcomed.

The Government claim to welcome that development and say that they want to encourage that trend. The primary care White Paper referred to

> "special arrangements to attract women to General practice and to encourage their appointment to the vacancies which occur".

That is a noble sentiment indeed, and I do not think that there is much disagreement on that until we look at the contract. The likely effect of the new contract will be exactly the opposite of encouraging more women GPs into the Health Service, particularly because of the inbuilt disincentives it offers to part-time and flexible working arrangements.

I shall cite just one example. At present, on average, a part-time female GP brings about £15,000-worth of allowances by joining a general practice. If the practice pays her £18,000 which, on average figures, is about one third of a senior partner's annual salary, the practice is getting about 20 hours a week for an annual net outlay of £3,000 per year. Under the new arrangements, that female GP is likely to bring £6,000 or less in basic practice allowances, so there will be a major and significant shortfall, which represents an equally major and significant disincentive. The cost of employing her will therefore be much greater and the likely result is that, instead of additional part-time, flexible working arrangements being available as the Government claim and wish to enhance, the opportunities for female general practitioners will contract as GPs do exactly as the

[Mr. Kennedy]

Secretary of State says that they will not do, and build up their lists to make up for the financial shortfall which will occur. The contract is a discriminatory measure in that cardinal respect.

As I said earlier, many aspects of the contract are to be welcomed and carry all-party support. But there are also major aspects which have been thoroughly divisive and have not been helped by the belligerence with which the Secretary of State has pursued his case. In his previous post at the Department of Health, he was the only Minister I have ever come across who thought that BMA was a four-letter word. As soon as he came into any contact with that organisation, he seemed to adopt a most intransigent attitude and decide that it must be gloves off. On this occasion, when the BMA took the gloves off, he began to bleat and complain in a rather plaintive fashion. One does not normally associate bleating with the Secretary of State, but we shall give him the benefit of the doubt.

Generally, the motives behind the contract cannot be divorced from the motives involved in the broader issues arising from the White Paper and the legislation which will follow. Despite those areas in which significant progress has been made and which are not the subject of partisan disagreement this afternoon, it is clear that the basic motivation is the reduction of medical costs within a political context to suit the whims of the Prime Minister much more than to suit the priorities of the patients.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Would the hon. Gentleman care to point out one respect in which the contract will reduce costs?

Mr. Kennedy: Reduction in costs will occur in the very last example which I cited, relating to female GPs. That is a cost reduction in terms of the employment of those general practitioners and in terms of the availability of employment for female GPs. That is an obvious example.

The motto should be "people first" in health care. Sadly, it is proving increasingly to be "cash first, people last", and on this occasion the profession, in a rather muted sense, is somewhere in between as a result of the contract.

5.15 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I do not know whether the speech of the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) meant that his minuscule party will be voting for the motion. If that is his intention, he will be voting against a large number of excellent provisions for patients and doctors.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is not only a much-maligned man, but a most unfairly maligned one. His opponents use every trick in the book to twist his words and muddy his intentions. I thought that he was being exceptionally mild and magnanimous when he told the Conservative party conference:

> "I do not think the BMA have been trying to be entirely helpful."

Mr. Devlin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dame Jill Knight: No, I wish to get into my speech first.

I thought that the description by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye of my right hon. and learned Friend's attitude towards the BMA was not accurate. I thought that, when my right hon. and learned Friend most recently expressed his views on the BMA, he was being rather sweet. If that was an accurate comment on the recent activities of the BMA, I tremble to contemplate how members of the BMA would behave if they were trying to be unhelpful.

I do not think that my right hon. and learned Friend's comment was accurate. The BMA has not only been obstructive, but has been intentionally misleading, putting the fear of God into elderly, sick and nervous people in the consulting rooms of its members. I find that very difficult to forgive. Members of the BMA have distributed leaflets which they must have known, not to put too fine a point on it, contained blatant lies. They misled people over the Health Service review and they are doing it now over a contract which is good for doctors and excellent for patients.

It will be excellent that the over-75s will have an improved service. Elderly people are well aware that many of their aches and pains are due to age, but I have heard of frequent cases where doctors hurriedly dismissed those aches and pains without checking. A great deal can be done to improve the hearing, sight and general comfort even of the elderly, and an annual check-up is exactly what they need.

I like the plans to improve health promotion clinics, immunisation and screening for cancer. I am interested in the women's national cancer control campaign. Now, due to the new contract, it is coming on stream with more energy than ever. I approve of regular assessments of the development of children. That used to be done far more than it is today by the ordinary school medical service; there have been gaps in that and I am pleased that it is clearly stated that children are to have regular assessments.

I am glad that there will be additional staff in the surgeries, especially chiropodists and physiotherapists. That is a new and good idea——

Ms. Harman: It is not new.

Dame Jill Knight: It is certainly a new idea to encourage all doctors to have such people in their surgeries. I will not answer any more sedentary interventions from hon. Members who do not know the whole position. These additional people are to be the rule rather than the exception.

It is sensible that doctors should be available to patients on an eyeball-to-eyeball basis for at least 26 hours a week. We appreciate that they work more hours than that because of travelling time, filling in forms and so on, but it is excellent that this improved service for patients is to be introduced.

So much for the way that the contract helps patients, but there is also a great deal that it will do to help doctors. The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye claimed that my right hon. and learned Friend said that general practitioners received an average of £65,000 per year—

Mr. Kennedy: I did not.

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Gentleman said that the sum quoted did not include expenses.

Mr. Kennedy: I said that when the Secretary of State referred to the total gross income of general practitioners, he was adding together salaries and allowances. I drew a comparison with the way in which members of the press talk about Members' salaries. They add up office allowances, living allowances and salaries and make people think that we are millionaires. Some Conservative Members are millionaires, but some of us most definitely are not.

Dame Jill Knight: That is exactly the point that I am trying to make. As usual, the hon. Gentleman is wrong. My right hon. and learned Friend has always said that the sum of about £67,000 per annum includes expenses—

Mr. Kennedy: Sotto voce.

Dame Jill Knight: That is not true. I have my right hon. and learned Friend's press release, which clearly states that the sum includes all expenses. A press release cannot be sotto voce. Indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend has been fair in his remarks about average expenses.

For the first time, doctors will receive specific payments for carrying out certain duties such as minor surgery in their surgeries. It is a good and useful service because it alleviates the work load on hospitals, but previously doctors have not received a specific payment for that work. They will also receive payments for health surveillance and health promotion.

It is worth uttering a word or two on the subject of postgraduate education allowances. Although some doctors go to great lengths to keep abreast of all medical developments, others do not. There is to be an allowance to encourage doctors to keep up to date. There will also be increased payments for night visits—I hope that the Opposition favour that. Necessary improvements to doctors' premises will also attract specific payments, and there will be an increase in capitation fees.

One matter that worries me is the proposed supplement for every patient living in an area of deprivation. Not all needy people live in such areas. Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend would say a few words about what "area of deprivation" will actually mean. Does it mean that doctors will receive additional payments for looking after people who live at certain addresses in rundown inner-city areas? Part of my constituency is an outer-city area, and people ignore the fact that, for example, there are more one-parent families in that part of Birmingham than there is in the inner city. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will bear that in mind and think not only of where the patient lives, but the extent of his need. I appreciate that that is not always easy to delineate.

Under the contract, it will be easier for patients to change doctors. There will be much less bureaucracy and patients can just turn up at a surgery and ask to be put on a doctor's list. I am sure that all hon. Members know of vexatious patients. Some doctors will have to have those patients on their lists. If a doctor says that he does not want them on his list any longer, they are passed around like a parcel. Under the contract, will a doctor have the right to say that he does not want a particular patient on his list? That needs to be clarified.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to repeat, in every speech, the following points—even though he and I know that they should be superfluous: first, that he has an unwavering and inflexible commitment to the principles of the NHS; secondly, that he believes in an NHS funded largely out of taxation giving free medical treatment to everyone regardless of means; and thirdly, that not for one moment will he contemplate privatising the NHS.

Repetition may be boring, but some people have such thick heads that only by repetition can we get the right ideas into them. We must continue to repeat the truth. I am sick and tired of listening to accusations against the Government and Ministers that they want to privatise the NHS. Anyone who listened to the words that are used would know perfectly well that the allegations are untrue. All the attacks, all the aggro, all the unfairness will not, I hope, deter my right hon. and learned Friend from continuing to improve the NHS. Of one thing I am certain: he will go down in history as having been a great, reforming and improving Secretary of State.

5.29 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I should like to ask the Secretary of State a number of questions. Let me say first, however, that all the general practitioners in my constituency to whom I have spoken—and most have approached me—have said that they want the Secretary of State to know that his contract stinks. It is absurd for any hon. Member to say that the BMA executive supported the right hon. and learned Gentleman; anyone who knows anything about negotiation will be aware that there is a difference between expressing support and telling the membership, "This is the best that we can offer."

The question of changing doctors worries me. It is easy for the Secretary of State to say that if a patient turns up at a doctor's surgery he must take that patient on. In London, chronic traffic congestion means that it can take hours to cross from south to north; if a GP whose surgery is in the north-east takes on a patient who lives in the south-west, emergency call-outs are bound to be a problem. As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edbaston (Dame J. Knight) pointed out, patients can be vexatious, and, unfortunately, some are even deranged. Such a patient might deliberately pick a GP whose surgery is on the other side of the map, just to be awkward.

I did not oppose parental choice in regard to schools, but it has nevertheless thrown up numerous problems. Excellent school buildings are half empty, and the Government are taking no steps to find out why. It is all very well for them to say that parents are still making up their minds; we have expensive buildings to keep up.

While Springburn was being redeveloped, it took us about 10 years to establish a health centre that is now second to none. We managed to persuade doctors to leave their converted shops in the high street and to provide the community with chiropody—notwithstanding what the hon. Member for Edgbaston said about that—as well as eye tests, dental checks, nursing sisters and a chemist, all under one roof.

A large health centre may contain six or seven practices. Let us say that some of those doctors are not attracting patients, and that their existing patient lists are dwindling. The Secretary of State may say that the patients are switching to other practices within the centre, but let us assume that they are going elsewhere. In such circumstances, a conscientious doctor will have to pay higher overheads because of the new contract.

I know that the patient is all-important, and that he has the right to decide. If I did not like my doctor I should want to leave his practice. If, however, overheads must be spread among fewer doctors, what help will the Government give? What help will they provide when patients who quite enjoyed visiting a health centre are cut off from it by a new road, and the doctors' list suddenly

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becomes smaller? Conservative Members shake their heads, but patients in my constituency have decided to stop visiting their health centre because the road is too dangerous to negotiate, and doctors are losing patients through no fault of their own.

The Secretary of State mentioned preventive care. In a middle-class community where people are relatively well off, a woman who becomes pregnant is more than likely to want first of all to find out about pre-natal care. In parts of my constituency, however, conscientious doctors know that, unless they go out and knock on the doors of women who have been housed under a "difficult to let" scheme, such women will not obtain the care they need.

We have been told that deprived areas are to receive an allowance. Bureaucrats, however, are terrific at drawing a line around an area on the map and designating it an area of deprivation in which a supplement is payable. An affluent area may contain one or two deprived streets, and the local doctor will know that he must visit the neighbourhood himself if he wants to obtain patients. I hope that we shall be told tonight that that will not happen.

The Secretary of State must be aware that, in areas of high unemployment, the problems for practitioners are getting worse and worse. Most people are visiting their surgeries suffering from depression because they are out of work; wives, too, arrive complaining about the pressures put on family life. I worry about the way in which the Government seem to think that practices should be run like nice, efficient businesses. A GP's work is not like a job churning out alarm clocks, for instance, in which payment is made for results. The Government's proposals will mean that the more sympathetic the doctor, and the more prepared he is to listen to patients, the fewer patients he will have.

A year ago, my wife had a serious operation. Two members of the local practice had said, "I will give you a prescription; you will be all right then." The third listened. He made an appointment with a consultant, and my wife obtained the necessary operation—from which, thankfully, she has now recovered. But what would have happened if all three doctors had been under pressure, and had not listened? A doctor who sits signing a prescription while the patient is still talking does not inspire confidence. *[Interruption.]* I did not hear what the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown) just said, and I do not approve of the practice of speaking from a sedentary position.

When the Secretary of State glibly talks about choice and says that patients can move, he forgets that, even if they are dissatisfied, elderly patients may not be able to get around as well as they did when they were 30 or 40 years old so they may have to content themselves with the local practice. He must know that in many inner-city areas, our communities are getting older. That puts a burden on GPs. In areas where the community is young and upwardly mobile, a GP may have only a few elderly patients while in other areas where the community is becoming ever more elderly, he may have many. Comparisons must be made and allowances built into the system.

I heard what the Minister said about the emergency doctor service. I do not knock that service, even though it is privatised. I would rather have a doctor in the surgery who is fresh then a doctor who had answered four or five calls the night before. We should examine the deputising service and in some cases encourage it, provided that the doctor does not lose contact with his patients or simply take the easy option. Doctors in the deputising service go out with a driver. Doctors may be afraid to go to areas with a high level of crime and drug problems. There have already been reports of assaults on doctors. Doctors have been called out by a bogus caller and assaulted for their drugs when they arrived in the street where they were expected. At least if doctors go on emergency calls with a driver, they will have some back-up.

I hope that the Minster for Health will examine thoroughly all the matters to which I referred, particularly the problems in inner-city areas, and that she and her colleagues will see that there are vast differences even within tightly knit communities.

5.42 pm

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): I deeply regret having to speak and vote against the regulations. I do not vote against my party lightly, particularly on an issue that involves my family, whom I try to keep out of politics. However, occasionally one must do what one believes is right.

I declare an interest immediately and it proves that I know something about general practice. My wife has been a general practitioner for over 25 years, initially in the inner-city area of Hackney in London and for the past 16 years in Bedfordshire. At the Conservative party conference in Blackpool in 1973 she received a phone call asking her to stand in on an emergency basis in Biggleswade because there was a shortage of GPs. Blackpool conferences were different then. In those days people were allowed to speak against the motion and the debates were not fixed as they were this year. In those days speakers knew and worked in the National Health Service. This year we listened to a doctor who did not work in the National Health Service telling us how marvellous the proposed reforms were. I found that cheeky. Moreover, I understand that he is not particularly successful in private practice.

I have several other interests to declare. I have been a member of the Public Accounts Committee for the past 10 years and the member of that Committee who has asked the most questions about the National Health Service. The health side of what was the Department of Health and Social Security hardly covered itself in glory in the past 10 years. I expect that my colleagues on the Committee will agree that it is not an exaggeration to say that it was probably the most badly organised Department in the Civil Service. Perhaps now that we have an independent Department of Health, that will change. It certainly needs to do so. I also serve on the Council of Europe's health committee and I advise two pharmaceutical companies. I think that I can claim to know at least as much as the Secretary of State about the National Health Service.

The negotiations for the new contract have followed a familiar pattern. First, the Department issued a set of proposals. The Secretary of State has often been at pains to tell us how long the negotiations have lasted. After all this time and with so many civil servants and officials who are doctors in the Department, one would think that the initial cockshy would be somewhere near a contract that would be acceptable to all parties. But what did we have in February? We had far-reaching proposals for changing both the terms of service and the remunerative system of general practice. My hon. Friends seem to forget the juxtaposition of those factors.

The changes in the terms of service—one of the key platforms—were to include no opting out of the 24-hours-a-day cover, which is right, and direct consultation in the surgery for at least 20 hours per week spread over five days. The Department seemed to forget about home visits. Doctors were to be required to live within a reasonable but undefined distance of the surgery. Several other conditions, which are well known to my colleagues, included regular medical assessments, practice leaflets, and production of annual reports. I listened to my colleagues with some incredulity. I wonder how many of them have read the statutory instrument issued by the Department of Health which sets down the required content of annual reports. They are to be long. Perhaps some of us should write a similar annual report for our constituents. [HON. MEMBERS: "We do, every four years."] Some of us do it more often than annually. Changes in the percentage of the square footage of a surgery devoted to the reception, surgery or nurses' surgery cannot be of the least relevance. Other questions have to be answered in the annual report, the purpose of which is questionable. Family practitioner committees will have to be informed of other professional commitments. That is perfectly fair.

The changes to the remuneration system altered 50 per cent. of the revenue of an average GP's practice. The Department was not simply tinkering at the fringes of the regulations; it introduced a wholesale change in remuneration. Out went seniority, group practice allowance, vocational training allowance, postgraduate training allowance, supplementary basic practice allowance, supplementary capitation, cervical cytology fees and child immunisation fees. On top of that, the basic practice allowance, night visit fees and rural practice payments were changed. That is a long list. In came capitation fees of 60 per cent. We have all heard a great deal about advisers in recent weeks. Advisers have suggested that 60 per cent. will be only the start. Will it be 70 per cent. in a few years' time and 80 per cent. a few years later? My hon. Friend the Minister must state that 60 per cent. will be the maximum and that it will not be changed.

The proposals state that in order to receive full remuneration a doctor must have 1,500 patients, reach cervical cytology and immunisation targets, provide annual check-ups for the over-75s, medicals for newly registered patients and medical assessments every three years for patients aged 16 to 74, undertake minor surgery, organise health promotion clinics, establish staff training, produce a practice leaflet, provide an annual report, accept child surveillance responsibilities, attend specified postgraduate training sessions and carry out night visits on a practice roster.

It does not end there. Last year, I was happy to support the changes to fees and allowances that were incorporated in the Health and Medicines Act 1988. I have long believed that that element of GP work should be cash-limited. However, this afternoon my right hon. and learned Friend said that there will be a review not just of new ancillary staff but of existing staff. When a nurse leaves a practice, the family practitioner committee will have the right to say to the doctor, "You may not have another nurse." I very much hope that that dimension, which has not been highlighted, will be dropped.

The Health and Medicines Act also contains provisions relating to isolated general practices and computerisation. The Bill that will come before the House in a few months' time will impinge on general practice. The main items for discussion are practice budgets for those with over 11,000 patients, particularly drug budgets, the medical audit and the recomposition and reorganisation of the FPCs. Each will lead to a new list of proposals before their introduction.

Throughout the summer months there was negotiation under duress. I met the Secretary of State several times. By August, there was a second edition of the contract. Seniority payments were mixed up with postgraduate allowances and seniority payments. The new two-tier system relating to cervical cytology and child immunisation is to be welcomed, but it is compulsory and will create problems in towns and cities that have large ethnic populations. That issue must be addressed.

Promises were made about rural practice payments, adjustments to the basic practice allowance and transitional payments to help small practices. That is greatly to be welcomed. The point that I made in an intervention about the 26 hours and five days need to be examined. The majority of general practices do not have access to a standby deputising service. It is all very well for hon. Members with inner-city seats to assume that all general practices have a deputising service. In many areas of the country they do not. It cannot be right, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) said, that any general practitioner should be on call for 12 days before he gets a break.

All this starts on 1 April 1990. The White Paper proposals to which I referred start a year later. That, by any yardstick, is a pretty tight timetable. It would have been better to roll it out as we went along, but my right hon. and learned Friend has decided otherwise. All these changes to the terms of service will have to be brought about in each surgery in fewer than six months. What other business would be expected to face a 50 per cent. change in its revenue within six months?

Family doctors are already busy people, as are their ancillary staff, but they will have to modernise and introduce computers. What, however, are the facts? Only 25 per cent. of general practices are fully computerised, and only a tiny percentage of FPCs have packages available to control everything from the other end. Those of us who are involved in health matters have received a mailing shot about an argument between the Department of Health and the private companies that are producing the software for the 25 per cent. of general practices that use computers. If something is to be up and running by next April, there should be no argument about who owns the software, with the GPs perhaps having to buy it off the particular company involved. I hope that when she winds up, the Minister for Health will deal with that point. It is absolutely central to getting everything moving by 1 April 1990.

All these changes are supposed to produce value for money, but can one find the figures? The only figure that I have found in either the first or second edition of the contract is the 50 per cent. reduction in the benefit that is to be paid to general practitioners. That is on record. As soon as the terms of service are in writing—I shall be grateful to know whether they are yet in writing and whether the red book has been updated—they will have to be priced by the review body. I hope that the statement of

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fees and allowances will be available by 1 January 1990. Every practice is making its plans which will come into effect on 1 April, so I hope that the Minister will confirm that the statement of fees and allowances will be published by 1 January 1990.

There have been many changes to the administrative and clinical system. GPs can do without the additional problem of having to speculate about revenue. No one should be expected to negotiate for half the final package just on faith. Is the Minister able to say what the cost of the changes will be? I know that the Public Accounts Committee, of which I am a member, will investigate that question with interest. It is only right that we should have the Government's forecast of the cost of the changes.

Very welcome though the new Minister for Health is at the Department, she will have to tighten things up a bit. Following the imposition of the agreement, we know that the directives on the national priorities for family practitioner committees arrived weeks late. I am glad to see that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has returned to the Treasury Bench. He promised to give general practitioners six months' notice of any changes. We are five months away from implementation of the scheme, so we have already lost a month.

I deplore the abuse that has been showered on hard-working general practitioners—in my constituency and by my friends. Equally, I deplore the British Medical Association's advertising campaign. I spent 20 years in advertising. The BMA should fire its agents.

I also deplore the assertion that GPs earn about £65,000 a year. That figure includes staff salaries, medical supplies and their share of medical premises expenses. They are not minor items. The taxable figure is £31,105. No Member of Parliament would expect his or her salary to be judged on a basis that included the secretarial allowance. Commentators such as Dr. Vernon Coleman in *The Sun* are being mischievous when they suggest a higher figure.

I deplore the lack of time, the bureaucracy that has been imposed on general practitioners, the unreality of the annual report and the intrusion into certain patients' lives, just to meet an arbitrary target. It will undermine the long-standing doctor-patient relationship which has never hitherto been based on financial considerations. That relationship is in danger of being changed. The new contract that is being imposed on GPs will not aid or improve general practice.

The passing of the regulations will be sad for general practitioners. General practice is the one part of the National Health Service that is admired the world over. The pressure that the new bureaucratic contract forces on GPs must mean that they will have less time for patients, and hence patient care. All the surveys show that every patient wants more time, not less, with his doctor. I fear that doctors who traditionally have counselled and consoled the bereaved will be forced to reduce some of that work.

This is not the freer, caring society for which I thought the Conservative party stood. I regard this as a bureaucratic system imposed from above, and I think that it should be rejected.

6 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): I should like to begin by quoting from a letter sent to me by Dr. Michael Wilson, who is chairman of the general medical services committee of the BMA. It puts a rather different perspective on his views from that rather misleadingly given by the Secretary of State. It says:

> "For the first time in the history of the health service, a Secretary of State has decided to impose his own contractual terms. There are some desirable components, but there are also important elements which are misguided and ill-conceived, for example, the target payments for immunisation and cervical cytology, and the shift towards a more capitation based payments system. Attached to this letter are more details of our views on these elements.
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> There have been misleading reports in the media that general practitioners would be taking industrial action as a result of this imposition. I deplore the fact that the public may have been disturbed in any way by these reports, and have written to the Secretary of State to make it clear that the BMA was not responsible for this press speculation.
>
> At a recent meeting, the Committee decided firmly against any form of action which would be damaging to patients. In order to protect patients' interests, which remain paramount, and to sustain general practice in the NHS for the future, we will subject key aspects of the contract to a careful audit to provide us with information on the contract's defects and the problems arising from its imposition."

That paints a different picture from the one that the Secretary of State attempted to paint this afternoon.

I support most of the principles and motives underlying the contract, although I disagree profoundly with some of the changes proposed, which have not been properly thought out and will almost certainly damage rather than enhance the primary care service. The Secretary of State was good enough to acknowledge that we probably have the best primary care service in the world. We must remember that it is run very cost-effectively and that it takes only 7 per cent. of total resources devoted to health care.

There are two underlying objectives for the new contract, both of which are laudable. The first is to improve the health experience of the population, and the second is to provide a better and more uniform service. It is essential to consider the new contract in the context of the Health and Medicines Act 1988 and the Government's proposals in "Working for Patients", which contain a third objective, again with which I do not disagree, of cost containment to exert downward pressure on the inexorable increase in health care costs year on year. It does the Secretary of State no credit to suggest that that is not the case. He should defend honestly that laudable objective.

We are trying to make the service more cost-effective, and there is no doubt that the health of the British people needs to be improved. The Government have targeted immunisation in childhood and cervical screening of adult women. We now immunise against polio and diphtheria —fortunately, mainly diseases of the past—whooping cough, measles and mumps, which sadly are still subject to regular epidemics, and rubella, which is a mild disease in itself but which has horrendous consequences for the next generation if a pregnant woman has the misfortune to have an attack. Massive improvements have been made over the past decade or two. Better vaccines are available, so therefore much of the fear and prejudice associated with vaccines, particularly whooping cough vaccine, has been overcome, and there have been tremendous improvements in the methods by which we ensure that the service is delivered to its target population. The same applies to cervical screening, which is responsible for thousands of preventable deaths every year. The failure of the present system to prevent those deaths is a national disgrace.

There is no doubt that, nationally, there is wide variation in the quality and standard of primary care and, regrettably in its accessibility. It is over a decade since Knox and others in the Dundee department of geography commented on this mismatch between the siting of GP practices in the centre of towns and the siting of the population on the periphery. Sadly, much of that problem has not yet been corrected. Housing schemes are ill-provided with basic services and do not have regular transport links to surgeries, and many people who live in them are on low incomes. I accept that inner London has particular problems that are the equal of those in smaller cities. That raises the first anomaly, because without a major effort to tackle the twin problems of multiple deprivation and poverty, all the Secretary of State's efforts in the contract are doomed to failure.

I do not propose to repeat the comments made by the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) on the detailed proposals of the contract. I have the greatest sympathy for the hon. Gentleman's predicament tonight, and I welcome his rational opposition to the proposals. I see several critical deficiencies in the Secretary of State's proposals, which negate the good intentions of his objectives. He grossly understates the importance of collective, rather than individual, action in health care. That has been a major failing of the Government's philosophical approach to society since they took office, so we should not expect them to change their approach on health care.

There are long-standing deficiencies in the present service that the Secretary of State has failed to tackle, such as the fragmentation of responsibility for the community's health between district health authorities and family practitioner committees. The Minister should learn from the far superior administrative system in Scotland, where one health board is responsible for each area and provides a single coherent purpose to health care, which is sadly lacking south of the border. I shall give some examples from my county of Fife, which is a mixed agricultural and industrial region and which in many areas has massive problems associated with the recent loss of the mining industry. We have immunisation rates of well over 90 per cent. and a target of immunising 100 per cent. of children who are able to take the vaccine over the next few years.

The successful introduction of the new measles, mumps and rubella immunisation, which was piloted in the county over the past three years, is being followed in other counties and again has achieved high target success. There are lower, but still rising, figures for whooping cough. Over 75 per cent. of children are immunised against it, which compares favourably with other areas. We are proud of that success story, but it is the product of an enormous collective effort by GPs, health visitors, the community health service, health education and effective and enthusiastic leadership from the health board. The service is underpinned by an equally effective computerised call-up system, without which we would not have a hope of reaching the target population.

On cervical screening, there is a collective commitment to improving the take-up of the service, backed up by research into why women fail to attend for screening, despite beng sent an appointment and despite it having been followed up. Those facilities are starting to pay off in higher take-up rates.

Our GPs need no further incentive to improve their rates. They do not need bonus payments, which they will attract anyway because of the level of service that they are providing. They have been given the tools, support and leadership of the health board; they require no further incentive than their professional pride to ensure that standards are maintained.

Why has the Minister failed to benefit from our experience in Fife? Why is he introducing an untried alternative when there is such a patently successful system north of the border? There is no guarantee that the system that he has introduced will succeed, and he has produced no evidence to suggest that he has any expectation other than his own prejudice to support it. Are the Minister and his Department blind? Are they unable to see it? Can they not afford the eye tests which they brought in last year? Without an efficient system, the best GPs will be unable to meet their targets. The Minister's proposal is doomed before it is introduced, and he fails to realise that.

The second factor that obstructs the Minister's good intentions is the nature of the primary care system. GPs are self-employed, and that is one reason for the vast variation in standards which they apply. They can choose what level of service to give.

I thought it was a bit rich of the Minister, in reply to my earlier intervention, saying that GPs signing a contract was all that was required for family practitioner committees to ensure the proper level of service was provided.

I assure the Minister that GPs, as with any other body of people, vary in the quality of service that they give. I cannot see the FPCs following them around to see how long they spend in the car as a proportion of their 26 hours of patient commitment per week, or to see whether they finish surgery early because they are going to the golf course or somewhere else. Without a proper monitoring system, how can one say that the contract will be properly enforced?

Many GPs have a captive population of patients who are prevented, for geographical reasons, from moving to another doctor. There are few teeth in the contract to improve that.

Why does not the Minister look at the option of a salaried service in areas which have difficulty in providing a service under the present system? Why is there such a deafening silence about medical audit? I know why—it is so difficult to bring in.

Although I am a member of the medical profession, I have been a stern critic of it for the past 20 years and I have a stronger track record than the "Johnny-come-latelies" on the Conservative Benches who criticise only when they see that their own political futures could be damaged.

The Secretary of State professes to recognise the problem of working in deprived inner-city areas. Has he recognised that inner-city GPs earn well below his much-touted average earnings, let alone the combined salary that the popular press has quoted so frequently or even the average target taxable earning. We know of GPs whose take-home pay is less than £1,000 a month. Averages blur the difference between them and GPs who earn fat salaries, mostly in the home counties and in other areas where there are plenty of extra perks and extra fees to be earned. There are not many fat salaries to be earned in Tower Hamlets or in the centre of London. I can tell the

[Dr. Lewis Moonie]

Minister that for a start. GPs there cannot afford nice premises, even if the buildings are available and if one takes into consideration the percentage of the cost which the Government so generously provide—70 per cent. I can assure the Minister that 30 per cent. of £1,000 will not provide much in the way of premises in the centre of London.

Any allowances that the Secretary of State proposes for deprived city areas will go no way towards solving those problems. GPs in those areas cannot find suitable staff to work for them. It is not a question of not being able to pay them. One of the reasons why they use deputising services so frequently, as other right hon. and hon. Members have said, is that it is unsafe for them to visit many parts of the area after dark. They cannot afford to employ a driver as a bodyguard and the police are no help as they refuse to accompany them. At least with a deputising service there is a nice large driver sitting in the car downstairs to provide some form of back-up. This is another problem in the delivery of health care which is not being tackled.

It is easy for us to say that we have noble intentions with the contract, and that as long as GPs all work hard it will be all right. It will not. We have to change the system within which GPs are trying to operate; otherwise, we will not be able to change the result of what they do.

The Department of Health seems to be incapable of conducting the most elementary investigation in the real world in which GPs have to operate. The Department is bloated—although not quite so bloated as it was earlier this afternoon—by a large increase in the number of people that it employs directly in central services.

The saddest failure of these proposals is the change in the balance of remuneration between basic practice allowance and capitation fees. That will penalise the better GP who knows, because he or she faces the fact every working day, that a better, more comprehensive service is possible only with fewer patients. It is not so much that there will be a tendency for a bad GP, who gives a poor service, to attract as many patients as possible on to his or her list, as that a good GP, who wishes to reduce the number of patients on the list, will be unfairly penalised by the reduction in basic practice allowance and the move towards a larger capitation fee—unless the capitation fee is much larger than the Minister anticipates.

If GPs wish to engage another partner to provide a better service, they will suffer a catastrophic fall in income. Why has the Department of Health failed to set proper targets for list sizes? There is adequate information available to make it clear that the ideal size of a practice is between 1,200 and 1,500 patients per GP—well below the current level. I do not expect the Minister to achieve such a target overnight, but he should certainly set that target now. If the Minister's objective is to reduce list sizes to a level at which all the good things he has talked about can be achieved, he should structure the payment system in a way that will make it desirable to do so—by penalising GPs who have too many patients on their lists. I assure the Minister that GPs with a list size of more than 2,000 patients do not provide the service that he imagines they are providing.

It is not possible to do so. Is this vaunted commitment to greater care only a facade to hide his real objective of a cheaper, nastier service?

The Secretary of State has had a glorious chance to improve primary care with this contract. His failure to do so is due as much to the incompetence of his Department as to his own arrogance. I hope that it is not too late for him to think again.

6.16 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I was disappointed with the speech of the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie). He started well, as he seemed to support just about everything that the Government are doing, but he lapsed into momentary incoherence when he talked about the catastrophic decrease in GP incomes. He overlooked the fact that the Government have said that there will be a transitional period of two years when bringing in the regulations to stop that happening. It would be helpful if right hon. and hon. Members read the regulations.

Dr. Moonie *rose*——

Mr. Hayes: I shall not give way.

Dr. Moonie: The hon. Gentleman is misrepresenting what I said.

Mr. Hayes: I have become accustomed to the fact that the BMA has done for sensible political argument what myxomatosis has done for rabbits. I found it rich that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who, to give him credit, has occasional moments of lucidity, criticised my right hon. and learned Friend's handling of the GP contract. Good heavens, in 1975, 7,800 GPs sent in their resignation letters. In 1975 there was industrial action by consultants and threatened industrial action by junior doctors.

I have always assumed that the House of Commons went barking mad only towards the end of July. It appears that there is also barking madness during the spillover period.

The House should analyse carefully, precisely what the Opposition and some of the other parties are voting against. They are voting against "Promoting Better Health," against the White Paper that received much professional acclaim, and against a higher capitation fee for rundown areas. They are voting against giving women doctors the opportunity of part-time work—not just half the hours but a quarter, which has never been in any contract before.

The Opposition are voting against screening and preventive medicine. They are voting against giving every person over 75 on a doctor's list the opportunity of getting a visit from either a GP or a member of the practice team. That is remarkable. They are voting against immunisation targets—for example, rubella immunisations, about which the hon. Member for Kircaldy talked. Our immunisation figures are appalling compared with World Health Organisation statistics. Surely setting targets is the way forward to protect our young people.

The Opposition are voting against payments to GPs for minor surgery and against the postgraduate training allowance. That does not seem to make any sense.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Rubbish.

Mr. Hayes: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman, who has just wandered in from the streets, should come into the Chamber and say, "Rubbish." It is nice that there are now four Opposition Members here during this debate on an Opposition prayer. However, I should not be too critical and try to score too many party political points.

These sensible measures were recommended by the BMA's negotiating committee. If only the BMA had not played such a foolish political game by winding up its members to such a degree that they believed that any contract from the Department of Health came from the jaws of Hades, there would not be such a mess and misunderstanding.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman is in a mess.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. There is too much sedentary noise from so few people.

Mr. Hayes: What quality sedentary noise it is from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery)! They say that empty vessels make the most noise.

Dr. Moonie: The hon. Gentleman is an empty vessel.

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Member for Kircaldy accuses me of being an empty vessel. His vessel is very full indeed, by the sound of it.

Dr. Moonie: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If hon. Members refer to my constituency, is it not in order for them to pronounce it correctly?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Member will correct the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes).

Mr. Hayes: I hope that I will pronounce the name correctly, especially as my parents have just moved to Scotland. The Conservative party has a great interest in Scotland.

The only difficulty of which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State should be aware is targeting. Many general practitioners throughout the country to whom I and many of my colleagues have had the opportunity of speaking are worried about targeting because they feel that they are meeting their targets now. They are worried that when they go to the family practitioner committees they will find that the family practitioner computer has gone horribly wrong. I ask for an initiative from the Department to ensure that FPCs get their act together to help GPs to look after their patients in the best way.

The Opposition are voting against some very sensible preventive health measures. I regret that. I am sure that my hon. Friends will join me and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in supporting these health measures, which will help patients in our constituencies.

6.23 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): We should take the contract in the full context of the Government's health policy. Last weekend, the Government announced that 11 health districts would be chosen to carry out some comparisons of practice, as a prelude to introducing the White Paper proposals on the NHS. We had hoped that the Government could agree that it was crucial to have a comprehensive evaluation before any of their health proposals were implemented. Like others, we have regularly suggested that such an evaluation should include fuller assessments of health needs, especially assessments that are locally and regionally sensitive. I say that as one who represents Leeds, West, which includes a section of the inner city.

In August, in response to the publication of the monitoring report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on infant and perinatal mortality, the former Minister for Health rejected further research on the wider social causes of ill health. He contemptuously dismissed regional and social factors. The principles in the contract, in terms of the index of social deprivation proposals, will be undermined because that research has not been carried out.

We all accept that any serious and major reform always involves risks, but it also imposes costs. It is difficult to carry out a genuine reform on the basis of a reduction in service. Unless an evaluation is carried out at an earlier stage, major mistakes, which later need correcting, may be made. The impression is that the reviews, and the contract as the vanguard for them, will set cash limits in concrete.

I remember the early days when the Departments of Health and Social Security were one Department. There are echoes now of what happened then. We were promised the great social security reviews—with the tag, of course, that they would be at nil cost, which in practice meant that they were reviews with a reduction. We all know of the great suspicion that this measure will end up as a cost-cutting exercise. To see this, we need simply to glance at the Government's practice, at the experience of cash limits which were imposed on, for example, the social fund. Budgets initially set at the centre included built-in factors based upon a declining take-up. Such approaches end in a reduction in service to the people and undermine sensitivity to local needs and demands. The people in need are left out. At the heart of the Government's approach is the issue of cost-benefit analysis. It may satisfy accountants, but it does not serve human needs. Emphasis on quantity can undermine the quality of provision. It may be forgotten that the purpose of the exercise is to serve people.

I am reminded of the inner-city initiative during the late 1970s and early 1980s. A former Secretary of State for the Environment introduced the urban programme monitoring initiative. That showed an obsession with monitoring on a quantitative basis, annual reports and micro-levels of accountancy, which resulted in officers being instructed to count the number of trees in environment improvement schemes and to send the information back in a report to the Department of the Environment. Pensioners in mini-buses provided to take them to luncheon clubs had to fill in journey measurement and time sheets. That was not the practical purpose of the programme, but is that the kind of contract monitoring which is envisaged in these proposals?

We are moving in a direction where "Yes, Minister" becomes real life, but it is a little too close to reality. I remember one of the "Yes, Minister" programmes about a totally efficient hospital which had a brilliant input and output ratio. In average accountancy terms, it ran perfectly—because it had no patients, as it had not yet opened. Unfortunately, patients would have messed up the ledger entries. Perhaps it is therefore better not to include patients at all. Human beings with whom we are dealing are not totally efficient animals.

Turning to the specifics of the doctors' contract, the Secretary of State might tell us what the assessment of the family doctors' future role in health care is. The emphasis

[Mr. John Battle]

is emerging in the community care proposals, with which we have yet to deal. The change will surely shift the work in the direction of local GPs because there will be fewer people in hospitals and institutions. We are told that there will be a welcome emphasis on prevention, health

How much space will there be in the contract for home visits? Will the system simply be based on a bonus payments approach, or will there be a genuine increase in service provision, as is needed? Several questions will arise. Will the need for GPs to pay attention to costs, budgets and annual reports distract them from the quality of care that they offer? Will the paperwork and accounting reduce patient contact time? Will the good intentions of dealing with primary preventive care be undermined by budget considerations and bureaucratic proposals?

There seems to be further contradiction when we take the contract in the context of the Government's proposals. What is proposed for the doctors is to challenge their autonomy and unaccountability in the contract. However, under the proposal for hospitals there is a real possibility that self-governing hospital trusts will become privatised and independent, as is being proposed at the Leeds general infirmary. In other words, there will be a fragmenting of local provision, which contradicts the Government's approach to doctors' practices. On the one hand, they say standardise and on the other they say opt-out. When their proposals are put together, collective and co-ordinated provision in the Health Service will be undermined.

We welcome the introduction of child health surveillance services. Let us hope that that will not be dealt with simply in terms of remuneration. It will increase the work load, but more importantly, it should recognise that there are unequal starting points in the country's health provision. If we study birth weights, it becomes more than obvious that good health is not evenly distributed throughout the nation. The strains on some health authorities are greater than on others. The recent OPCS report on baby deaths published in August highlighted that the health divide between Britain's more prosperous regions and the poorer regions is growing wider. Although the perinatal mortality rate for England and Wales in 1988 was 8·7 per thousand and the infant mortality rate was nine per thousand, the regional breakdown shows big variations throughout the country within that improving trend.

The Select Committee on Social Services said last December that Britain's infant mortality record is not improving as fast as it should. The Committee called for further research into the links between baby deaths and social deprivation. That research has yet to be initiated by the Secretary of State. That sensitivity to an area analysis demands a much more comprehensive approach before the contract can be introduced.

There is also the question of interpreting and enforcing the contract. If a GP wants to increase his list size, he would do best by attracting fit and healthy patients whom he sees rarely and who make few demands on his time. The long-term sick will be more time-consuming and he will do better if he refers them to another GP down the road. That is a perversion of the provision of health care to those who need it.

Not every person in Britain has an address as some are homeless and others live in hostels and accommodation for the homeless. What is the provision in the contract for them? It is, incredibly difficult to arrange doctor provision for hostels in order to provide care for the homeless or mentally ill.

On enforcement, we have a stark reminder of what happened to the nurses. This morning I received a letter from a nurse in my constituency. She asked what will happen to community staff and especially preventive medicine. She said that she had been a health visitor and that she does two district jobs—she is both a specialist in diabetes and a mothers and babies health visitor. However, she is still waiting for her grade to be settled. She sees others doing less and with fewer qualifications moving to the H grade. We have a long way to go before the contract can be settled. If the experience of the nurses is anything to go by, we will have to wait years for implementation to be sorted out if the proposal is not first solidly thought through.

In their eagerness to transfer social costs into market prices, the Government manage to demonstrate gross insensitivity to the detailed effects of their proposals. Our challenge is to a Government who seem to be entranced by the business man's ethic of profit. The euphemism is now the "discipline of the market". In the current edition of *The Salisbury Review* I was interested to read an article by Ian Crowther entitled: "Thatcherism and the Good Life." He said:

> "A modern business enterprise, by its very nature, has as its highest goal the maximisation of profit; what it provides in the way of goods or services is secondary. But to force this commercial model on every other species of corporate life —for example, on public service broadcasting, the health service, the legal profession and the universities—is to betray either an indifference to non-economic motives or an ignorance of how in reality they are sustained. If it is obvious —as surely it must be, that the highest loyalty of a soldier or a policeman or a fireman can never be to material gain, it should be hardly less obvious that there are others in the community—among them dons, doctors, nurses, teachers and lawyers—whose character would be altered irrevocably and for the worst if the pursuit of profit, instead of being incidental to their professions, were to be made central to them. Britain would be the poorer, literally, if millions of its citizens did not still think of service as the primary and profit as the secondary motivation in their working lives.
>
> That they do so is testimony to the truth that man is not just an economic being but a moral, social and political being as well."

I would have hoped that those were the motives driving the Government but we know that that is not the case. However, perhaps the Government will bear in mind the parallel with the poll tax. We reminded the Government that if it was not thought out it would be brought back time and again with alterations.

Mr. Conway: On a point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is a solitary figure on the Opposition Back Benches and he is trying to spin out the debate for the Opposition. However, even his colleagues are not listening. I would be grateful if you would bring the hon. Gentleman back to the subject of the NHS contract.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) that the time available for the debate is very short.

Mr. Battle: Perhaps Conservative Members do not like to hear what I have said. However, they might learn that when points are put to them in advance of the legislation it may save the country from the turmoil it is experiencing with the poll tax. I hope that they will withdraw the contract. If they do not, the British people will pass judgment at the appropriate time and elect a Government who adopt a different approach from the market-driven one of the present Government.

6.37 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I have only a few seconds in which to participate in this important debate. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on his positive and rather more agreeable presentation of the Government's case on the GP contract. I only wish that what he said had carried a majority of not only general practitioners but the people of the country.

As yet, my right hon. and learned Friend does not carry a majority of either doctors or the people in what he is seeking to do in the contract—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) points out that he may obtain that majority in the future but he does not have it now. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the contract is somewhat misguided.

I have grave reservations about the increased percentage of doctors' remuneration that will come from capitation. It will go up from 46 per cent. to 60 per cent. I have performed considerable service on the Select Committee for Social Services and I can say from experience that one of the greatest services a doctor can provide is not minor operations, immunisation or screening but the counselling and advice that he gives either on a visit or in his surgery. The contract will lead to a position in which doctors have less time to spend with individual patients rather than more.

My remarks have been much supported by the Select Committee. If my right hon. and learned Friend reads our latest report—the eighth report—he will see that we say on page 38:

> "A number of observers indicated their concern that increasing the proportion of GP income from capitation payments and the introduction of indicative drugs budgets could mean GPs will pay greater attention to the workload and financial implications of having some groups of patients on their lists."

I have said that to my right hon. and learned Friend before. The report continues:

> "They indicated that this could mean refusals to accept elderly or chronic sick patients who apply to join the practice."

My right hon. and learned Friend assured the Committee:

> "the Government intend to minimise this likelihood and that the number of chronically sick could be taken into account in determining actual or indicative GP budgets".

However, I must point out to my right hon. and learned Friend that the working paper on GP budgets does not explain how such patients will be defined and identified. Our views were strongly supported by the Health Visitors Association and by others such as the Faculty of Community Medicine, so we are not speaking in isolation.

Indicative drug budgets are another relevant issue. Clearly, there is downward pressure from Government on the cost of drugs, but surely effective prescribing should not be judged in terms of medicine costs only. Medicines provide excellent value for money compared with many other forms of treatment. Keeping patients out of hospitals or out of community care by appropriate medical treatment is both socially and economically advantageous. I hope that the emphasis on capitation and the Government's clear move to cost-limiting and cost-fencing the family doctor services will not lead to a less good service than we have at present. For the reasons I have expressed and for others that I have not time to express, I cannot support the Government in the Lobby tonight.

6.41 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I warmly congratulate the new Minister for Health on her appointment and on her involvement in the debate.

The debate has been useful in sounding a cautionary note for the future of the family doctor service and I hope that the Government will take heed. We are debating today the effects that we think the new GP contract may have. It could mean that patients have less time with their doctors, when we all know that they want more time and should have more time. It could mean elderly and chronically ill patients being culled from their GPs' lists. It could mean a widening gap between the service that one receives if one lives in a well-heeled suburb and the service provided in a deprived, inner-city area. It could also mean that patients have less chance to choose a woman GP, and there is much to justify those concerns.

Mr. Conway: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Harman: I will not give way because I want to justify our concerns.

The Secretary of State flatly denies those concerns and simply asserts that patients will receive better care. However, if he is confident of his case and certain that his predictions about the beneficial effects of the contract will be justified, let him give the House the following assurances. He must monitor what happens to list sizes and not talk merely about average list sizes. He must monitor the length of consultations and what is happening to immunisation and screening. He must monitor the number of women GPs, the ability of the elderly and the chronically ill to have the GP of their choice and the gap between the inner cities and the suburbs. He must give the House and members of the public a commitment that, if his contract has the effect that we fear, and which he denies, he will come back to the House and amend the regulations.

The main concern expressed this afternoon has been that the effect of the new contract will be that patients have less time with their doctor. Once again, the Secretary of State has asserted that that will not be the case, but there is a widespread belief that an increase in the capitation element of a GP's income will lead to an increase in list sizes, and that an increase in list sizes will lead to less time for each patient. That view is shared by *Which?* magazine, the magazine of the Consumers' Association, by the Select Committee on Social Services, about which the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) spoke, and by the Patients Association.

The Secretary of State responds by saying that none of that will happen because we shall have the same number of GPs and patients, so average list sizes and consultation time will remain the same. The Secretary of State is content to say in defence of his contract merely that average list sizes will stay the same. Previously, the Government had supported a reduction in list sizes—a trend which had been supported by successive Governments—yet that aim

[Ms. Harman]

appears to have vanished today. We are talking only about whether we can prevent list sizes from increasing as a result of the contract.

We need to continue to reduce list sizes because it is only with smaller list sizes that doctors will be able to expand their preventive work and health promotion work. It is only with smaller list sizes that they will be able to play a real part in providing care in the community and to respond to the demands of patients which have rightly increased. In the past 10 years, the average number of visits made by patients to their doctors has increased by 35 per cent. That is one statistic that we never hear from the Government.

Above all, the Government should be presenting measures to reduce list sizes and to increase the time each patient has with his GP because that is what patients want, as all surveys show. Most notably, the *Which?* survey discovered that more than 90 per cent. in its survey listed time with their GP as their priority. However, it is clear that the proposals will not increase patient time and that is disappointing.

Worse still, there are good grounds for believing that patients will have less time with their GP. Increasing the fee per patient—which is what the capitation element is —as a percentage of doctors' incomes provides doctors with a direct incentive to take on more patients. The Government have been muddled about that. In July, the Secretary of State said:

> "It is totally illogical to suggest that the new contract will increase average list sizes."

However, in October he said:

> "We fully recognise that the high capitation element in the new remuneration system does not favour small list practices."

That is the case, because if one gives a financial incentive for doctors to increase their list size, they will do so, as GPs themselves believe. The widely held view is that increased list sizes will result not in doctors working longer, but in patient consultation time becoming shorter.

The Department of Health report on GP weekly work loads in 1987 showed that they spent about 38 hours seeing patients, plus 31 hours on call and six hours on other medically related work. If GPs work more hours, the quality of patient care will not improve. I do not want to see GPs dropping asleep in their surgeries in the same way that we see junior hospital doctors dropping asleep in the wards. General practitioners already have a full working week, yet under the contract they will be expected to take on more patients, to perform minor surgery, to carry out regular checks on the elderly, to carry out more immunisation and more childhood screening, to run anti-smoking clinics, alcohol control clinics and well person clinics, and to advise on diet, exercise and stress. As the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) pointed out, they will be expected to do all that in addition to taking on extra patients to increase their income.

If the best doctors attract larger lists, it will turn good doctors into bad doctors, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) said. The number of GPs is not fixed, as the Secretary of State would like to make out. Therefore, his argument about the average does not hold. GP numbers could quickly drop if demoralisation sets in again. Once again, general practice could become an unattractive option. Women could get squeezed out, and earlier retirement could certainly mean a reduction in the number of GPs.

Only one in four GPs are women. That means that many women patients do not have the chance to choose a woman doctor and, therefore, must have a male GP. We need to continue the trend of an increasing number of women becoming GPs, but the contract threatens to reduce the number of women GPs. We must examine the figures. Women and men GPs have different working patterns. There is no such thing as the average GP. There is the woman GP's working patterns, hours and list sizes and then there is the male GP's profoundly different working pattern, hours, and list sizes. An effect of the contract—no doubt in an effort to squeeze out lazy and uncommitted GPs—is that the Government will squeeze out those women GPs who have fewer patients on their lists and work fewer hours. The reason why they work fewer hours is that women GPs, like most working women, must combine their work with their family responsibilities, whereas male GPs, like most men, leave family responsibilities to their wives.

If we are concerned to increase the number of women GPs, we must not discriminate against people for having smaller list sizes and working fewer hours. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) mentioned differences in care in inner cities and suburbs.

I now refer to the hidden agenda. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) was absolutely right. The Government think that the family doctor service is costing too much. Cash limiting——

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not a disgrace that the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) should afford so little time to my hon. Friend the Minister, whom all hon. Members are waiting to hear with the greatest impatience?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am sure that the hon. Lady is watching the clock, as are all hon. Members. This debate must end at 7 o'clock.

Ms. Harman: It would be right to divide the time between myself and the Minister.

The problem is the hidden agenda. The hidden agenda is about public spending. The Government think that the family doctor service is costing too much. They are cash-limiting support staff and drug budgets, and they are encouraging GP budget holders to opt for cash limited budgets. Their ultimate aim, of which the contract is part, is to increase list sizes and to reduce the number of GPs and, as a result, reduce public spending on the family doctor service.

6.52 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I thank hon. Members for their kind and undeserved comments. I am delighted to take on this role. I pay a warm tribute to my predecessor, now the Minister of State, Home Office, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who magnificently piloted the Children Bill through the House. It is a Bill in which I had a special and particular interest.

I cannot fail to be aghast at the remarks of the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). She had her eye on the wrong target. She represents a constituency in which I worked for many years. I know directly the difference between the best of the good general practice, which demonstrates the excellent service provided by a family practitioner, and the general practitioner who is not available, who uses an answering service and who does not provide all that the hon. Lady and I want for those in the inner cities. Many hon. Members have referred to the particular problems of the inner cities, and that is why a special premium is to be available in those areas. The key must be how we can ensure that our family practitioners, who are one of the most important elements in our National Health Service, can play a fundamental part in primary health care and can achieve the standards which all of us want.

Before discussing the regulations, I must pay a tribute to the other members of the practice and primary health care team. I was not particularly sympathetic when the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) dismissively referred to other members of the team. Frankly, a chiropodist, a clinic nurse, a counsellor and many community nurses can play a crucial part in improving patients' well-being.

Were the hon. Lady to have castigated the Government for failing to have refined the regulations and the contract for the past 25 years, she would have been nearer the mark. But to become agitated about the fact that now, at last, the Government are facing the responsibility of specifying precisely what we want general practitioners to do can only be a virtue and a force for good in the welfare of our people. Can it be wrong for any mother to know that children are to be more vigorously assessed, that their development is to be checked, and that immunisation is to be robustly pursued? Too many people are fearful of medical practices generally, and anything that we can do to encourage general practitioners to pursue the World Health Organisation targets and to look to the welfare of their patients must be good.

Can there be any objection to women having cervical cytology robustly pursued and ensuring that targets are met? I spent many years as the vice-president of the Women's National Cancer Control Campaign. In years gone by, had we thought that general practitioners would have reached targets like these, we would have welcomed them. Can there be anything objectionable in knowing that elderly relations will be visited? How many people over 75 are fearful of contacting their general practitioners and feel that they do not want to trouble them with their ailments? Often those over 75 can have their lives significantly improved and their medical conditions addressed by a visit and by assessment. That is welcome indeed. Time and again, the Foundation for Age Research has said that relatively simple medical treatments can often improve and enhance the quality of life for our elderly.

Can anybody object to payments for training and education? Anybody who examines the British National Formulary will see the speed with which medication and technical science have moved forward. Having served on the Medical Research Council, I know the speed of change and the importance of making sure that our general practitioners are promoting and encouraging the most up-to-date and best practice.

As patients, all of us have rising expectations about what we want from our medical practitioners. The contract is about promoting patients' choice, providing information, and letting patients choose who they go to. That is the answer to those who fear the capitation allowances. The crucial point is that people should know what is available and how much patients welcome the move towards greater health promotion and disease prevention. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) has done a great deal to promote and encourage awareness of the importance of health promotion. How many people welcome the possibility of regular lifestyle checks and scrutiny when they go to their general practitioner?

I have not delayed the House in speaking about the role of women doctors. They have a crucial part to play. I welcome the fact that 50 per cent. of medical students and 40 per cent. of trainees are women. Many of the steps that we are taking are good news for women. Above all, the patient—the consumer who, too often, is not regarded—will be able to say, "I want to see a woman doctor." That will work as fast as any of our other objectives at ensuring that women doctors are available and have a crucial part to play.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) spoke about the information that was forthcoming. I can tell him that the statement of fees and allowances, the red book, will be available later this month —well ahead of the schedule that he anticipated. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is shortly to make a statement about information technology in general practice.

We want to ensure the well-being and safety of our Health Service. General practitioners have a crucial and vital part to play in primary health care. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health has spent many hours in discussion. The regulations and the new contract provide the basis for an effective service that takes care of patients. I urge hon. Members to vote against—

It being Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to order [27 October]:—*

The House divided: Ayes 214, Noes 319.

Division No. 365] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth

Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and shall be ordered to be read the third time;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session.

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

7.17 pm

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I call Mr. Kevin Barron on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I gave you notice that I wanted to raise a point of order on this issue.

You may recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that on Second Reading of the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill on 22 June 1988 I raised a point of order about meetings that had taken place between the Secretary of State for Transport and the promoters of the Bill, Associated British Ports. On that occasion, Mr. Deputy Speaker rightly ruled:

> "Discussions that may have taken place outside the House are not a matter for the Chair."—[*Official Report*, 22 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 1187.]

It is my understanding that, following a meeting between my right hon. and hon. Friends, the Secretary of State for Energy, the Leader of the House and myself in July, an approach was made to Associated British Ports. They then made an approach to Parliament, and I understand that that approach may have gone, directly or indirectly, to the Chairman of Ways and Means. That suggests to me and to many others than a Government Department has interfered directly with this private Bill. [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] I rise on a point of order because those discussions did not take place outside the House.

They have taken place in high office. I should like a ruling to be made about whether there are the fingerprints of a Government Department on this Bill. Perhaps it should not fall within the private Bill procedure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is quite correct in supposing that the ruling is exactly the same. As he knows, a Committee has considered the private Bill procedure, so he can pursue the matter in whatever way he thinks appropriate. The points which he has made would be entirely in order in the debate on the suspension motion.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a matter for you because under the private Bill procedure there is not supposed to be whipping. I have heard people talk about the pairing system—although I have not been involved myself—and I know that it does not apply to the private Bill procedure because the Opposition and the Government are not involved. Yet, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) said, it is significant that the Secretary of State for Energy and the Leader of the House at that time—I know that there have been many changes since then, but in July two people were allocated to those posts—met the miners group to discuss this Bill's future. When that happened, the Bill was taken out of private Bill procedure.

Anybody can look at the matter in any way he or she likes, but the moment that those two Government spokespersons met the miners group they invalidated the private Bill procedure. As soon as those discussions took place in the room of the Leader of the House—not somewhere outside the building—the matter was removed from the private Bill procedure.

If the Government and their Ministers could manage to stop the Bill from proceeding in July, they have every justification—we have even more—for saying to the nation, the miners and others affected that the Bill is very flawed. It was flawed at the beginning because it was political from the outset. The person who took the Chair when the Bill was discussed voted to ensure that not one amendment went through. The Chairman is an adviser to the British Chemical Engineering Contractors Association, which has as one of its members a firm which is helping to sponsor the Bill.

When all those facts are considered, together with the South African connection, the fact that Conservative Members are being paid to take free trips to South Africa to help get the Bill through and the fact that we now have a balance of payments deficit of £20 billion whereas when the Bill started its passage through Parliament there was a balance of payments surplus, it becomes clear that the Bill should be thrown out. It will add a tremendous amount of money to the balance of payments.

For all those reasons, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be totally justified in saying today that the Bill is flawed and should be withdrawn. If Conservative Members want to bring it forward in the next Session, they should start at the beginning and not be allowed to obviate that by a carry-over motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This debate has got off to a good start. The hon. Members for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) have raised perfectly legitimate points. My only complaint is that they were not points of order but matters for debate. It would be better if, instead of prefacing the debate with points of order, we got on with it along the lines which have so far been wholly in order.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recall that when the Bill was introduced I asked whether it was a hybrid Bill. The Chair ruled that it was not hybrid because the Clerk to the Private Bill Committee looked at it and told you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Chairman of Ways and Means that it was perfectly proper and fell within the private Bill procedure. It was impossible for us to question the Clerk any more because he left soon after, When we raised the matter of the Bill's hybridity, there was nothing at that time to indicate Government involvement. I understand that the Chairman of Ways and Means, who controls private Bills, has the power, if ever a Bill becomes suspect, to take the appropriate action to remedy the procedure. In the circumstances which have prevailed since the Bill was first introduced, will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rule that the Bill has obviously become hybrid? Therefore, will you withdraw the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There has been no change in the Bill's structure. The previous proceedings have been in order. We are now dealing with the suspension motion and I hope that we shall come to that so that we can continue to hear the arguments for and against it.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy [illegible]ker. I do not wish to detain the House, but in addition to considering whether the Bill should continue its passage, the House should be mindful of the fact that we are supposed to be a debating Chamber. When the House last considered the Bill, the only speech in favour of it was one of about 27 words by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). I accept that his contribution covered about four columns of *Hansard;* there were 14 words in the first bit and 10 or 11 in the second.

I am making a serious point. If the House spends hours and hours debating a Bill and those in favour of it can move it formally, even though they do not have the support of all their hon. Friends—the only Conservative Member to speak, with perhaps one exception, opposed the Bill as we do——it brings the House into disrepute. It allows us to suggest not merely that we should refuse to allow the Bill to be carried over, but that it should be reviewed and revised before any hon. Member has the gall to present a similar measure in another Session.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman because he helps me by suggesting, as I have said, that the sooner we get on to discussing the suspension motion the better.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have an important question: can this sitting be adjourned until the Secretary of State for Energy comes and says why, in a letter to me on 26 July, he said that all the coal which was produced would be burnt, whereas a Cabinet document shows that 30,000 miners will be sacked in three years?

When we spoke about this Bill we were not aware of those facts. Therefore, it is right and proper that this debate should be adjourned or the Secretary of State for Energy should come and tell us which is the true document. I am sure that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) would not have moved the Bill if he thought that 30,000 miners would be compulsorily sacked within three years. Therefore, can any action be taken along the lines I have requested?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That was a helpful point and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I noticed that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes was rising; no doubt he wishes to speak to the suspension motion. I also noticed that there was a Minister on the Treasury Bench. The sooner we move on to the suspension motion the sooner we shall hear what those two hon. Members have to say, should they rise to speak.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is an awful smell in this place tonight. It stinks to high heaven. There is something crooked about what is going on and the smell is coming from the Conservative Benches. You know as well as we know what Conservative Members are up to.

I have been sent here by my constituents and they tell me that they do not like what is going on on the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. Mine is a mining constituency, and what my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) has just said about the report on further pit closures and job losses makes matters worse.

There is no doubt that the Government are pulling a fast one and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should take note of what we are saying. You saw it with your own eyes when they rolled in the payroll vote and they have a South African mouthpiece who is yawping like billy-oh, not only in here but outside. He stops me in the corridors and talks to me about it. I ask him how many times he has been to South Africa. He has been more than half a dozen times.

This smells; it really stinks. If the Government get away with this move, it will be at the expense of the British mining industry and the jobs in it, particularly in my constituency. I do not like it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You should take note of what we are saying. I am not criticising the Chairman of Ways and Means; he has a job to do.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): What is the point of order?

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Gentleman [illegible] always raising points of order and more often than not Mr. Speaker has to slap him down because he does not have one.

What I am saying is that this place stinks. The Bill should not be on today's Order Paper. We should not be discussing it tonight. The Government should do the right thing and damn well drop it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The points that the hon. Gentleman has made are perfectly in order in debate, but they are not points of order for the Chair.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to raise a number of points with you. First, in view of the association of the Chairman of the Private Bill Committee with the promoters, which has been the subject of previous points of order, would you be prepared to accept a manuscript amendment to the carry-over motion so that it can be examined by the Committee and a recommendation made to the House? That would be the best way of proceeding in these difficult circumstances.

Secondly, the provision of trips to South Africa has been mentioned on several occasions. It appears that the Bill would give an advantage to enterprises in that benighted country to export coal to Britain. I should have thought that that raised the question of a fiduciary interest, as "Erskine May" has defined it.

I would like a clear ruling from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if it can be established that peple have received any sort of inducement to go to South Africa, any travel facilities or hospitality, or if anybody has received any sort of assistance tonight—rumours of champagne parties and facilities to keep Members of Parliament here are circulating around the House—that that would constitute a fiduciary interest and would prevent Members of Parliament from voting on the Bill.

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

I have raised such matters many times before and I know that the general rubric is that it is up to individual hon. Members of Parliament. That standard is not good enough when this place requires local councillors to make specific declarations and does not even allow them to be present in the committee rooms of council chambers. It is incumbent on the Chair to maintain the standards of the House, which should be such that we can tell local authorities that we have at least the same standards as we impose upon them.

Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, make it clear, as was made clear by Mr. Speaker during proceedings on the Lloyd's Bill, a private Bill that was submitted in 1981, that when Lloyd's members were involved they should not vote. People who have been scurrying to the South African Government who impose apartheid and produce coal with black miners' blood should not be allowed to vote in this matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: First, it is not possible for me to accept a manuscript amendment on a suspension motion. Secondly, page 354 of "Erskine May" says:

> "No Member who has a direct pecuniary interest in a question is allowed to vote upon it; but, in order to operate as a disqualification, this interest must be immediate and personal, and not merely of a general or remote character."

I hope that I have answered the two points raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These points of order are not an attempt to delay the proceedings of the House; they go to the heart of the integrity of the House and its business. This is not the first occasion when we have been dealing with dock legislation that we have had to raise points of order about the direct or indirect pecuniary interests of Conservative Members.

Following representations made to Mr. Speaker, I have had discussions with the Clerk of the House over a number of weeks. It is important to set out the procedure under Standing Order No. 20 and what emerged in relation to the Committee's Chairman and the written evidence that he and others provided who, to my knowledge, have not to this day been called to give witness to that evidence or for that evidence to be checked for its veracity.

Standing Order No. 120 concerns the declaration by members of Committees on opposed Bills and says:

> "EACH member of a committee on an opposed private bill, or a group of private bills, shall, before he is entitled to attend and vote in such committee, sign the following declaration:—
>
> I, having been selected by the Committee of Selection to serve as a member of the Committee on the . . . . Bill or on Group . . . . . . of Private Bills, hereby declare, that my constituents have no local interest, and that I have no personal interest, in the said bill or any bill included in the said group; and that I will never vote on any question which may arise without having duly heard and attended to the evidence relating thereto."

That is important——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not clear what the point of order is for the Chair. The hon. Gentleman is now going over previous proceedings. He cannot do that. He must relate any point of order that he has directly to the suspension motion that is before the House.

Mr. McCartney: I can do so, and I am trying to assist in the matter. I have taken a great deal of trouble over this in my discussions with the Speaker's Office and the Clerk of the House and I would be obliged, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you would let me make the point.

Let me quote now from *Hansard:*

> "I am totally in your pocket and I had better come across to speak to you."—*[Official Report,* 23 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. 893.]

On two occasions the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) was challenged by Members of the House. On one occasion the Deputy Speaker made it clear that the hon. Gentleman had better come back into the general discussion and he went from under the Gallery back to his place.

Subsequently, on 24 May I wrote to Mr. Speaker on Standing Order No. 120. Mr. Speaker then arranged for a series of discussions to take place between the Clerk of the House and a number of hon. Members, including myself. I was asked to produce evidence of the allegation and submitted two written statements or affidavits——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This has nothing to do with the suspension motion. I call Mr. Michael Brown.

7.40 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): It is very important that the House supports the carry-over motion —*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have had a good run on points of order. I have explained to every hon. Member who has raised a point of order that, apart from those on which I have already ruled, they are not points of order for the Chair, but are perfectly legitimate points to be raised in the debate. I suggest that it would be far better if these points were raised in speeches and not under the guise of points of order.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems to me that my hon. Friend is referring to quite specific points of order relating to private business that require not the declaration of interest but the absence from a Committee of anyone who has any possible interest to declare. Without challenging your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it appears that my hon. Friend has raised a most material point of order by suggesting with some validity that the hon. Member who chaired the Committee on this private Bill was out of order in doing so. It would seem to any fair-minded person that my hon. Friend raised a valid point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not possible at this stage to challenge the validity of previous proceedings. We are now dealing with a suspension motion. As I have told the House more than once, it is perfectly in order to raise those arguments in favour of voting against the suspension motion. That is why I said that it would be far better if those perfectly legitimate points were raised not under the guise of points of order but as part of the general debate that has been going on for quite some time.

Mr. Dobson: Surely it cannot be the case that subsequent proceedings validate those that have gone before if they were wrong. Let us suppose that in the case of another Bill an hon. Member who sat on an opposed Bill Committee was discovered to have been receiving sums of money from the promoter in clear breach of order. Surely that would invalidate those proceedings and allow them to be questioned at this stage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Only a decision of the House could invalidate previous proceedings. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that further information has come to light which would appear to constitute a contempt of the House or a breach of privilege, he knows very well that the appropriate procedure in that case is to write to Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Michael Brown: As I was saying, the carry-over is required because the Third Reading of the Bill now stands adjourned. In those circumstances, it is absolutely necessary—*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: People should know what is happening in this cock-eyed place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My point of order follows the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh). I have a copy of a letter dated 26 July from the then Leader of the House indicating that there was a certain tonnage to be bought and burnt from British Coal. We now have in our possession the leaked Cabinet document showing the implications for coal production——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for the Chair?

Mr. Cummings: The point is that the Leader of the House has acted with duplicity, having had possession of the document before 26 July, and he should come here tonight and explain his action in calling us into his office —at his request—to discuss these matters.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My point of order could not be raised in the debate as it concerns the consequences of tonight's debate. I am the only hon. Member present who served on the Committee considering the Associated British Ports Bill. I did so believing that the Bill was about planning permission, only to find myself in the midst of one of the biggest controversies of my two and a half years in the House. I feel that I can raise a point of order in all freedom because I have no coal mining or dock interests. Bradford lost its last coal mine more than 50 years ago. The Leeds-Liverpool canal goes through part of my constituency but there is n[illegible]king, although there is a boat yard employing one and a half workers. So I do not have any pecuniary or other interests.

When we debated the Bill on Third Reading, at the end of the debate I was still on my feet. Closure was not called, and as I understand it the debate was incomplete. Had we been debating a Government Bill, presuming the unfortunate event that the suspension motion is carried tonight, I would have the Floor when Third Reading is resumed. Do we have that right on a private Bill and will that be the effect if the carry-over motion is carried tonight?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in giving notice of his point of order, as that enabled me to look into it. The answer is that, if the suspension motion is carried tonight, the House would then proceed in the next Session to a Third Reading debate, and that debate would start from scratch. It would be de novo. The hon. Gentleman would be free to try to catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair, but he would not have the Floor at the start of the Third Reading debate.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For many months I have been trying desperately to make a speech on the Bill, but I cannot be called to speak because of the controversy and the continual points of order. If the motion is carried and the Bill proceeds to Third Reading, will it be guillotined, will there be some form of closure and how many hours will the Government allow us to debate the Bill? Can all the hon. Members who wish to speak on the many aspects of the Bill speak on it or will we be curtailed next Session and the Bill bulldozed through?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is hypothetical at the moment. Let me clarify to the House the important and genuine point that, if a suspension motion for a private Bill is carried and the Bill is carried over to the next Session, and, as in this case, the Bill had an adjourned Third Reading, the Third Reading will start from scratch. That is the procedure which we operate and that is the answer to both hon. Gentlemen.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you can rule on whether the Bill can proceed with the carry-on motion? You and the House will be aware that, in paragraph 26 of the special report, the Committee put conditions on its recommendations, stating:

> "In our view it is the Government's duty to take whatever steps are necessary in the overall national interest to protect the coal mining industry."

We have received, no assurance whatsoever from the Government that they will take such action. In fact there has been evidence to the contrary. We have heard about the leaked document revealing that there could be another devastating attack on the coal industry. The recommendations and the conditions laid down in the special report have not been fulfilled, and I respectfully suggest that the Bill should not proceed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, that is a legitimate point to raise during the debate that we are now having. It is not a point of order.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Coming to this House after 20 years local authority service, I am absolutely astounded to find that half of the Members on the Conservative Benches have interests in South Africa, interests in coal and shares in coal, yet here we are debating with them—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) can grin as much as he likes, but I am astounded at the contempt that this House has for our people, especially those in the mining areas. Conservative Members should be ashamed of that, and so

[Mr. Ronnie Campbell]

should you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You should not allow this debate to continue. You should suspend it—*[Interruption.]* You should forget it——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a point for debate, not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are in a difficult position because your concern is primarily with the procedures of the House and how the House should advance its business, yet most of the points of order that have been raised have questioned the legality of the measure if it goes through those procedures. I appreciate that some of those matters concern you, but they are also the concern of the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General. I suggest that the House is adjourned until either one or both legal officers come and make a statement on whether we should proceed with this measure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for me. Thank goodness, I have no power to summon Ministers to this House.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We now have at stake the integrity of the discussions that I had with the Clerk of the House and with Mr. Speaker's office. I am quite sincere in this matter because I had detailed discussions with the Clerk on a number of occasions. The Clerk, in absolute good faith and integrity, did all that he could about my complaints.

There are two outstanding matters relevant to Standing Order No. 120. The first is that in the general investigation, the Chairman of the Committee admitted that he had discussions with the sponsors of the Bill; secondly—I now quote from a handwritten note by the Chairman—he conceded:

> "I was unwise to speak to the sponsor of the Bill when I did."

The remaining content of that letter must remain private because it was a private letter——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman is alleging that there has been a contempt of the House or a breach of privilege by an hon. Member, he knows the procedure that he must follow. He cannot raise the matter during proceedings on the Floor of the House; he must write to Mr. Speaker. I cannot allow him to proceed with that point if that is the nature of his allegation.

Mr. McCartney: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With all due respect, the establishment in this House is trying to gag Back-Bench Members and to deny us our rights in relation to the Bill. You are asking me to go back three months. I have done all that was asked of me by Mr. Speaker, so all that remains is that hon. Members, at 10 pm or even earlier, will have to vote on the Bill. My cursory investigations show prima facie evidence of a link between Conservative Members and the sponsors of the Bill. That calls into doubt the integrity of this House. Our integrity is now at stake. I implore you, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are now——

Mr. Skinner: The sitting should be suspended until the Attorney-General comes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. These points of order have been raised before and I allowed them to have a good run.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: It is a corrupt Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have allowed a good run on points of order. I have called every hon. Member who has risen——

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: It is a corrupt Bill and the hon. Member for Johannesburg knows it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have either given a ruling on the points of order or I have said that they were legitimate points to raise during the debate. It would be far easier if we were to continue with the debate on the motion, and I call Mr. Brown.

Mr. Michael Brown: Following on from the points raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) it is important to bear in mind——

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: It is a corrupt Bill. It is disgraceful.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I try to assist you in what I appreciate is a difficult position? My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) asked whether it would be appropriate for either the Solicitor-General or the Attorney-General to come to the House and rule on the legality of proceeding with the measure. You said that that was not a matter for you.

If the House were to put a motion to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, requesting that the sitting be suspended pending the appearance of either the Attorney-General or the Solicitor-General, would you accept that motion? We might then get out of the impasse and proceed with the business. Could you give me your guidance, please?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not prepared to accept such a motion. The motion on the Order Paper is perfectly in order and I hope that the House will now get on with discussing it.

Mr. Michael Brown: The hon. Member for Bradford, North was towards the end of his speech during our debate before the recess—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate——

Mr. Skinner: There are two points of order over here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House once more that I have listened to many points of order. Those that are now being raised are merely a repetition of the points with which I have dealt—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh no they are not."] Order. I have dealt with the points. I hope that the House will now agree that it would be more sensible and more orderly to continue to discuss the suspension motion.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With due respect to your earlier ruling, and while not wishing to challenge it, the questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) have not been answered, although they have been heard in the Chamber and await an answer. I have a note of the words used by the Chairman of the Committee when he went under the Gallery. He said:

> "Since I am totally in your pocket I had better come across to speak to you. Michael Brown has had a word with me"—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Those points can be raised during the debate; they are not points of order for the Chair. I am gaining the impression that the House is trying to involve the Chair in political controversy—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Order. I am sure that, on reflection, the House will realise that it would be unfair to put the Chair in that position.

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been before the Privileges Committee in regard to a matter concerning contempt. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, points concerning privilege must be dealt with immediately, or they will be ruled out of order. Because of the recess, however, my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) did not have a chance to raise the matter at the appropriate time, and Mr. Speaker would now rule it out of order.

In the light of the information that we have received, surely we need the guidance of the Attorney-General on whether there has been a breach of privilege, or corruption behind the scenes. The information in the letter in the possession of my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) has exposed a serious defect in the Bill, which ought to be examined at the highest level.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because he has helped me. As he rightly says, a point of privilege must be raised with Mr. Speaker immediately; if the point had been raised at the appropriate time, it would have been dealt with at that time. If any hon. Member is suggesting that new information has become available that could amount to a contempt of the House or a breach of privilege, the procedures of the House are wholly clear: the matter should not be raised on the Floor of the House, where I cannot deal with it, but the hon. Gentleman concerned should write to Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I quote from the Standing Orders on Private Business? Standing Order No. 162, on Bills relating to water companies, is entirely relevant. The private Bill at present under consideration clashes with the interests of a water Bill promoted by the Government, and without a ruling on the interpretation of the Standing Order this Bill, in my view, should not proceed.

Standing Order No. 162 states:

> "In the case of a bill whereby it is proposed that an existing water company shall be authorised to raise additional capital, provision shall be made for the offer of such capital by puplic auction or tender at the best price which can be obtained, unless the committee on the bill reports that such provision ought not to be required, with the reasons on which its opinion is founded."

The Committee has been considering this Bill at the same time as the water privatisation Bill is being considered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make those points in his arguments against the suspension motion, he is entitled to do so.

Mr. Michael Brown: The Bill was first presented to the House in November 1987. For some two years, therefore, the House has been able to consider the Bill on Second Reading, and then to instruct the Opposed Private Bill Committee to consider it at the Committee stage. The Committee considered the Bill, and reported it to the House without amendment. I remind the House—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I called the hon. Gentleman, and he should be given the courtesy of being heard.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am trying to remind the hon. Members that the House has had an opportunity to consider the Bill on Second Reading, in Committee and in the first part of the Third Reading debate. The carry-over motion will enable the House to reach a conclusion in the next Session of Parliament. In those circumstances, I believe that it is crucial for the motion to be approved. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Redmond *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Do I understand that the hon. Gentleman is rising to make a speech?

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am seeing whether any hon. Member wishes to continue the debate.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond).

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I ask for your guidance? As I understand it, the House is about to discuss a motion on whether to carry forward a private Bill. Many points of order have been raised about whether the Bill should be dealt with on the Floor of the House this evening. In view of what has been said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to ask whether Mr. Speaker's office has been called into disrepute by the malingering and gerrymandering on the part of certain Conservative Members. I ask you to suspend the sitting so that you can consult Mr. Speaker on whether the Bill should be carried forward this evening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my job to ensure that the business before the House is proceeded with. If the motion had not been in order, it would not be on the Order Paper. I hope that we will now get on with the debate: the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) was interrupted by points of order.

Mr. Michael Brown: I wish to end my speech by saying that the most important point is that the Bill is the subject of controversy among Opposition Members with mining interests, and those interests will not be adversely affected by the Bill. It will probably not reach the statute book until 1990, and by 1992 its provisions will be enacted.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me repeat that we have had a long run on points of order. Some were asking me for a ruling on our procedures, and I have given rulings in answer to them. Most of the others—as I have explained more than once—were perfectly legitimate for the debate on the carry-over motion. It would be more sensible if hon.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

Members made the same points without prefacing them with the words "on a point of order", because they are not points of order.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Only rarely do I rise to raise a point of order, but I find the position confusing. Along with, I imagine, every other hon. Member present, I have a copy of the special report by the Committee. The doubt cast on the validity of the report, in view of the role and actions of the Committee's Chairman, raise the question whether views that I might express relating to the report would be relevant. Much of what I would have to say bears on its content. It seems that we must question the work of the Committee, and its actions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Again, that is a perfectly legitimate point for the hon. Gentleman to raise during the debate, and he has now done so.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to refer to what was said earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell). I am deeply disturbed that the House is being brought into disrepute. When as many hon. Members are on their feet as I have seen tonight—and I have not witnessed such a sight in two and a half years—it shows the depth of feeling that something very underhand, if not corrupt, is about to take place. I believe that the office of Speaker and Deputy Speaker—one of the highest offices in the House—should address itself to the concern felt by hon. Members. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to suspend the sitting, to bring the Law Officers to the House and to make a ruling.

Hon. Members, the press and those in the Public Gallery are not the only people listening to the debate. The eyes of the country are on us, and the country smells something pretty rotten. I ask once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what my hon. Friends have already asked: that you bring the Attorney-General to the House, suspend the sitting and give us a ruling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already said that I am not prepared to do that. We must continue with the debate.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Solicitor-General has just poked his nose in. He is available now to have a look at this matter. Therefore, we should suspend the sitting and a discussion should take place between him, the usual channels and representatives of my hon. Friends on the Back Benches. Then we can proceed with the Bill if necessary. You have the power to suspend the sitting. It was suspended last week when Nigel Lawson packed up. The matter is important because it involves the loss of thousands of jobs in various constituencies, money being made in South Africa and Tory Members lining their pockets. It is essential to suspend the sitting so that discussions can take place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already said that I am not prepared to do that. Any discussions that take place through the usual channels have nothing to do with the Chair. Mr. Leigh.

8.12 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The facilities are essential. It has been said that they are primarily required for coal imports——

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have called an hon. Member to speak in the debate. I hope that he will not be interrupted by further points of order.

Mr. Leigh: The facilities could be used for coal. Associated British Ports has a duty to——

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Leigh: Are you going to protect democracy in the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cryer: You have called two Tory Members on the trot.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) have a point of order?

Mr. Bennett: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The House is in difficulty because my hon. Friends are worried about rulings on the passage of the Bill. I ask you to consider the business on the Order Paper. The Bill is on the Order Paper because the Chairman of Ways and Means chose to allocate time to it. That was a decision about the priority given to private Bills. As you will be aware, many private Bills have not yet completed their passage through the House. I understand that the Chairman of Ways and Means decides which Bills have carry-over motions and allocates time to them.

My hon. Friends are worried about the propriety of the Bill's rate of progress. In Committee, the promoters asked for an undertaking that no amendments would be tabled so that they could avoid Report stage. Members of the Committee agreed, on the basis that a report would be submitted to the Government before the Bill proceeded any further. That was an odd procedure and it seems strange that the Chairman of Ways and Means found time for a debate on a carry-over motion for this Bill ahead of the long list of other private Bills.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has a unique position in the House. Sometimes he is in the Chair and the rest of the time he takes care of private business. It is perfectly legitimate for Opposition Members to challenge his choice and to ask why this Bill was chosen, particularly as it has had a chequered course. I realise that no hon. Member should challenge the Chairman of Ways and Means, but my hon. Friends have legitimate anxieties about why time was allocated to the Bill. Hon. Members have the right to look into private business.

It is extremely mysterious that one Bill should move forward at a faster rate than others. The promoters may make requests, but the Chairman of Ways and Means has to make the decision. How can the House influence the decision to allocate time to this Bill in preference to the other 15 or 16 that have not made progress? How soon can we debate the report on private Bill procedure? The points of order raised today clearly show that hon. Members on both sides are dissatisfied with the present procedures.

I do not wish to push this matter further, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure that you will appreciate that I am close to challenging the Chairman of Ways and Means in that capacity as opposed to his capacity as Deputy Speaker. The House should have some way of asking questions about priorities in allocating time, without challenging him as an occupant of the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am glad that the hon. Member said that he was not questioning the judgment of the Chairman of Ways and Means, who has a difficult job in finding time for private business. He tabled this motion for today and it is in order. Like Mr. Speaker, he does not have to give his reasons when making a ruling. It will not have escaped the notice of the House that the Bill was on its adjourned Third Reading.

Long before the debate this evening it was felt by hon. Members on both sides of the House that some features of private Bill procedure were unsatisfactory. For that reason, the House set up a Select Committee some time ago. It has reported to the House and there has been a preliminary debate. The matter is now under consideration. If the hon. Member wishes to raise any point on that, he should address it to the Leader of the House, not to the Chair.

Mr. Leigh: Although the port of Immingham could be used for importing coal, what it really needs is to expand. It is crying out for additional facilities so that it can deal, in particular, with steel and chemicals. That point must be made repeatedly.

British ports face stiff competition from Rotterdam and other continental ports. Expansion at Immingham will help Britain compete effectively and allow businesses in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) to flourish. That is why we support the Bill. Opposition Members emphasise that the Bill is intended to allow imports of foreign coal, but it is not.

Mr. Michael Brown: We owe it to the House to declare the greatest interest of all—the welfare of our constituents. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about our constituents?"] The only crime of which my hon. Friend and I have been accused is supporting the views of our constituents.

Mr. Leigh *rose*——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not a fact that the House is supposed to exercise a judicial function with regard to private Bills? The rules require that the people appointed to consider a private Bill do not have a constituency interest in it but are as disinterested as possible so that they consider it not through the eyes of an hon. Member with a constituency or financial interest but in a detached manner. I realise that we have moved on from Committee stage, but surely it is inappropriate for an hon. Member with a clear constituency interest as opposed to the interest of the promoters at heart to speak for the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What the hon. Gentleman says about the Committee is entirely correct, but, as he has already said, we are past the Committee stage. Its proceedings were completed some time ago. What hon. Members say in this House must be a matter for their judgment and their judgment alone.

Mr. Leigh: It is a very strange state of affairs when a Member of Parliament who is attempting to ensure that his constituents' interests are safeguarded is criticised by Opposition Members.

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have twice heard the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on points of order. I hope that they will not continue to interrupt the speech of the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who now has the Floor of the House.

Mr. Leigh: I shall bring my remarks to a close very soon.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have given the hon. Member for Makerfield a very good run.

Mr. McCartney: I want to make a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will now allow other hon. Members who wish to take part in the debate to do so.

Mr. Leigh: The point that has to be made is that, because of the serious delay, it will be at least 1992 before the facility can be opened. That will provide ample opportunity for the Government, or any future Government, to reach a decision on their coal import policy. The carry-over motion relating to the Bill is not about coal imports. It is about increasing trade and helping to improve the economic outlook of constituencies in south Humberside and north Lincolnshire. It is on that basis that I support the carry-over motion.

8.21 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): It is probably silly to say that the Bill arouses a great deal of emotion and concern among my hon. Friends and some Conservative Members, but no hon. Member should feel ashamed about their emotion and concern, particularly when the jobs of their constituents are at stake. Therefore I make no apology for attacking the motion. I said on a previous occasion that this was a bastard proposal. My view has not changed. One could also describe it as a pirate measure. I do not understand why the motion that the Bill should be carried over to the next Session is before the House.

The Opposition have said in many of our debates that the Bill should be referred back to the Committee. The case for doing so was overwhelming, consequent upon the information that was coming to light week by week and month by month. Since we last debated it, it has become even more of a pirate measure. In all fairness, therefore, it should go back to the Committee.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has made an important point about the Bill being sent back to the Committee for re-examination. It would not be the first time that a private Bill was referred back to a Committee for re-examination.

[Mr. Skinner]

Does my hon. Friend believe that, if the Bill were to be referred back to the Committee, which any decent legislature would ensure, the Chair of the Committee would have to be changed?

Mr. Eadie: It would be a legal matter, of course. I tried to assist the Chair when I said that, since we were trapped in legalities, the proceedings of the House ought to be suspended so that the Attorney-General or the Solicitor-General could be asked to make a ruling. My hon. Friend asks whether the Committee's Chairman would have to be changed. There might also have to be new Committee members. My hon. Friend has made a valid point.

The Committee felt that what it was being asked to decide was, to a certain extent, out of bounds: that it was considering not just private legislation but a proposal that involved national energy policy. The Committee's view, therefore, was that the Government should respond to that point. The parliamentary group of hon. Members with mining constituencies sought a meeting with the Government. As a result of the far-reaching consequences of the Bill, which I have described as a bastard Bill and as a pirate Bill, we thought that the Government should respond to what the Committee had said about its belief that the proposal involved national energy policy.

We were received with the ulmost courtesy by very distinguished people—the former Leader of the House and the then Secreary of State for Energy who is now the Secretary of State for Transport. They undertook to provide us with the Government's view on whether the proposal had any implications for national energy policy. I am in no doubt that that was said to us with the best will in the world.

I shall not bore the House with the details. Any independently minded person who examined the proposal with complete objectivity would be bound to agree that since July it has been completely out of date.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does my hon. Friend agree that, as the Committee's recommendations and the conditions that it imposed in its special report have not been met by the Government, the Bill should go back to the Committee?

Mr. Eadie: Yes, it should, but will we, as parliamentarians, be allowed to vote as free individuals?

Part of the difficulty throughout has been that when we met the Government's representatives, they said, "This is not a matter for us. This is a private legislation; it is a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means. He must decide when it will be debated in the House."

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) made a reasonable point. Anyone outside the House listening to what he said would agree that he was developing an argument of sweet reasonableness. The problem is that Conservative Members, with the honourable exception of one or two, are being whipped to defeat whatever arguments are advanced. Mention was made of winning the argument but losing the vote—we have won the argument.

Mr. McCartney: It is accepted that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is the Whip. My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) was talking about hon. Members being free to vote. An entry in the Register of Members' Interests on the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes says:

"Overseas Visits . . . 2-5 February 1988, to South Africa, as the guest of the Office of the South African Coal Industry."

The hon. Member will be entering the Lobby with a direct interest in what happens to the Bill. That is a public scandal which brings the House into total disrepute.

Mr. Eadie: I can understand my hon. Friend's emotions, which are shared by many Labour Members.

I wish that this debate was being televised. I am a super-idealist, but when people read about their conduct, Conservative Members' day of reckoning will come.

My hon. Friend for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) should not apologise for feeling emotional, because thousands of jobs are at stake. However, we must continue to argue against this bastard Bill.

Mr. Skinner: Does my hon. Friend agree that if this debate were being televised, anyone watching would say, "It is a fine state of affairs when National Union of Mineworkers-sponsored Members of Parliament were not allowed to sit on the Committee that considered the Bill because they are too close to the subject, but a Tory Member of Parliament can not only sit on the Committee but chair it while he is representing an interest through the British Chemical Engineering Contractors Association"? Would not an independent observer say, "There is something corrupt in the House of Commons when that can be allowed to take place. There is no place for miners, but places for Tory Members to represent the bosses who are pushing the Bill through"? There is something dirty about that.

Mr. Eadie: Of course there is something anomalous in what my hon. Friend says. I was the Minister with responsibilities for coal in the last Labour Government for five and a quarter years. I remember that I received a note from a civil servant saying that I should not be dealing with an aspect of the coal industry because I was so emotionally involved as a coal miner. What a cheek! I am pleased to say that the Secretary of State made it perfectly clear what responsibilities I had.

Mr. Skinner: I bet that was Bernard Ingham.

Mr. Eadie: As a matter of fact, it was.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does my hon. Friend agree that if this had been a report from a local government committee to a full council, the full council would have sent it back to the committee? If that did not happen, Conservative Members would say that the district auditor should investigate such corruption and whether there was a case to answer. If the mother of Parliaments cannot send back to the Committee something that is suspicious, we are worthy of suspicion ourselves.

Mr. Eadie: I know that there are many views of Parliament and that sometimes people are very cynical about it. I say to them that they can be either Members of Parliament or outsiders. Labour Members have more reason to preserve this House than anyone. If we leave here, we have nowhere else to go. This is a forum for discussion, and our forefathers made great sacrifices to ensure that we would have a Parliament in which we can voice the opinions of the people whom we represent. We are not anti-parliamentarian by any stretch of the imagination. If we destroy Parliament and the way that it works, we destroy the opportunity for putting the case of the people whom we represent. I make no apology for defending the House.

At the outset of my remarks I mentioned the great change that has taken place. I showed how, since July, the Government's energy policy had changed. I said that that policy is out of date, which itself is a good reason for the Bill to be referred back to the Committee. It is a good reason for the Government to reconsider it, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) knows that we have asked the Government to do that.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): My hon. Friend said that the document on Government energy policy was out of date when it was forwarded to my hon. Friend in his capacity as secretary of the miners' group. That document was not only out of date but was compiled at the same time as the document that was leaked to the *Financial Times* publication "Power in Europe". It is contradictory to the information given in the letter from the Secretary of State for Energy. At about the same time as that letter, the Department of Energy gave evidence to the Select Committee about several matters, including redundancies in the coal industry. The information given to the Select Committee was contradictory to the information that we were given in the letter from the Secretary of State, and different from the information in the leaked document.

The Government's energy policy is upside down. It is absolutely futile for us to consider this Bill. Some 30,000 jobs in the coal industry are at stake because 15 million tonnes of coal will be imported through the Humber ports if the Bill is passed. Will my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) reflect on that and on the fact that there is no representative from the Department of Energy on the Government Front Bench and nor is the Leader of the House there?

Mr. Eadie: That could be the subject of a speech which would probably last for all the time that we have available. My hon. Friend poses a pertinent question and if I have a chance to make this speech, that question will be the substance of my remarks, because he is correct.

I must plead guilty of inaccuracy because I said that the Government's statement was out of date. The words were out of date because, at that time, we did not have the knowledge that we now have. It is a damning indictment of the Government that they had the temerity to write that statement, knowing perfectly well that there was a Cabinet document that we knew nothing about, and which was subsequently leaked. That was clandestine and it must cause embarrassment to the Government to be found out issuing words that do not relate to reality.

Mr. Barron: Before my hon. Friend goes on to make his speech, does he agree that the most damning indictment of the Government in their involvement with Associated British Ports, is that, at the beginning of the Third Reading debate on the Bill, the Minister refused to get up and to offer answers about the special report or about the way the Bill had gone through the House? It will be interesting to see whether the Government have come, prepared with a statement, to pass comment on the implications of the Bill, as we proceed towards 10 o'clock.

Mr. Eadie: I am glad that I do not have to respond on behalf of the Government and that I am not responsible for what they do. I am not a supporter of the Government and I am always anxious to point that out in letters to my constituents. I do not know what the Minister will say, whether he will respond or try to defend the indefensible.

I shall list three aspects of how things have changed. I do not want to incur the wrath of some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, but I have to say that the nuclear power argument has changed dramatically even when one considers the words of the Secretary of State in the document. I shall not go through the papers and quote exactly, but they talked about security of supply, a price that the consumer could afford and a proper pricing policy. That is old hat.

I do not know what the Government will do about an indigenous energy policy but it is well known—in fact it appeared in *The Observer*, at the weekend—that we will not be able to build any more pressurised water reactors after Sizewell B, because they are too expensive.

Mr. Barron: It should be on record when we are talking about building PWRs that the cost per KW hour could be somewhere between two and three times more than using British fossil fuels to generate electricity.

Mr. Eadie: If I had been able to proceed, I would have been able to produce ample documentation to substantiate the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), but he was right to intervene. When one is speaking one can omit details. I am not chastising my hon. Friend, but pointing out that it was my intention to mention that issue.

I base my remarks about nuclear policy not on anything that I have calculated, but on a letter that we received from the Secretary of State for Energy about a country that was trying its best to have an indigenous energy supply, and that was trying to consider "security of supply". I was astonished to read that at the beginning of the week.

Many right hon. and hon. Members have made a meal of the fact that we are importing 1,500 to 2,000 MW of electricity from France. We did the best we could and we tried to find out the cost of that electricity coming across the Channel link. We know what it costs them in France but we can never find out what we have to pay.

I listened to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at Question Time today. He was complaining about subsidisation within the Common Market.

Mr. Skinner: Is that the man whose Spitting Image flatters him?

Mr. Eadie: I am talking about the man who said that he has no objection to a 12-year-old kid having a plastic card, as long as he has money in the bank. I am glad we are at one.

The importation of cheap energy from France will probably have to cease, and the reason that has been given is the drought. At the moment, France is supposed to be madly importing coal to start up coal-fired power stations to sustain indigenous sources of energy. It has been said in many debates in the House that if one depends upon energy supplies from any area, whether it is politically unstable or not, one places British people in jeopardy.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend will be aware that we have asked the Government on many occasions to state the price that we pay for French nuclear power. In my view

[Mr. Hardy]

—and it is a generally accepted view—it is an example of dumping. My hon. Friend may like to know that new initiatives are currently being pursued in Britain and elsewhere to ascertain that price. It might be useful, since it is relevant to this debate, if the Minister came clean rather than having to be dragged kicking and screaming to divulge that information.

Does my hon. Friend agree that another serious danger for energy in Britain is the policy which is now being pursued of importing coal at a lower price into Britain than into other European countries? This new port capacity will be used to do that—to smash the British coal industry. When they have succeeded, they will be able to put the price up. That is just as foolish as importing French nuclear power.

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend is spot on. The dream of many countries is to have a safe, secure indigenous source of energy. We in this country are fortunate in that we have an abundance of energy reserves. Some people used to say that we had sufficient coal for 600 years—when I was Minister, we probably had sufficient coal for 1,000 years.

We have been greatly helped by the exploration for North sea oil. When the seismic studies were perfected, we found that we were studying coal measures that we had not thought existed. The so-called exporters who want to destroy our capacity to produce our own energy have been terribly wrong. I have been a Member of Parliament long enough to remember what the experts said to us about North sea oil. They said that oil could never be produced from the North sea because of the hostile climate, with winds of more than 100 mph and waves of more than 100 ft. The Norwegians said the same thing but put it in another context. They said that we could drink the only oil we could ever get from the North sea, and, of course, they were wrong.

The biggest blunder by the experts was on gas reserves. That is why we must consider the proposition lying behind the Bill. They said that North sea gas would be gobbled up by the year 2010. We know differently now. Norway and Britain probably have sufficient gas for more than 100 years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has talked about the experts. They say, "You need only close the pits, wave a magic wand whenever you need it and you will be able to get the coal." It does not work like that. Miners these days must be highly skilled. They will not sit around on the dole waiting on their country to decide to open its pits again. It is also a physical impossibility to reopen all the pits. One can mothball, but only to a limited extent.

Mr. Skinner: Not Lawson. He couldn't do it, could he?

Mr. Eadie: I do not know. I shall give an example from my constituency. After hundreds of years, there is no longer any coal mining in Midlothian.

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): It is a shame.

Mr. Eadie: It is a disgrace. That has happened not because there is no coal——

Mr. Hardy: There is low-sulphur coal.

Mr. Eadie: There is very low-sulphur coal. There is no coal mining because of the Government's policy. They said that it was too expensive to produce the coal.

We have a new development in Midlothian, which is called Monktonhall colliery. The authorities spent £40 million or £50 million on its development. The work went on below the Firth of Forth. The men stopped drilling because it became too boring as they were finding more and more coal reserves. British Coal, aided and abetted by the Government, decided that Monktonhall had to close. The authorities thought about it again and said, "We have spent that £40 million or £50 million on developing some of these seams. We will mothball the development." It has been mothballed for about a year, in the hope that things will improve. If Monktonhall colliery is closed because of the water problem—thousands of gallons of water a day are pumped up—the coal measures in that vast area will probably be lost for ever.

That is not energy policy. It is sheer vandalism. Let us remember that the Government are destroying what is a priceless asset for generations yet unborn.

Mr. Jack Thompson: I wholly support my hon. Friend's point. Is he aware that the coal reserves in Scotland are echoed down the east coast? In my area in Northumberland, the mine in which I worked was so far out under the North sea that we always claimed that we were entitled to duty-free goods. We were 6 to 10 km out. One of the mines in Northumberland was closed in the 1960s because of bad management decisions. The management decided to use a technique that was not appropriate under the sea. Millions upon millions of tonnes of coal reserves in that area have been written off because the mine had to be flooded after a fire. That is the situation about which my hon. Friend is talking. Those coal reserves are to be found not only in Scotland but along the east coast of England.

Mr. Eadie: As a Minister with responsibility for coal, I was privileged to see the results of many of the examinations which were carried out. I had some in my house but was not able to lay my hands on them. My hon. Friend is talking about the Cannibie coalfield, which starts at Dumfries and goes on and on through Cumberland. It is probably the largest unexplored coalfield in Britain. Mining that coal is a matter of investment. If pits were opened, miners in Wansbeck, Cumberland and Dumfries would be employed.

People talk about limited coal reserves, but Britain is a rich nation in terms of its energy reserves of oil, gas and coal. We should be worried about silly propositions like the Bill and talk of importing coal, thereby putting our miners out of work and destroying our capacity to produce coal.

Mr. Lofthouse: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), the sponsor of the Bill, heard the words expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) about closing coal mines and then reopening them. Only today the chairman of British Coal, Sir Robert Haslam, informed the Energy Select Committee that if a coal mine is closed, it cannot be reopened. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is aware of that.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know that you have to deal with some tricky situations in the House but we are coming to a sorry pass. The sponsors of the Bill are sitting under the Gallery and there is a South African pin-striped fellow who has not yet opened his eyes. Despite all the talk, he is using the Chamber as a doss house—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Chair is accustomed to dealing with tricky situations. However, as the hon. Gentleman knows, one is not supposed to refer to people present but not in the Chamber. However, the point has been taken.

Mr. Eadie: Some of us are sentimental and if someone is sleeping, we do not want to disturb them unduly. However, perhaps the Badge Messengers could point out that he should go to his bed.

Mr. Cunliffe (Leigh): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We should suspend the House for 10 minutes. I an extremely concerned about our honourable visitor—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cunliffe: We should suspend the sitting—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. Eadie: I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Baron: Does my hon. Friend agree that we could look at no better region than the Scottish coalfields if we are studying the Government's energy policy, or the lack of it? There is a sub judice rule in the House and it is not my intention to comment on any particular case. However, two public bodies—British Coal and the South of Scotland electricity board—are currently in court arguing about contracts. That sums up the Government's commitment to any form of energy policy.

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend tempts me to deal with the absurd position in which we now find ourselves. The Government are supposed to reflect the needs of the nation but they are standing back and in the courts we have an expensive legal battle between the South of Scotland electricity board and British Coal.

The situation is becoming a farce. The problems are convoluted by the fact that last year the South of Scotland electricity board decided to import Chinese coal. If one is to depend on a particular area for one's energy supplies, one must look for areas of political stability. I do not regard South Africa as an area of political stability and I do not think that anybody would disagree that China can hardly be deemed as such. When we question the Government, they say that the case in the courts is a matter of commercial judgment for the bodies involved. That is an abdication of what good government should be about.

Mr. Jack Thompson: Is my hon. Friend aware that in May and June this year some of my parliamentary colleagues and I were in China during the student demonstrations? The instability still exists and my hon. Friend was right to say that China is not politically stable. We should not depend upon imports of Chinese coal. It will be 20 or 30 years before that country becomes stable again.

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend adds substance to my earlier argument that we have an abundance of indigenous energy. I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth say that some coal was low in sulphur content. However, some of the coals that we import are high in sulphur content. Earlier, I saw the green Minister, the Secretary of State for the Environment, sitting on the Front Bench. What are his views when the Cabinet decides on imports of coal? The Government supposedly went green. They are not very blue at times, but they are certainly not green either.

The coal deal made by the South of Scotland electricity board was absurd, yet it was done in Parliament's name. The price paid bore no relation to the cost of producing energy indigenously.

Mr. Meale: Is my hon. Friend aware that only this week, 20,000 tonnes of Colombian coal, dug by small children, was imported on the east coast? For the past two years, large amounts of South African coal, dug by slave labour, has been imported via Rotterdam, where it is mixed with cheap coal, imported into this country and distributed. Is my hon. Friend also aware that an ex-employee of British Coal, who was a senior director of British Coal, is one of the directors of the main company involved in the mixing and sale of that coal?

Mr. Eadie: I know many people who are engaged in business and some of them are decent people. However, I also come across many people who argue that if it is good for business, it is justified. This is a question of morality. The analogy is to say that it is right to have cheaper coal even if it is produced by 10 or 11-year-old children. What kind of nation are we if we are prepared to countenance that? We are even encouraging it to some extent by buying such coal.

The Prime Minister talks about returning to good Victorian moral values. I do not know what moral values are for 1989 and 1990, but I know that my constituents take gross exception to the fact that as a nation, we argue on the basis that if it is good business and if it is profitable, we must carry on with it. I gave an earlier example which typified the Government's philosophy. When the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was asked a question today about 12-year-old children having plastic credit cards, he did not say that that was a bit much or unfair, as most people would have said. Instead, he had to bring the business aspect into his answer. He said that there was nothing wrong with it provided that 12-year-old children had the money. A Government who preach such moral values are wrong.

Mr. Hardy: Does my hon. Friend recognise that in addition to the feckless morality and social stupidity of a Government with such a policy, there is also demonstrable incompetence, which allows a current trade deficit of £18 billion a year which will certainly rise? Does my hon. Friend agree that that means that we shall soon see a pound-dollar relationship at least 25 cents lower than it is now? That will mean that although the Government believe that they are signing good deals to import coal from Colombia or elsewhere, in five or six years' time at the most, this country will find that it cannot afford the new price as a result of the changed sterling relationship.

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. We have often heard that if one destroys one's indigenous

[Mr. Eadie]

energy capacity, which is the key to a nation's requirements, and does not have sufficient energy sources, one dies. In the long run, a Government who subscribe to such a policy will be at the mercy of others.

A point was made about the financial problems that Governments encounter when they pursue such policies. Reference was also made to the estimated £20 billion trade deficit. To some extent, the Opposition are trying to help the Government and our constitutents. If we allow the importation of 15 million to 25 million tonnes of foreign coal, we will put extra pressure on our trade balance. Of course, we will never then be able to tackle the £20 billion defecit. It is absolutely crazy that the Government should be conniving. They are either sleeping or whipping the measure through. I cannot understand the crying need for this motion or for this three-hour debate,. It is absolutely unnecessary.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): My hon. Friend will have noticed that one of the excuses—it can be put no better than that—given by Conservative Members is that there is a need for a port in that area and that coal was only of secondary importance. My hon. Friend will be aware of my interest in the port transport industry: since the abolition of the dock labour scheme, there has been over-capacity in our ports. We need another port like we need a hole in our national head. I hope that my hon. Friend will dismiss the argument about the need for further port capacity in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eadie: I greatly appreciate my hon. Friend's intervention. I was seeking to emphasise—perhaps overemphasise—the energy argument. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) has brought a new dimension into the argument. Times have changed since this madcap, bastard Bill was introduced. My hon. Friend is saying that events have overtaken the Bill. He pointed out that the argument about port capacity is no longer valid. The House should be grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. There has been a cloth argument in favour of getting the go-ahead to import more than 15 million tonnes of foreign coal.

Mr. Allen McKay: My hon. Friend is exposing the Secretary of State's double-dealing in his conduct of the Government's energy policy. I have a copy of a leaked document that mentions phasing in coal imports over five years. The Government are already talking about five years. The document states:

> "In such a significant closure round, it would be almost impossible to shield the UDM areas from further closures, given that British Coal have already fallen over backwards to maintain in existence relatively high cost pits in Nottinghamshire."

Since the miners' strike, the Government have pursued the closure of NUM pits and kept open the high-cost Nottingham pits, as part of their ideological policy against the National Union of Mineworkers.

Mr. Eadie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Perhaps later I shall be able to make the speech that I would like to make, at which time I can deal with the points raised by my hon. Friend. I have all the vital statistics and I am sure that the House would like me to place them on the record. I shall tell my hon. Friend now in case I forget to tell him later that the facts he quotes are correct.

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): Understandably, my hon. Friend has dwelt on the consequences of the Bill on the coal industry. All Opposition Members expressed extreme concern at every stage of the Bill. The promoter of the Bill says that it will have no impact whatever on the mining communities. However, he introduced another dimension which I hope my hon. Friend will consider. He says that the Bill's main purpose is to introduce extra capacity for importing chemicals. Perhaps my hon. Friend will consider that aspect, because it may pose danger to his constituents and to the constituents of other hon. Members. The Bill may result in the transport of toxic chemicals through our constituencies. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) currently has a toxic waste problem in his constituency caused by imported chemicals.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) will be able to respond to those points.

Mr. Eadie: I take your strictures, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. My strictures are that interventions should be pertinent or should be questions, and they should not be so long.

Mr. Eadie: I take the strictures, but I understand how my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) feels. He was a little emotional in describing the matter, but he need not apologise for that because I know that he speaks with great experience of this matter. My hon. Friend's first point was about the impact of the Bill on mining. Anyone who tries to suggest that the provision of facilities capable of handling the import of 15 million tonnes of foreign coal will not have an impact on mining is either not relating himself to reality or is economical with the truth.

We are not merely discussing the impact on one area of imports of coal because the importation of foreign coal touches every part of these islands. It touches south Wales, the north-east, Scotland, Lancashire—I could go through all the regions. It would have an impact throughout the United Kingdom. To some extent that is why the proposition has engendered such emotion in people from every part of the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth spoke about toxic waste, a matter of great controversy. At the moment I am concerned about the transportation of such waste by rail, quite apart from the possibility of its being conveyed from the ports. I accept that the toxic waste generated must be disposed of. My major criticism, however, is that, because of Government policy, we have not invested the necessary money to dispose of it by the best technological method available.

Vitrification was proposed long ago—it would not solve the problem of toxic waste, but it would make it easier to handle. Somewhere along the line, however, it was decided not to invest money in that process. The failure to do so has, of course, brought anxiety to my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth, to those working at the ports as well as people living in different regions. Some countries approach this problem in a much more realistic manner and they already vitrify toxic waste—despite the fact that we invented that process.

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): I know that my hon. Friend has had a long association with the Fire Brigades Union. He will be aware that that union resists the further development of the transportation of chemical waste. The fire brigade performs a tremendous task along with the ambulance service, which has been treated so shabbily by the Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) will get on to the substance of his speech, which he has been promising us for some time now.

Mr. Eadie: Further to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields)—it is perfectly in order for me to comment on what he said—I know that the organisations to which he referred support the stand that has been taken in opposition to the Bill. He is entitled to that response from me so that it can go on the record. We are very dependent upon the emergency services—sometimes we do not want to be—if we are involved in a road accident or a fire. Those people do heroic work. It is right that what my hon. Friend has said should go on the record—they support our opposition to the Bill.

Mr. Michael Welsh: The two electricity generating companies have asked that they be able to reduce the amount of coal that they receive from British Coal from 25 million tonnes to below 60 million tonnes while getting the rest from abroad. Does my hon. Friend agree that that means that one third of British collieries will close? It means that the Nottinghamshire coalfields will disappear. What happens when something goes wrong with the importation of that coal? My hon. Friend will know that the critical life of a pit is 10 to 15 years. One cannot just find new coal. If we import coal we will be going into the unknown and generations of people will suffer as they discover that there is no fuel for them. That is what will happen within 15 years. Does my hon. Friend agree that that scenario is correct?

Mr. Eadie: I confirm what my hon. Friend has said and I hope to do so at even greater length later. A study of the leaked Cabinet paper bears out exactly what my hon. Friend has said. Those suggestions come not from a particular group on the Labour Benches, but from the Government. That is the important thing that we must understand. We are not talking about something that has been cooked up, but about Government statements. Before the debate is concluded I hope that I shall have the opportunity to raise some further questions so that they are put on the record.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) for allowing me to say a few words. I have previously attended debates on this subject because it is one of the most important which we have discussed during my time here. I have listened to the Prime Minister over and over again saying how she hates sanctions against South Africa, that the sanctions would hurt the South African working people, and that working is the way for South African people to obtain their freedom. That is absolutely and directly connected with the issue which we are discussing.

We all know that these ports are a deliberate attack on the miners. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), who represents the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, knows full well that having used the UDM the Government will ruthlessly sacrifice it and all the workers of South Africa, including the miners. They know that the coal will go to Holland, where there are no mines, and that the coal will come here from specially arranged ports in Holland. We know that and they know that, and the South African workers defend the British workers as we defend them. That is the reality of the struggle which is going on.

The Conservative party supports trade unions in Poland, and so it should, but it does not support them here. The Government's sanctions are against the miners of this country. They believe in sanctions against our miners and pretend that they are not in favour of sanctions against South African miners. Such hypocrisy is almost unbelievable and must be fought, even though they have the will of us in the end.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you refer to page 227 of Erskine May's "Parliamentary Practice" on the matter of the misconduct of strangers in Galleries? For the third time in this House we have to raise the fact that the representative of the Parliamentary agents, Sherwoods, is guilty of gross discourtesy to this House by sleeping under the Gallery. He is not someone who is a stranger to the House and visiting it for the first time, but a professional, paid individual who knows the practice of this House. In accordance with Standing Orders, will the Serjeant at Arms remove the person because it is a gross discourtesy to this House for such an agent to come here and conduct himself in such a fashion?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but hon. Members should not refer to strangers in the Gallery. I assure the hon. Member that I have dealt with the matter in the firmest possible manner.

Mr. Eadie: I must respond briefly to what my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) has tried to argue in relation to South Africa. If the House has the patience to listen to me I shall describe what has happened in relations to the South African coal miners whose wages and conditions are a disgrace.

In the past, I have had the opportunity to speak to some of the leaders of the South African coal miners. I wish to make a point which I have repeatedly tried to make during this debate: the importation of energy does not assist our balance of payments problem. Worse than that, when we have an abundance of such energy of our own, it seems suicidal that we should consider contracting our indigenous energy capacity in order to buy energy supplies from overseas. Such a consideration is bedevilled by the fact that the energy is produced by semi-slave labour in South Africa.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hillsborough will accept that tonight we have been arguing that we want no part of that. One aspect of this debate has dealt with the morality and ethics involved in this matter. There is no morality in importing coal which is produced by 11-year-old children or slave labour in South Africa. Certainly we are very much against it.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I fully accept that the Bill increases port capacity and has implications for the coalmining industry, energy policy and the importation of coal. I have not sought to intervene earlier

[Mr. Peter Griffiths]

because the Bill does not directly and immediately affect my constituents. However, does the hon. Gentleman agree that at the beginning of this evening's debate many of his hon. Friends were seeking to deal with the motion, which has considerable significance for parliamentary and constitutional procedure, and it would be a great pity if between now and 10 o'clock those who wish to debate the substance of the motion were denied the opportunity to do so?

Mr. Eadie: I make no complaints about the points that the hon. Gentleman is making. If the hon. Gentleman was in the House earlier, he will know that I raised a point of order. I did not like what happened in the House tonight. I told Mr. Deputy Speaker that a way out of the impasse would be to suspend the sitting for 10 minutes to allow the Attorney-General or the Solicitor-General to rule on the legality of the motion. It is only a guess, but we might then have been able to proceed. I do not know what can be done about the legality of the matter. My hon. Friends also have a view on that. The measure should not have been proceeded with tonight.

In the course of my remarks and in trying to respond to interventions, I have been trying to back up that argument. The hon. Gentleman is entitled to disagree, but I hope that he will appreciate that some of the points that my hon. Friends have been putting to me, and some of the points that I have been putting, have sought to substantiate the fact that the Bill is out of date and that this carry-over motion should not have been before us tonight.

What happens in the next Session is a matter for us all to play for, but why on earth, with the Government under so much pressure to get their business through and with the House meeting at 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning, is this matter being treated with such urgency?

I might be told that I am behaving in an extraordinary way. I am not criticising anybody. The Chairman of Ways and Means may have been duty bound to put this measure on the Order Paper. However, I can say in all sincerity that I have been a Member of the House for getting on for 25 years and I know that any Government who do not want a particular thing generally succeed in their objective if they have the necessary majority.

We are reasonable men. The Leader of the House sent for some of us and we had a discussion. We said, "Look, there doesn't seem to be any problem here. You are saying that this is only a carry-over motion and that the matter will then be debated in the next parliamentary Session regardless of whether the matter is of the minor importance that you suggest." But if the matter has the insignificance that was suggested, why are we spending three hours debating this when the House is chockfull of parliamentary legislation that must be completed before the Queen's Speech?

If the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) feels embarrassed by what has happened tonight, we have a solution to the problem. We should not proceed with the motion. Nothing would be lost or gained if we did that and the promoters of the Bill would be completely up to date when they had to produce a fresh proposition to present to the House. The hon. Gentleman and I would be better informed. Since the Bill was first presented to the House so many things have happened. That is a reasonable solution as it would do away with all the hassle and all the difficulty.

I do not like what has happened here tonight. I have already expressed my views about Parliament, parliamentary democracy, the authority of the Chair and the conduct of business. To some extent, Parliament and the Government have been injured tonight.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. It is really very kind of him to be so generous with his time. Will he accept from me that we are debating a procedural motion designed to carry the Bill over so that further discussion can take place? It is certainly the Government's view that there is nothing unusual about having a motion in the name of the Chairman of Ways and Means. As the Government are always neutral in respect of private Bills —*[Interruption.]* We believe that it is wholly consistent with that position that the motion in the name of the Chairman of Ways and Means for the carry-over should be supported. Therefore, if there is a vote, the Government will recommend to the House that the motion should be carried so that there can be further debate, and all the issues that have been raised this evening could be pursued on Third Reading. Will he therefore accept from me that it would be the Government's recommendation that the carry-over motion should be passed by the House?

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Why should we accept a statement like that from the Minister at the Dispatch Box when we know very well that on previous occasions when we have debated this Bill, all the Ministers have been wheeled in, including the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Energy, to vote in favour of it? They have a Whip on it——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Eadie: Let me attempt to cool the anger of my hon. Friends. I want to respond to the Minister. It is unfortunate that the Minister is obviously not privy to what has happened. I do not wish to delay the House, but I could quote verbatim the Government's attitude, as it is contained in the letter I have here about the Bill. The Government argue that they want to be as reasonably objective as possible, but at the end of the day, it is a matter of ways and means. I and my hon. Friends are quite entitled to oppose the motion. The Government may disagree with us, but we are entitled to vote against the motion. But—this is what angers my hon. Friends—we know that there is a Whip on the motion. Therefore, the Government lack the candour that they should show on the matters.

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Eadie: I shall give way to my hon. Friend when I have answered the Minister. I am not revealing any secrets as I respect confidentiality, but I was asked by the Leader of the House and the deputy Leader of the House to go and see them. They asked what was the problem. I have a record of what I said then and also of what I said when we met the Leader of the House and the Secretary of State. We explained the problem to them. I know that the Minister was not privy to our discussions, so I do not criticise him. We asked his Cabinet Minister why it was necessary to debate the measure tonight when the Government have such a pressure of business.

The Minister said that we were dealing with a technicality. Whether or not he believes that, he has been sitting at the Dispatch Box for most of the debate and one thing must be impressed upon his mind—that my hon. Friends do not think that this is but a simple technicality. If anything is marked on his mind, it must be how strongly my hon. Friends feel.

I said earlier that Governments with a commanding majority generally get their way. I am not suggesting that the Government would breach the private legislation procedure and usurp the powers of the Chairman of Ways and Means. Nevertheless, had the Government so wanted, they could have prevented this debate and all the agony felt by my hon. Friends. The matter is not as simple as the Minister has suggested, and we cannot allow the measure to proceed.

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend consider the content of the Minister's intervention? He suggested that, if the carry-over motion was accepted, there would be a further opportunity for debate. Is it not true that if the motion is accepted, that will curtail further debate? If the Minister is anxious for further debate, what could be more satisfactory than to allow the Bill to lapse with other Bills on Prorogation so that it can go through all its procedures in a new Session of Parliament? If the Minister wants more debate, he should advance that argument. Does not all this demonstrate the Government's double standards and forked tongue?

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend argues with sweet reasonableness. However, I was even more reasonable when, at the outset, I said that because there had been great changes in energy policy—absolutely devastating changes—since the Bill was first born, the proper procedure would be to accept paragraph 26 of the Committee's report, which said that because the issue covered all aspects of energy policy it did not feel competent to make a judgment, and that it was a matter for Government to decide. My proposition was different from that of my hon. Friend. It was that we should decide to send the Bill back to the Committee, which would then examine it in the light of all that had happened, and report back to the House. Then we would have a proper, up-to-date report.

Mr. Hardy: May I add to the serious point made by my hon. Friend? Would he care to remind the Minister—a Transport Minister is on the Bench at present—that, just before the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill was, unfortunately, passed, a high-quality survey of port capacity in the United Kingdom was carried out by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, on whose council I then sat—as will be confirmed by my hon. Friend the Minister for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), who is now a member of that council. That survey demonstrated beyond doubt that there was no need for the investment on the Orwell that destroyed a site of considerable importance.

There have been other approvals of dock investment since then, but the basis of the argument advanced against the Orwell investment is even stronger today because of that. We have, however, had no real opportunity to consider the transport implications of the Bill, because economic and energy implications have been overriding. Does not the question of transport investment strengthen the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that proceedings on the Bill should start all over again? Would the Minister care to deny what I have said?

Mr. Eadie: I do not know how long I have been speaking—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not long enough."] Indeed, I have not even started my speech. I do not want to fall out with my hon. Friends at this juncture; nor do I wish to be sandwiched between my hon. Friends the Members for Wentworth and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). I was trying to demonstrate that I have been, to some extent, an example of sweet reasonableness. I had no intention of deviating from the proposition that I advanced at the outset as a solution to the problem.

I do not object to what my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South has said; I am merely saying that we are giving the Minister not one but two options. If I could persuade the House to accept either, it would get us out of our present unnecessary impasse. I am astonished that as yet we have had no response from the Minister, but I suspect that he is not empowered to respond to the present climate of debate: if he were, he would surely have accepted one of those two propositions.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) is probably one of the greatest authorities in the House on the mining industry, and, in his long speech, he has made some pertinent points and offered some solutions. The hon. Gentleman has talked about deep feelings, but does he not feel that they may be a little shallow, in view of the fact that only 51 of his colleagues turned out to vote against the Bill on Second Reading on 23 June 1988?

Mr. Michael Welsh: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you could rule on the point that has just been made by the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart)? Is it relevant to the carry-over motion?

Madam Deputy Speaker: No breach whatsoever of our Standing Orders has been committed.

Mr. Eadie: At the outset of the debate, I said how emotional and indignant my hon. Friends feel about the motion. The point made by the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) was synthetic. I made the mistake of courteously allowing him to intervene, but I am bound to say that he is the victim of his own Government's deception. The leaked Cabinet papers may have a devastating impact on jobs in the Nottinghamshire area and in his constituency. I predict that many Conservative Members will not be re-elected. They must be worried about their prospects. We have only the power of argument and persuasion, but Conservative Members ought to be able to exert some influence over the Government in a way that we cannot do.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman has raised a number of points about the Government's energy policy and their attitude towards various other matters. It is entirely legitimate that he should pursue them in correspondence with Ministers, at meetings with Ministers, at Question Time and in debates that the Opposition wish to initiate. So that there is no confusion about it, I ought to point out

[Mr. Portillo]

that we are debating the carry-over motion and that none of the matters to which the hon. Gentleman has referred is relevant to that question. I believe that I can explain to the hon. Gentleman in a way that he will understand why the Government support the motion of the Chairman of Ways and Means to have the Bill carried over to another Session when it could be further debated.

Mr. Eadie: I am grateful to the Minister for elaborating on the Government's point of view, but my hon. Friends and I have already written to the appropriate Ministers and asked them to explain the Government's energy policy. We have also asked them to explain why they sent to us documents that they knew were out of date.

The hon. Gentleman ought to convey to his ministerial colleagues our view that these debates should take place not in Opposition time but in Government time. The Government are responsible for the leaked Cabinet papers and for the mess that they have made of the nuclear power industry. They were responsible for finding out that nuclear power has become so expensive that it is quite possible that we shall be unable to build another pressurised water reactor. The Government must say why electricity, reputed to be derived from nuclear power and equivalent to the output of one massive power station, will be imported from France. We are told that, having accepted that deal, we may not be able to import that energy. I hope that the Minister will convey my remarks to the Secretary of State for Energy, because they are important for energy policy.

Mr. Barron: In view of the Minister's remarks about the neutrality of the Government, perhaps my hon. Friend will ask the Leader of the House for a debate in Government time on the neutrality of the Government's payroll vote when it is exercised on private business.

Mr. Eadie: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. Debates on the Bill have illustrated the convoluted nature of private business.

To some extent, the Bill has been under a guise, and I make no personal criticism of anyone in the Chair of anyone associated with the business procedures. To say that Conservative Members will have a chance to vote without being subject to whipping by the Government is untrue. Hon. Members are concerned about the private procedure. It is untrue to suggest that hon. Members will be voting freely in the Lobby, because Conservative Members have been whipped—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I must be able to hear the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie).

Mr. Eadie: I had a friendly meeting with the Leader of the House, who received us with the utmost courtesy. I told him about a member of the Government going through the Lobby, but that Mr. Speaker, in his wisdom, decided that the matter—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If hon. Members wish to hold meetings, perhaps they would do so on the other side of the swing doors.

Mr. Michael Brown *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 190, Noes 169.

Division No. [illegible]] **[[illegible]**

AYES

Alison, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hill, James
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Davis and
Mr. Nicholas Bennett.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hood, Jimmy
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly:—

The House divided: Ayes 190, Noes 169.

Division No. 367] **[10.10 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hill, James
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*

Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Davis and
Mr. Nicholas Bennett.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hood, Jimmy
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and shall be ordered to be read the third time;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session.

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.

Nitrate Pollution

10.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4136/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of the Environment on 19th October 1989 relating to control of nitrate pollution; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that Community action to control nitrate pollution takes sufficient account of the range of circumstances in each Member State.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sitting immediately behind the Minister, but I cannot hear a word that he is saying.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I accept that point of order. Would hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber do so a little less noisily so that those who are interested in hearing what the Minister has to say about this important motion can do so?

Mr. Moynihan: The Scrutiny Committee, in its 14th report of this Session, recommended that the House should consider the proposals for a Council directive concerning the protection of fresh, coastal and marine waters against pollution caused by nitrate from diffused sources. The debate has been arranged as the result of that recommendation and I should like to emphasise the value that the Government place on hearing the opinion of the House on such proposals. I assure the House that the Government will carefully consider the points made by right hon. and hon. Members this evening.

Before describing the Commission's proposals and saying something about the Government's response to them, the House might find it helpful if I say a few words about the current stage of negotiations.

Right hon. and hon. Members will be pleased to hear that this debate is well timed. The first substantive consideration of the Commission's proposal by Environment Ministers will be at the Council in November, so my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will want to know the views of the House in advance of that discussion. However, we do not expect a final agreement on the detailed terms of the directive at this Council, rather that Ministers will give guidance for the coming negotiations.

The Commission's proposals for this directive were published in January. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health issued an explanatory memorandum on 22 February describing the proposal and, more recently, on 19 October, I issued an updating memorandum on proposed changes to the text, to which I shall refer later.

Lead responsibility for this proposal rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. In view of the potential implications of the proposal for agriculture—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I should appreciate it if the House would come to order. The Minister is attempting to move this motion and he deserves to be heard.

Mr. Moynihan: I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will reply to this debate. This is the first proposal from the Commission to introduce controls on diffuse sources of pollution, which arise from multiple localised small sources of pollution. That is a welcome extension of existing environmental control measures, but means that we are breaking new ground in these negotiations. The directive may come to be seen as a precedent.

In their original form, the proposals would require member states to designate as vulnerable zones areas of land which drain into the following waters: first, surface fresh waters which are intended for use for drinking water and could contain more than 50 mg of nitrate per litre if protective action is not taken; secondly, groundwaters intended to be used for drinking water which contain more than 50 mg of nitrate per litre, or could contain more than this level if protective action is not taken; and thirdly, water which may become eutrophic with nitrate as the limiting factor, if preventive action is not taken.

The latest Commission proposals have modified the details of these requirements, particularly as they relate to surface waters.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Would my hon. Friend answer a simple question? As he rightly said, this is a precedent, an order relating to the environment which has been produced since the publication of the Single European Act. Has he, or his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, or anyone in the Department of the Environment, asked the Commission how it can present this order when article 130R subsection 2 of the Single European Act makes it clear that any actions in the Community relating to the environment will include the principle that the polluter should pay? Since this measure makes it clear that the general taxpayer and not the polluter will pay, will the Minister explain why he is willing to consider an order which is in direct contravention of the Single European Act?

Mr. Moynihan: I know that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will be covering the important "polluter pays" principle. The 1986 nitrate co-ordination group report concluded that there were problems in applying the principle fairly to nitrate and individual producer levels. We agree with that, for several reasons.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle) *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: I appreciate the technical point that is being raised and I wish to assist my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) by responding to it. First, current concentrations reflect agricultural activity and policy over decades, including the ploughing up of grassland. Secondly, different farmers following the same agricultural practice can produce significantly different nitrate leaching rates because of local circumstances.

Mr. Roberts: Will the Minister accept that his hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is quite right? These policies of declaring nitrate-free zones on a voluntary basis will not mean that the polluter pays but that the polluter is compensated. Compensation will actually be given to those who are polluting.

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman knows that I have given two good reasons why it is impossible to apply the strict polluter pays principle in this example.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Does the Minister agree that the two hon. Members who have just intervened are not correct because until recently what farmers have been doing has been regarded as best agricultural practice? Some sections of the community have now decided that it causes pollution. It will be hard on farmers if we start backdating in this way.

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. Friend makes a valid and important point.

The latest Commission proposals have modified the details of the requirements that I have outlined, particularly as they relate to surface waters. Within those vulnerable zones, member states will be required to introduce controls on the application of chemical fertilisers and livestock manure. In the case of livestock manure, the original proposals were for limits on the amount that could be applied in terms of maximum livestock numbers per hectare of land. The Government would prefer to allow member states more discretion to adjust those limits to take account of local needs. The Commission is now suggesting an alternative limit of 170 kg per hectare. We shall need to consider whether either approach is satisfactory.

Member states would also have to take further preventive measures where necessary. Those are set out in annex 3 of the proposal and could potentially be very far—reaching in their effect.

Although the Commission's proposal deals with the problem of nitrate-limited eutrophication, we do not believe that to be a significant problem in the United Kingdom, and I shall confine my remarks to the other aspects of the proposals. However, the House will be aware that other factors, such as phosphate, may also be limiting agents for eutrophication. We understand that the Commission is likely to bring forward separate proposals to control discharges of waste water, and those may involve controls on phosphate.

The Government have welcomed the Commission's initiative in proposing a directive to control nitrate pollution. However, we see the need for a number of changes to be made to the detailed proposals. In particular, we consider that it is important that the proposals are sufficiently flexible to enable member states to tailor solutions to circumstances found in their particular areas.

The development of Communitywide action to control nitrate is to be welcomed. Most member states have a nitrate problem, and need to take action to protect water. There are rising concentrations of nitrate in many groundwater sources in the United Kingdom. Therefore, independently of the progress of negotiations on this directive, we are taking action domestically to control nitrate reaching water sources. Other member states are also taking measures domestically and the new directive will help to ensure that all member states develop appropriate preventative measures.

The underlying problem confronting Governments in all member states in respect of nitrate, which the directive is intended to address, can be stated simply. It is the potential conflict between ensuring the long-term ready supply of wholesome drinking water, and the plentiful supply of food. In developing policies to control nitrate, there must be recognition of both the environmental and agricultural implications of what is proposed, and a proper balance drawn between them.

The problem of controlling nitrate pollution of water sources is complex. Solutions are likely to depend on factors such as the rainfall and hydrogeology, and on the existing balance of land use in the area. However, as most nitrate found in water comes from agriculture, it is essential that agriculture contributes, where appropriate, to action to reduce high nitrate concentrations in water sources. Of course, farmers should follow good practice in respect of nitrate. But the problem goes deeper and some cases may require measures that go beyond good agricultural practice, including changes in land use.

The Commission's proposals are wholly concerned with preventative measures to control nitrate pollution. However, it is important to select solutions, or combinations of solutions, that are appropriate to local conditions. In some cases, blending before supply of water of higher nitrate content with water from another source low in nitrate, or treatment of the water to remove nitrate, could be the most effective option. Such water engineering solutions are used already——

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will the Minister clarify the issue of blending? Blending has so far been used to try to get within the limits laid down by the EC. Is the Minister saying that the blending will be used to continue to ensure that the water supply meets EC standards as well as the protection zones that will have to go with that, or is he suggesting that blending can be used as an alternative to the protection zones to reduce nitrate pollution in the longer term?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman will know that the objective is to reach the desired standard. My point is that we need to be flexible according to local conditions to make sure that that is achieved at the best possible price in the best interests of the water consumer. To that extent it is not possible simply to draw a general principle, as the hon. Gentleman would seek to establish, but where, for example, in high season there are high levels of nitrates compared with low season, blending with appropriate waters can be the right mechanism. Such water engineering solutions are used already, and will ensure that water supplies contain no more than the permitted level of nitrate.

For the Commission's proposals to be acceptable, it is important that the requirements of the directive are clear. It would be quite wrong for the United Kingdom to agree to a Community directive without being fully aware of the responsibilities it places on the United Kingdom, and the steps necessary to implement the proposal. The Commission proposals could have a major effect over wide areas of the country, but the requirements in the initial draft were obscure. We are pressing in the negotiations to remove ambiguities from the text of the directive. That is particularly important in relation to the circumstances in which land use measures should be introduced. It is also important to establish our responsibilities under the transboundary pollution provisions in respect of the North sea.

The directive must also strike an appropriate balance between the environmental benefits of measures to protect sources and the economic effect of the measures on the

[Mr. Moynihan]

area in question. The treaty of Rome requires all environmental proposals to take account of the economic effect of proposed measures. This approach must apply in this case, for example, on the circumstances governing the introduction of land use measures. We are concerned that that point was not addressed in the Commission's proposals, and we are suggesting ways in which it could be incorporated.

The effect of the directive will, to a large extent, depend on the areas of the country that will be designated as "vulnerable zones" under the proposals. The size of the zones will depend on the way in which any numerical limits in the criteria are interpreted.

As I have said, the initial proposal from the Commission for vulnerable zones to protect surface water was for these to be required whenever the nitrate concentration of water in a river exceeded 50 mg per litre. That is a very strict test, particularly in view of the natural variability of nitrate in river water to which I have just alluded. It would require that river water be maintained at the same quality as drinking water at all times, regardless of whether a water undertaker intends to use that river source.

The Government have said that they would prefer an average level of 50 mg per litre to be used for designation of a surface water source, rather than an absolute level. We have represented to the Commission that the effect of an absolute level would be disproportionate, provided that drinking water is maintained at the appropriate quality. I believe that the Commission accepts our arguments on that point. They have proposed an alternative and rather technical approach, which is set out in the updating memorandum. We are still studying the Commission's new proposals.

The control of nitrate is a difficult and complex problem and the Community directive makes a contribution to finding solutions. We recognise that the directive as drafted would have a very extensive effect and we shall need to be sure that it allows us to strike the appropriate balance between land use for agriculture and the use of the land for water catchments. It is also essential that the directive should provide us with sufficient flexibility to match measures to United Kingdom conditions. The Government will take note of the points raised here this evening, and we shall also make sure that the European Commission is aware of the views expressed. I commend the motion to the House.

10.37 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I listened with care to the Minister, who did no more than read his brief. The Government have tried persistently to belittle the problems related to nitrates and algae blooms caused by sewage discharges. The Minister give no sign that the Government recognise that the problems need to be addressed with a little more urgency and willingness to accept the facts.

Hon. Members who represent rural constituencies are well aware of the conflict of interest between those who consume water and those who farm the land. I should be surprised if any hon. Members representing rural constituencies had not received representations from people concerned about polluted water supplies and farmers concerned about the implications of farming in a way that did not lead to nitrates getting into small and private water supplies in particular.

The problem of nitrates has to be tackled. There is a clear difference, which the Minister acknowledges, between the Commission's proposal that 50 mg should be the maximum and the Government's approach, which was first to argue for 75 mg and then to accept 50 mg as an average, which presumably means that they may allow even more than 75 mg in some cases. In a sense, the Government are seizing the Commission's initiative as an opportunity to put forward an even weaker proposal than the one that they had been prepared to negotiate. That is a genuine concern about the Government's attitude.

It is a pity that the Government are in no position to appear credible on the problem of eutrophication. The problem of polluted water, sewage effluent and sewage discharge is absolutely central to the cost of water privatisation and will have to be confronted by those who invest in the industry. It is inevitable that the Government should say that there is no problem, yet evidence from others, notably our continental neighbours, suggests that it is a serious problem and that blooms are occurring around the coast of the British Isles—which the Government will not acknowledge, but of which others are aware.

It is hardly surprising that the Government do not wish to acknowledge the problem. If they did, they would also have to accept that the cost of putting the problem right could be up to £3·5 billion. If that sum had to be absorbed, it would not make privatisation of the water industry attractive. Although the Minister has tried to present the debate as centring around a technical response to a technical initiative from the Community, it represents a much more fundamental problem that the Government have tried to duck for years. Not only have they not implemented the previous directives on nitrates; they have actually sought to delay them. It is only in the last month that the European Commissioner has finally said that he will take the Government to court. When my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) met him, the Commissioner made it clear that that was the only way that the Government would respond, given their commitment to water privatisation and their unwillingness to face the full implications of the proposals.

Unlike the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), I share the Government's concern about the impact of the regulations on farming and farmers. Labour Members forget that working people live and work on the land. They need their livelihood——

Mr. Morley: Only 3 per cent.

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman shows no understanding of the fabric of the rural economy and how agriculture underpins it.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Is the hon. Gentleman justifying pollution and the destruction of the environment, as do some Conservative Members, on the basis that it is agricultural pollution rather than industrial pollution?

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman was so anxious to intervene that he did so a little early——

Mr. Roberts: Answer the question.

Mr. Bruce: I am not in favour of agricultural pollution, and I am in favour of the Commission's proposals. I understand that they cannot be imposed overnight. Farmers must be given a reasonable opportunity to respond, especially in current circumstances when many are facing financial difficulties. The difference between my party and the Labour party is that we are concerned about workers, whether they are in industry or in any other sector of the economy, whereas the Labour party chooses to represent only those workers who will vote Labour in certain areas.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The hon. Gentleman and I have participated together in many debates and I have often heard him refer to the rural position. Unfortunately, when other members of his party address audiences in more urban areas they are as willing to castigate the rural areas as he is to castigate members of my party. There seems to be a difference between his hon. Friends who represent Scottish rural constituencies and his hon. Friend the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who takes a quite different approach to urban affairs.

Mr. Bruce: On a point of information, my seat is not rural. It is a mix of a substantial rural area and a substantial urban area. The record will show that the hon. Member for Bootle intervened in the Minister's speech and said that he was not interested in farmers. I am, and I think that the Government are, too.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruce: No, I will not; I think that I have given way enough. I have made my points, and I stand by them.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way? It is only a brief intervention.

Mr. Bruce: No, I will not give way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) is not giving way.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the hon. Gentleman please give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) has been here a long time, and he should know better.

Mr. Bruce: This is a short debate, and I do not want to prolong it more than necesary. I have made my points. I think that my case rests, and I am entirely satisfied with the record.

My conclusion—which I hope that the Minister will address—is that we should not delay for the sake of agreement about getting the facts straight. We should ensure that there is proper time to adjust, but the Minister should acknowledge that it is not good enough to go on pretending that there is no problem, particularly in regard to eutrophication. Clearly there is a problem. The Government should accept that, one way or another, the problem must be addressed and money must be invested —not least in ensuring that we do not discharge raw sewage into the seas around our coast. We must set ourselves a timetable to eliminte that process.

10.45 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I should like briefly to tell the House something about the south Devon coastline, which is part of my constituency. Those 88 miles of coastline have more designated areas than any other coastline in the country: it is an area of outstanding natural beauty, and is called "the heritage coastline" and "an area of great landscape value". It contains a good number of conservation areas, a national park is close by it, and it has many sites of special scientific interest. Yet at Thurlestone——

Mr. Hoyle: Stop reading.

Mr. Steen: I will stop reading when I wish to stop reading, not when the hon. Gentleman wishes me to stop reading.

At Thurlestone there is a sewage outfall which is at 300 times the Common Market beach pollution level. I am afraid that, in the summer, a swimmer contacted hepatitis A as a result of contact with sewage flowing into the sea there. At Street, some way along the coastline, raw sewage flows out to sea: it goes over the cliff through a broken pipe, having been carried through agricultural land. All the sewage of Dartmouth, together with sewage from 50 other outlets, flows into the River Dart untreated.

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Steen: I will not give way.

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman, having been told to stop reading, to continue to do so?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have not told the hon. Gentleman that he is reading, and in any case it is not unusual for hon. Members to refresh their memories with notes, sometimes copious notes.

Mr. Steen: It is clear that Opposition Members are not taking the matter seriously; they just want to make fun. My hon. Friends believe that this is an extremely serious debate, which will have serious consequences.

Mr. Hoyle: It is very serious, but the hon. Gentleman should not read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Warrington, North knows that he must not persistently intervene from a sedentary position. This is a serious matter, and I very much hope that the House will take it seriously.

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Of course it is a serious matter, but I am sure that the rules of the House apply—do they not, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Lord: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for Opposition Members, simply because they dined quite well, to disrupt a very important debate? I should be grateful if you would give some thought to dealing with the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) if he continues to carry on in this way.

Mr. Hoyle *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps it would be more sensible to get back to the debate.

Mr. Hoyle: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker—[HON. MEMBERS: "Name him."] We cannot allow aspersions to be cast on Opposition Members who take a deep interest in debates, at whatever time they may be held. We cannot allow someone to come along and say, just because it is 10.49 pm, that certain people may or may not have dined well—and that usually applies to Conservative Members.

Mr. Steen: I have referred to the enormous amount of sewage that flows into the rivers and then into the sea along the south Devon coastline. The Government need to be more robust and active than merely taking note of a European Council directive.

On the south Devon coast there is a natural freshwater lagoon, Slapton Ley. It is a site of special scientific interest. The freshwater lagoon is separated from the sea by a few yards. It was recognised as one of the finest fish and bird sanctuaries in the country. During the last 20 years, however, the fish population has declined by 70 per cent. and the lagoon is attracting fewer and fewer birds.

A few months ago I was asked to open a bird hide for the handicapped. When I pushed the first old lady in her wheelchair into it we found that there was not a bird to be seen. The reason is simple: the rivers are polluting the lagoon. Apart form the acids pouring into the ley, South West Water is pumping sewage into it. About a year ago I started a campaign to draw the Government's attention to the fact that this site of special scientific interest in an area of great landscape value and outstanding natural beauty is being destroyed by pollution.

On 25 August 1989 a Totnes newspaper reported that I launched a campaign to clean up Slapton Ley. I explained what I thought ought to be done—that there ought to be

> "a pilot scheme designed to safeguard this environmentally sensitive area."

So far, however, I have singularly failed to persuade the Government that they should take any interest in the matter. I pointed out:

> "Toxic materials washed off surrounding farmland and treated sewage effluent have upset the ley's natural balance and have resulted in a serious decline in fish and bird populations".

I explained:

> "The reserve, a site of special scientific interest, is being clogged by an unnatural growth of algae which blocks out sunlight and starves the water of oxygen. There is a clause in the Water Privatisation Act for wildlife havens like Slapton to be designated nitrate sensitive areas."

I received the Minister's response yesterday. I hope that I shall not embarrass him, but it shows our Government's commitment to green issues and to doing something about preserving one of the most important sites of special scientific interest. He said:

> "I was very sorry to hear that this nature reserve, and SSSI, appears to be deteriorating in quality and wildlife interest. Our Regional staff are of course aware of the problem and have"

had meetings with various people. He continued:

> "It is one of our oldest and best known SSSIS and I am sure everyone will wish that it can be quickly restored."

He then went on to say that, broadly, the problem had been identified as both nitrate and phosphate run-off from agricultural land but that there was no evidence that local farmers had not been observing good agricultural practice.

The evidence is overwhelming that the damage to fish and bird life has been caused by sewage, pumped into the ley by South West Water, and the use of nitrates and phosphates by farmers. They are perfectly prepared to stop using them if the Government will compensate them for not doing so. The Minister said:

> "I am afraid that MAFF cannot simply designate the Slapton area as a Nitrate Sensitive Area in our pilot scheme. The National Rivers Authority is responsible for selecting the 'candidate' areas, and they have recently notified us of areas which we are now looking at in depth before any Scheme is introduced. I am copying this correspondence to Michael Howard at the DoE, which is the Department with responsibility for sewage treatment".

How can the Minister duck an issue affecting one of the most treasured areas of this country? Why was he not more positive in his response to me? There is national concern that a site of special scientific interest is being killed off by lack of Government action. I hope that the Minister will realise that the directive has given us an opportunity to draw attention to the Government's failure to practise what they preach.

I should like to mention another problem that has arisen in south Devon and many other parts of the country —the taking of more and more water from the water system, particularly reservoirs, because of the unrestrained growth of house building. Water authorities are not telling the planning authorities that they cannot supply increasing quantities of water. They are pumping more water from the reservoirs and reducing the amount of water flowing down the old river course. Nitrates are flowing off farm land—I do not blame farmers for that—and poisoning the reduced levels of water.

I shall give as an example what is happening at the Avon dam in the Dartmoor national park, which is an area of outstanding natural beauty. When the Avon reservoir was built, 0·95cu m per second of water was diverted from the mains water supply down the old river course. That figure reduced to 0·68 in 1978 and from that to 0·026. In August 1989, South West Water applied to the Government to reduce the figure from 0·026 to 0·012. Experts said that if that had happened it would have taken three to five years to restore the river to health.

By reducing the amount of water flowing down the old river courses, we are allowing nitrates to have a powerful effect on aquatic life. We are reducing the amount of water to such an extent that nitrates are not being diluted. The reason for that is that the water authorities are not telling the planning authorities, "We cannot allow any more building until we have a greater water supply."

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): My hon. Friend is aware of my knowledge of his constituency. Does he agree that over the years the provision of reservoirs in the area has been grossly inadequate?

Mr. Steen: My hon. Friend's interest in my constituency is well known, and I am grateful for his intervention.

Instead of the water authorities refusing to allow more houses to be built until more water is available, they have allowed water to be used to such an extent that the rivers have become depleted and the poisons are not being sufficiently diluted.

Although the Minister will say that it is not his Department's responsibility but that of the Department of the Environment—they are both passing the buck—as a Government we should be committed to purifying rivers, to reducing pollution and to ensuring that more house building is not allowed until the supply of water is adequate. We cannot continue destroying aquatic life in our rivers because we want more houses built.

It is regrettable that we are debating a matter in which Britain should be taking the lead only because the EC decided to produce a directive. However, because it has done so, we are obliged to ensure that we make fast progress in ensuring that our river life is not destroyed, that we stop building until we have enough water, and that we do not destroy our sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): My hon. Friend is right, and what he is saying strikes a chord in all of us, especially those who represent rural areas. I think that my hon. Friend will find that his call is being responded to by our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, to judge from a speech that he made in Blackpool at a certain occasion not long ago. My hon. Friend is making the right noises, and I think that there is reason for optimism.

Mr. Steen: Because of the intervention of the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), which took five minutes out of a speech that I had to make in 10 rather than 15, I think that it would be right for me to sit down and allow others to speak.

11 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I am surprised that the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) should say that Conservative Members are expecting a positive response from the Secretary of State for the Environment on this issue and the pollution of our rivers and seas.

The Government are committed to a policy of sewage sludge-dumping at sea. They are committed to a policy of using long outfalls to dispose of raw sewage further out to sea—so it lands on different beaches. I hope, but doubt, that hon. Members who are now complaining about sewage damaging our rivers and seas voted for Labour's amendment to the Water Bill which would not have exempted private water companies from prosecution for such pollution.

I understand that the present Secretary of State for the Environment has not altered the policy of his predecessor. Private water companies are still to be exempted from prosecution for breaching discharge consent levels on sewage discharges into rivers and seas. The 12-year moratorium that applies at the moment, which we voted against, but which Conservative Members did not vote against, could be extended by the Secretary of State. It is agreed that water companies can produce proposals for expenditure and the possibility of dealing with the problem. There is no time scale. There is no expenditure —only proposals for expenditure.

The Government are clever at saying one thing and doing another. They claim to be concerned about the environment and nitrate and nitrate pollution, yet they adopt policies that will ensure that action is not taken. *The Times* of Monday 14 August—when the House was in recess—reported:

> "£3 million grant cut puts water nitrate and crop studies at risk. A cut of £3 million by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food".

The Ministry is the culprit. It is preventing wiser voices in the Department of the Environment from taking real action on nitrate and nitrite pollution because of the National Farmers Union and the agriculture lobby. Whatever we say, the agriculture lobby is pernicious in this respect.

Such pollution derives directly from the common agricultural policy, the commitment of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—one could call it the MAFFIA—intervention, and our membership of the EEC.

The Times said:

> "A cut of £3 million by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for horticultural research has jeopardised studies into nitrate levels in crops, the water supplies and the future of a bank of plant genes. The decision to withdraw Government support amounts to a 20 per cent. reduction in spending over the next two years for the Institute of Horticultural Research."

Mr. Lord: The hon. Gentleman is being rather rude about British farmers, but he obviously enjoys that. Would he like to explain how individual farmers are to blame for the common agricultural policy?

Mr. Roberts: I did not say that individual farmers are to blame for the common agricultural policey. I said that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, intervention and our membership of the Common Market, as long as the CAP is in operation, are responsible for nitrate and nitrite pollution and the overuse of fertilisers. We pay the richer farmers through the subsidy system for producing more food than we need.

I do not know whether the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) was at the Conservative party conference. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was not, but the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was. The people who attend Conservative party conferences must not be very bright, because the right hon. Gentleman had a visual aid—"This is a butter mountain. This is a smaller butter mountain." He boasted about having reduced the butter mountain. The butter had been given to the Russians.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): It is Conservative party policy to reduce mountains of surplus food.

Mr. Roberts: It is Conservative policy to have visual aids showing butter mountains. There are butter mountains, beef mountains, wine lakes and so on. If we get harmonisation, they might mix the mustard with the wine —I do not know. As long as the common agricultural policy continues and farmers are subsidised, they will be reluctant to stop using nitrate fertilisers, and the pollution will continue. Something must be done.

We are being prosecuted under the provisions of an EEC drinking water directive on nitrates—80/778—because of the high nitrate levels in drinking water in East Anglia, Tower Hamlets and other places. Nitrite pollution is linked with the blue baby syndrome. It may also, although the research is not conclusive, cause stomach cancer. If we accept the Government's commitment to a declaration signed by North sea countries and adopt a precautionary approach, we should take action to ensure that nitrite and nitrate pollution does not occur in our drinking water. Cancelling research into the problem does not help.

This directive aims to reduce pollution of fresh, coastal and marine water caused by nitrates from diffuse sources —agriculture, fertilisers, animal manure and slurry. The Government could adopt a policy of giving farmers assistance, even grants, to provide facilities for the storage

[Mr. Roberts]

of slurry. The designation of vulnerable zones is welcome. The Government's desire to designate those zones was welcomed even by Labour spokespeople in the other place. However, all the designations will be voluntary. Lord Crickhowell spoke in favour of the voluntary approach and criticised the EEC directive on the lines that the Government were doing something—meaning that no decisive or precise action will be taken.

When will the National Rivers Authority be seen to be independent of the Government? When will it have a chairperson who is not a Tory placeperson and former Cabinet Minister?

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. Nevertheless, even the NRA has designated 24 lakes and rivers which suffer from the problem of eutrophication of algae, yet the Government continue to say that there is no problem.

Mr. Roberts: I agree. During the summer, lakes and reservoirs were closed because of the production of algae. Nitrates are a problem not only because they get into our drinking water through the use of fertilisers but because they get into natural fresh water lakes, estuaries and coastal waters, which become eutrophic. In simple terms, that means algae grows, becomes poisonous, and damages the environment. If no action is taken where high nitrate concentrations are identified, the algae continues to grow and to kill plant and animal life. That is a serious problem. It is in our drinking water, lakes and reservoirs. It also gets into our rivers and ground water and flows into the sea and around our coastal areas. It over-fertilises the photoplankton and the seaweed around our coasts which flowers more than it should. That takes the oxygen out of the sea which means that fish and other life forms cannot survive. It is a major problem that needs to be addressed by the Government.

Could pesticides and nitrates get into our food and cause problems in the products we buy in our supermarkets?

Mr. Steen: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that some farmers have to use fertilisers to make a living and that if they use fewer fertilisers and acids, they should receive compensation? The hon. Gentleman mentioned the algae but a unique condition was caused this summer by the drought. It is not right to conclude, as he has, that the problem occurs every year.

Mr. Roberts: It does happen every year but not on such a large scale and it is not given as much media attention. However, I agree that it is made worse when the weather is hot.

I am in favour of the declaration of zones within which nitrates and nitrites are not to be used. Action should be taken in vulnerable areas in which nitrates and nitrites may find their way into ground water and fresh water sources and into drinking water. However, I do not believe that the Government's solution, under which farmers would voluntarily declare and operate zones, will work. I saw a farmer interviewed on television and he said that if the farmer next door is not forced to stop using nitrates and nitrites, he would not stop, even if his area was declared a vulnerable zone.

The problem can be solved only by a mandatory approach. I do not object to help being given to farmers to deal with the problem. However, the long-term solution to the over-use of nitrate and nitrite fertilisers is to stop using them and to ensure that they are not necessary. To do that, there would need to be some changes to the common agricultural policy.

I am not against facilities to farmers as long as they are used wisely and the benefit is felt by the consumer and the farm worker. However, that is not what happens to many of the subsidies now. It is Labour party policy——

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): The hon. Gentleman has made an interesting point. Am I right in saying that he has committed the Labour party to the huge increases in food prices that would result from the abolition of nitrate fertilisers?

Mr. Roberts: Conservative Members are always trying to make mischief and misrepresent what people say.

Before I gave way I was about to say that the Labour party will assist the poorer hill farmer in a way that does not happen under the CAP. We will assist those who grow and develop programmes for producing crops organically. That will help the consumer considerably. We will not adopt the policies that the Government now seem to be embracing having commissioned the Pearce report. The report says that we should tax the polluter and polluting activity. That includes farmers. Therefore, if farmers use polluting fertilisers and pesticides they will be taxed. That will mean not that the polluter pays but that one pays to pollute. What is likely to happen is that farmers will continue to use nitrate fertilisers and will pass on the cost of the tax to the consumer.

Mr. Hardy: I ask my hon. Friend not to allow himself to be diverted by hon. Members who are trying to ensure that we start talking about the plight of the farmer. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), as a farmer himself, would find that attractive. They are trying to ensure that my hon. Friend moves away from his scathing indictment of Government environmental policy, which should be at the heart of this debate.

Mr. Roberts: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend, but we must remember that one of the Government's answers to agricultural pollution through the use of nitrates and nitrites is to tax the farmer. The Pearce report recommended that and, generally, the Government have embraced the Pearce report. The Government's policy may be to tax the polluter, but in practice it will be a policy not that the polluter pays, but that one can pay to pollute and can pass on the cost to the consumer.

We are not surprised that the Government's policy means that the consumer will pay. The Government claim that they want to clean up our water environment, but they have made it clear that if there are any improvements in our water environment, the consumer will pay for them. The polluter will not pay and the private water companies discharging the sewage will not pay. All the cost will be borne by the water consumer. The Government's policy seems to be that the consumer pays.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Roberts: I will give way, for the last time.

Mr. Knapman: The hon. Gentleman has said that we produce too much food. In fact, we grow 85 per cent. of the temperate foodstuffs that we need. If nitrogen application is to be reduced in the way that the hon. Gentleman has described, what proportion of food will be home grown?

Mr. Roberts: Eighty-five per cent. Europe produces beef and butter mountains and Britain contributes to some food mountains. It is not advisable for the Government to continue policies that are polluting our drinking water, rivers and seas. They also pursue policies—which the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) supports—that produce beef and butter mountains, and wine lakes. We are opposed to that. We shall continue sane and rational policies, which will help poorer farmers, such as the hill farmers, and encourage organic products for the housewife and the househusband.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Roberts: No. I said that I had given way for the last time. [HON. MEMBERS: "Frit."] It is not a matter of being frit; it is a matter of time. I shall receive complaints if my hon. Friends and other hon. Members are cut out of the debate because I speak for too long.

The Government's response to the directive is acceptable, but inadequate because it does not go far enough. The Government are damning with faint praise and assenting with civil leer, as they usually do. They claim to accept the main thrust of the directive, although they deny the principle behind it, which is a requirement for more direct action by Government to deal with the nitrate and nitrite pollution problems. Nine advisory areas, on a voluntary basis, and pilot schemes are not acceptable at this stage when one considers the problems caused by this pollution.

The Government should take stronger action and intervene in the market to assist farmers who are prepared to adopt environmentally acceptable methods of farming which do not involve the use of damaging fertilisers and pesticides. They should intervene in the market through legislation to have more powers over what is happening. The Secretary of State for the Environment should tell the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that he does not accept the views that are being pushed on him by his colleague and that concern for the environment is as important as concern for the farmers and agriculture—which is important—and the common agricultural policy.

11.20 pm

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): I shall contribute only briefly to the debate and shall not take up the majority of the arguments of the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench. Many of my constituents will be interested to hear, however, about the new policy of the Labour party to phase out the use of nitrogen-based fertilisers at the earliest possible moment. The effect of that on food production and food prices would be dramatic.

I wish to emphasise the extent of the concern in my constituency and, I believe, in the country generally. The efforts of the European Commission are obviously well intentioned and all the contributions to the debate have been well intentioned, but the content of the directive and its presentation are not good advertisements for the work of the Commission. It has produced an inflexible scheme, the potential cost of which is enormous, without proper evaluation of the options.

The scheme is highly unpredictable in its consequences. The Select Committee in another place estimated that a reduction of one third in arable crop output could result from a strict interpretation of the directive's proposals. Perhaps that is an outside estimate. I have no doubt that it is possible to exaggerate, but it is a large enough number to merit considerable concern. That will or could be the result of a directive for which the Commission has published no scientific evidence. It has never been able to clarify where the limit of 50 mg per litre comes from. We all agree that there has to be a limit and that the problem must be tackled, but the Commission should be able to produce more scientific evidence than it has presented.

No doubt the Commission would say that a limit of 50 mg per litre would be on the safe side. It is a good thing to be on the safe side, and that is the side on which we all want to be because the hazards of excessive nitrate pollution accumulating in future are great, but we want to be on the safe side in the most practical, sensible and cost-effective way. It is not clear that the most cost-effective way is to endanger the productive capacity of vast tracts of agricultural land.

The United Kingdom is unusual in the European Community in the proportion of its drinking water that originates on the surface rather than under the ground. Our circumstances are different from those in many parts of the continent. Such factors must be allowed for in any agreement that is reached in the European Community.

Nor is it clear that it is sensible to introduce a limit which has to be broken only once for compulsory restrictions, as set out in the directive, to come into force, especially when it is likely to be broken occasionally in some areas because of unusual weather conditions or the onset of winter. There will be dilution subsequently in any event as the polluted water flows into large bodies of water. It has not done the Commission any good to produce such a proposal. I can presume only that it did not have the research capability and background to enable it to evaluate the consequences.

I support the Government's effort to allow greater national variation. The extent of the problem varies widely according to local rock formation and local agriculture practice. If the Government accede to a compulsory scheme—and hon. Members who have referred to the unwillingness of farmers to adopt a voluntary scheme should remember the success of the voluntary environmentally sensitive area scheme, for example—the problems of deciding on fair compensation for farmers will be immense. How will we decide how to compensate the farmer who has invested heavily in the drainage or irrigation of his land and the farmer who has not? The problems will be enormous.

I hope that Ministers will approach the forthcoming negotiations with their customary resolve. I hope also that they will take the message from the House that it would have been better if the Commission had concentrated on laying down common standards, subject to sensible interpretation for different conditions, rather than troubling itself to seek to introduce inflexible rules and compulsory restrictions, the consequences of which it has shown little evidence of recognising.

[Mr. William Hague]

11.24 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague). I well understand his caution before he embraced the criticism that is justly levelled at the Government. The hon. Gentleman has not been long in the House, but he will be aware that I have been concerned for a long time about environmental matters. He knows that in our home area—I think that it is still his home area—we have some of the foulest rivers in Europe.

In 1971 when I had been in the House a short time, I campaigned—which is the word that I think the *Yorkshire Post* used—for clean rivers. I was promised that the dirty, foul sewers of South Yorkshire would reach class 2 or recreational standard by the middle 1980s. We were advised in the mid-1980s that our dirty, open sewers might reach recreational standard by the early 21st century. Far from making progress we appear to be slipping back. The hon. Gentleman will understand that I am rather more impatient than his speech suggested that he was, although he recognised that if the case were proved, action would have to be rather more urgent.

I am not prepared to accept that we should refer to yet another body for scientific research so that we can determine that our rivers are dangerous, unhealthy and foul. They are. Next month I shall take the chair at a conference in Paris to discuss the North sea. Although some of our European neighbours are a little holier than thou at times, we in the United Kingdom cannot hold up our heads with any sense of pride.

It is a pity that we have to have a dry summer before we recognise the evils or errors of our ways. Because of the dry summer, untreated sewage bacteria is falling on the heads of a substantial proportion of the population in the eastern part of my county. That is the result of taking untreated sewage water into the cooling towers at power stations. I heard a Conservative party Member say that that was because of the miners, because of having to burn coal at power stations.

Some of us have been arguing that we have not been cleaning our rivers for anything like as long as we should have been. Our rivers are foul. When I raised the matter in 1971 I was concerned about the industrial rivers of South Yorkshire. In those days the Ure, the Swale and the Nidd, all the rivers in our county, some of which water the constituencies of the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks, were clean.

Those of us interested in these matters have discovered that in recent years the rural rivers of Yorkshire are deteriorating faster than ours. For example, we discovered a couple of years ago that the number of offences committed by people in the rural areas of Yorkshire in our own water authority area had risen enormously. I was extremely critical of our water authority because the number of prosecutions was falling and had reached a pathetically low level. Then I acquitted the Yorkshire water authority because it can only operate within the law of the land. When it took out prosecutions it found that some people were making a fortune out of poisoning our water. Having been brought to justice, the commercial undertakings responsible for that poisoning were fined a mere £200 or £300. It was scarcely worth the effort of the authority. It brought the law into disrepute and encouraged criminal action.

It is not only corrupt private businesses which are polluting our rivers; some farmers are also doing so. I recognise that many farmers do not wish to pollute the environment and that many of them have taken a great deal of trouble to avoid doing so. However, excessive use of nitrates is damaging our rivers and streams and the health of our country.

When people talk about the greenhouse effect and global warming they associate that with coal-fired power stations. I am not a scientist and I am not qualified to give an expert analysis of the facts, but I hope that the Minister will confirm that emissions from fertilisers make a significant contribution to the pollution of the atmosphere. The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) will recall that in the Committee considering the Electricity Bill I forecast the number of low-lying constituencies that would be inundated as a result of the greenhouse effect. The political benefit to the Opposition, prior to the election, would be enormous. In a party-political sense my attitude is relatively unbiased, however, as we must accept that the emission of greenhouse gases should be limited. We must ensure that the interests of man do not supersede those of the world climate. The Government should be spurred into action.

Perhaps there is some justified criticism of the Commission for prosecuting the British Government when it may not have had adequate information. Those of us concerned with nature conservation do not, however, require any more information to make us believe that the Government are guilty of negligence, incompetence or worse.

The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) spoke about his site of special scientific interest. Last Saturday I addressed the annual meeting of the Yorkshire wildlife trust. As evidence for the thesis that I advanced I took a document entitled "Losing Ground", recently published by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation. In February a noble Lord in the other place, answering questions on behalf of the Department of the Environment, suggested that he could not find one example of damage to a SSSI. In June a ministerial colleague confirmed in a parliamentary answer that in the past 12 months 228 SSSIs had been damaged. As the Nature Conservancy Council does not have the resources that it should, one cannot be sure that that list of damaged SSSIs is complete.

That background of administrative incompetence led the Prime Minister, on 16 January, to call for our wetlands, woods, moors, marshes, fields, ponds, rivers and hedgerows to be protected. She said that we are merely trustees and that no generation has a freehold on our island. My hon. Friends will remember that I responded to that call by tabling a Bill that very day to protect hedgerows. The Government blocked that Bill despite the fact that many Conservative Members, including some who occupy the Treasury Bench, wanted that Bill to succeed. I wrote two letters to the Prime Minister in which I criticised that decision, but she suggested that other things, as well as conservation, matter. The Prime Minister takes such an attitude when she is considering legislation, but on other occasions, for example when she spoke at the Royal Society of Arts, she is prepared to be as green as the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and his colleagues.

We should develop a bipartisan policy to such matters because we are talking about not simply the conservation of rare species, but the survival of mankind. Some of the conditions that develop from the eutrophication of water and the fact that our generation has been careless with the liberal doses of toxic material with which we have laced the environment have led us to recognise that we have gone too far.

I do not suppose that many hon. Members have had a similar experience to the one I have faced since August when I discovered that tonnes and tonnes of toxic waste was being kept one mile from my home. Immediately I found out I came to see the Minister on duty at the Department of the Environment. He was courteous, saw me immediately and gave immediate instructions that the toxic waste should be put into secure containers. It took about six weeks before the containers were obtained, and nearly two months—certainly eight or nine weeks—before the task was completed. The result is that I have hundreds of tonnes of toxic waste in my constituency, one mile from my home, in an area of Britain which is, more than most, crying out for regeneration and environmental enhancement. No one, not even the highest paid officials in public agencies or Ministers in the Treasury Department, knows what we are going to do with it.

The waste came improperly, if not unlawfully, from the United States of America. I had hoped that by now we would have made effective representations to the American Administration to get it shifted. However, we have 2,700 drums of toxic waste less than 1 km from my home, which has caused enormous anxiety. From the occasional visits which he has made to our area, the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks will be aware of the problem. Despite all that, the drums are still there and I do not know when they will be moved. It is about time that I did.

This is a classic illustration, not merely of the historically low priority that these matters have enjoyed, but of the gross inadequacy of law and regulation which I hope will be put right in the green Bill because little measures of this sort will not suffice to meet the environmental challenge. The green Bill must do so, and I hope that when it comes before the House it will be of such character and content that it can be accepted on the bipartisan basis which I mentioned.

11.37 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I shall bring the House back to the topic which we are supposed to be debating: nitrates and the Community directive. I respect the knowledge of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and his concern about the environment, but he has given us a quick canter around the environment and that is not what we are here to talk about tonight.

I shall devote my remarks as quickly as I can—because I know time is short—to three items: first, how these matters impact on the nation's health; secondly, the role and image of the Community; and thirdly, our farmers' welfare. The Government's proposals in relation to nitrate levels and the time scale for improvements are reasonable. They have recognised the problem, and it is being tackled.

I shall turn to the question of the nation's health and what we are trying to protect the nation from. It is important on any environmental issue to get the facts right, otherwise we do ourselves and the issue no service. We are talking of the possibility of nitrates causing the blue baby syndrome and cancer. The House of Lords report said of the blue baby syndrome that it was

> "now virtually non-existent in Western Europe".

There have been

> "14 cases . . . in the United Kingdom in the past 35 years, the last of which was in 1972 . . . the only recorded death was in 1950 when the nitrate level was found to be 885 mg/l".

That is not a good case for identifying a desperate need to do something about nitrates in relation to blue baby syndrome.

The House of Lords report said about cancer:

> "Studies of fertiliser workers exposed to very high doses of nitrate have not shown any increased level of cancer and the overall trend in the United Kingdom has been a fall in the incidence of stomach cancer whilst nitrate levels in water have risen. Indeed, the incidence of stomach cancer is lowest in Eastern England where nitrate concentrations in water are highest . . . Most witnesses discounted the importance of nitrate in drinking water as a factor contributing to cancer development . . . The Institute of Cancer Research considered the evidence . . . to be 'very weak' . . . the Medical Research Council said that 'nitrates in water at levels of 50—100mg per litre do not present any hazard with respect to gastric cancer'."

Without wanting to disregard those matters, that puts the situation into perspective.

It is important that the Community should not act in an arbitrary way. Our eyes are upon it and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has some strong feelings about it. If the Community is to maintain its credibility, it is important that it should not act in too arbitrary a way.

The Government invited the Commission to suggest any practicable ways in which work on these matters could be speeded up, but it was unable to come up with a single idea. That is how helpful it was. When it was trying to make us go faster, it could not come up with any ideas itself.

The farming community has been unfairly and harshly treated by the Opposition tonight, and I want to say a few words about farmers in general and about my Suffolk farmers in particular. We are talking not just about farmers, but about all the other industries that depend upon them in our rural communities, from the merchants and the fertiliser manufacturers, right down to the village shop and the local pub. All depend on a thriving agriculture.

It is worth reminding the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), and perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East that it is one thing to have too much food, but let us hope that we never see the day when we do not have enough food.

Suffolk has some of the best cereal farmers in the world, but they are feeling increasingly beleaguered. They are unfairly accused of surpluses when they were doing only what they were asked to do. They are also unfairly accused of damaging the environment when those who understand such things know that they have been good custodians of the environment. Anyone who cares to come to East Anglia will see that the countryside has never looked better.

Until recently the use of nitrates was regarded as good agricultural practice. Suddenly it is not, but it is unfair to start talking of pollution and to expect farmers to change their ways immediately.

My farmers are extremely fearful of Europe, 1992 and unfairness. One and a half pages of the directive relate to the United Kingdom and how we should tackle our nitrate

[Mr. Michael Lord]

problem, compared with only four lines to describe the problem in Spain and two lines for Portugal. That shows how we are giving chapter and verse while others are not. That is an important point. Farming is a long-term business and farmers must be given time to adjust, with adequate compensation during that period.

Our farmers have served us well. We take them for granted at our peril. They deserve our fullest concern and support, and I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to assure us that he will provide just that.

11.42 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): This has been an interesting if wide-ranging debate, which often did not stick too closely to the exact terms of the directive.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) may have misunderstood the Government's position. Let there be no mistake that the Government are committed to the 50 mg level in drinking water as it comes out of our tap. However, we want some flexibility on the water in the river, not at the point of abstraction or when it comes out of the tap. An averaging system would be perfectly acceptable there, and that is what we have been urging on the Commission.

Let me give a simple example in relation to blending. The Commission's original proposals were so inflexible that if river A had 20 mg and river B had 60 mg and they merged into river C which then averaged 40 mg, that, at the point of abstraction would be acceptable under the directive, but we would be forced to take a panoply of measures in order to deal with river B at source which was technically over the 50 mg limit even though no one was drinking it. We see no point in that response. That is why we have been negotiating with the Commission and making good progress.

It is true that some coastal regions in the North sea appear to be at risk of eutrophication. The algae blooms along the coasts of Denmark and Germany are an example. The ministerial declaration of the second North sea conference in November 1987 required states to take effective national steps to reduce nutrient inputs into areas where they are likely directly or indirectly to cause pollution. We would not consider possible eutrophication due to nitrate in parts of the North sea not adjacent to the United Kingdom as legitimate grounds for designating vulnerable zones in the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Gordon also said that we need time to adjust. I agree entirely. One of the reasons we are going ahead with our candidate nitrate-sensitive areas is so that we can have a voluntary system up and running and so that we can assess the measure and its effectiveness before the EC directive becomes fully functional in four years' time.

Turning to the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), I must tell him that I and my hon. Friend are not trying to duck the issues. Much of what my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams said is important but not within the terms of the directive. I shall try to give him a fair response.

The Government are engaged in a £1 billion programme to deal with the problem of sewage going directly into the sea. Part of the reason for privatising the water companies was to generate capital investment from private sources to build more reservoirs—I understand that two are planned in my hon. Friend's part of the world—to deal with the problems of too great extraction.

My hon. Friend quoted from the letter I sent him about Slapton Ley. I am not ducking the issue, but the directive deals with nitrate in drinking water. It does not deal with pollution of a water supply causing damage to wildlife and to conservation. That is why my Department, with specific responsibilities for that, could not give him a more helpful reply. I am happy to discuss that problem with him, but if there is any pollution in his river from any farmers, I shall not defend farmers who cause pollution. The National Rivers Authority will have teeth and it will prosecute.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) is absolutely right to urge flexibility and some national variation. That is exactly what the Government have been urging, supported by our colleagues in other European countries who want some flexibility. The French in particular are aware of the possible dangers to their food supply and of the unnecessary disruption to good agricultural practice in the countryside if rigid limits are imposed when they are not strictly necessary.

I respect the long experience in the House of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). He has been here much longer than I have and has a long commitment to the environment. I was fascinated by all he had to say about the general problems of pollution in the environment. However, the Government are committed to cleaning up our rivers. We are entirely committed to the 50 mg nitrate limit in drinking water, which is the reason behind the directive. Let me repeat that I would not defend any farmers who are causing pollution from whatever source. My Department has a grant scheme for slurry containment systems to make sure that pollution is eliminated or reduced to the absolute minimum. Even then, if farmers cause pollution in spite of the generous grants available from my Department, that is a matter for the prosecuting authorities.

I am not a scientist. Perhaps it is a good thing that we are not all scientists. I do not know the exact effects of fertilisers on global warming. However, in the past few years my Department has been instrumental in urging farmers not to overdo the use of fertilisers. We ask farmers to optimise fertiliser not to maximise it—to use no more than the right amount at the right time of year.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: I am coming on to the hon. Gentleman's speech. He need not worry about that.

We have been successful in reducing nitrate leaching by 60 per cent. by reducing the amount of autumn fertiliser applied when there is no uptake of it.

Mr. Roberts: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Maclean: No. I have only three minutes left, and I want to save at least two minutes to reply to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman spoke for about 20 minutes. I have only 7 minutes and I am going to utilise them. My hon. Friend——

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman is trying to stop me from speaking in this debate. If he does, it will be on the record——

Mr. Allan Roberts: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Members who lengthened my contribution, who caused me to speak for as long as I did, were Conservative Members who intervened——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the hon. Gentleman's point of order?

Mr. Roberts: The Minister accused me of lengthening the debate——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Maclean: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) on making some valid and sensible points. It is right to stress the importance of the food supply in this country. Many countries do not have an adequate food supply—thank God that we do, and we should not forget that.

I shall now deal with the points raised by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). We have had a good, sensible and wide-ranging debate. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will regret some of his remarks. He did not address himself to the debate, but instead made a ragbag of bitter accusations against farmers and the agricultural lobby, which he described as pernicious, and my Department, which he called the MAFFIA. I do not care if he calls me the MAFFIA, but he should remember that in my Department there are hundreds of good, honest civil servants—scientists and doctors—and it is disgraceful to refer to them as the MAFFIA.

We are not cutting research on nitrate pollution. If the hon. Gentleman cares to visit the experimental research station that I visited at Gleadethorpe, he would realise the success of our nitrate research. The hon. Gentleman brought in the blue baby syndrome; he just cast it into the debate without any facts. He also threw stomach cancer into the debate. There is no evidence of stomach cancer related to nitrate use.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Maclean: No.

Mr. Roberts: Give way.

Mr. Maclean: No, I shall not give way. I have only 30 seconds remaining——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business.)*

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4136/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of the Environment on 19th October 1989 relating to control of nitrate pollution; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that Community action to control nitrate pollution takes sufficient account of the range of circumstances in each Member State.

Burma and Cambodia

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

11.52 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I sympathise with my hon. Friend the Minister in the task that he has to perform because not only has he flown overnight from Washington, but the matters that I shall raise do not fall within his area of responsibility. However, I have great faith in his ability and his intelligence, and I am sure that the debate will be both constructive and helpful.

I realise the difficulties of dealing with two critical subjects in an Adjournment debate. I hope that my hon. Friend will join me and others in pressing for time for a major debate at the earliest opportunity. It is because there is a sense of urgency that I bring these matters before the House tonight. Both countries under discussion—one with a recognised Government of questionable standards and the other the only country in the world where Britain does not recognise any Government, whether internal or external—are engaged in a civil war that is increasing the wholly unacceptable risk of a return to power of the Khmer Rouge by military force. It is the result of the ambivalent policy of the Western powers and their inability to adjust quickly enough to the changing situation.

First, I shall deal with Burma. It appears that it has less impact in this country than in America and Australia, yet we have very much more reason to be concerned about events in that country. Anyone who, like me, has visited the war cemetery in Rangoon and seen the 33,000 graves there will recognise how many lives have been laid down in the interests of a free Burma.

Now, however, there is not a single foreign journalist in Burma: the stringers who write for our newspapers are circumscribed by the present Burmese Government. I can only say thank God for the BBC, which is listened to everywhere in Burma. I am delighted to tell my hon. Friend that the BBC has received 80,000 letters from Burma in the past six months—a third of the number that it receives from all over the world. That is an indication of the way in which those people reach out for our help, and it is a matter of concern that, apart from speaking in Adjournment debates, we can do so little to muster that help.

I especially want to raise the position of Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League of Democracy, who has been under house arrest—as have those of her fellows who are not in prison—since July. According to figures that I have obtained from various sources, thousands have been arrested since then. SLORC itself says that it has over 1,200 political detainees, and other reports suggest that the figure is nearer 3,000.

Evidence given to the sub-committees on human rights and Asian and Pacific affairs of the House of Representatives provides overwhelming corroboration of what has been said. I shall read out only brief extracts, but I can give my hon. Friend all the evidence. It raises serious doubt over how free and fair elections can be held in May 1990, as has been promised, if the effective opposition—which commands the majority of support—is either in prison or under house arrest.

[Mr. Jim Lester]

According to one of the statements to the House of Representatives committee by the Under-Secretary responsible for this part of the world—the deputy assistant Secretary of State, Mr. David Lambertson—

> "The government denies that it is making political arrests or is mistreating detainees. It likewise denies credible reports we have of instances of torture. Instead, it claims that those detained are criminal offenders who will be tried as such. In our view, given numerous credible, firsthand reports of the regime targeting opposition political activists, in the absence of verifiable charges, the Burmese government's version of events simply does not square with the facts. Indeed, there seems to be a pattern of attacks against the larger opposition political parties."

Further evidence given to the committee by Ambassador Richard Schifter, the assistant secretary for human rights, states:

> "In July, the regime granted to local military commanders summary powers of trial and execution. Under present martial law, there are effectively no legal means for accused persons to defend themselves. Military tribunals, completely lacking legal training, have the final say on all cases, political or criminal. Defence lawyers are severely limited in what they are allowed to say and reportedly under warning that too vigorous a defence can result in negative consequences for the client and the lawyer."

I also wish to raise with my hon. Friend the position of the students who fled from the Rangoon riots and civil disturbance to the Thai border. I met many this summer at a conference in Caux. One of the saddest aspects is the fact that those young people have been torn from their education and living in atrocious conditions, hunted down by the army. In September, one of them wrote to me:

> "The current situation inside Burma is in adversity. The . . . military regime has again suppressed brutally . . . the opposition force in the country-wide mass arrest. Because of this . . . repression there is a sudden influx of more students from inside Burma to many of our camps . . . The military regime is also reorganising its troops to make an all out offensive to wipe out all our student camps along the border in the coming dry season. All these efforts come from within their despair towards the situation. I would say that they are in despair because the foreign currency reserves are virtually reaching to the bottom . . . and the general public feelings towards the army is in the form of hatred."

How do the Government and the European Community stand in terms of ensuring that foreign observers are able to oversee the treatment of opposition parties during elections? Unlike Cambodia, where there are many foreign observers, they are unable to report what goes on. Under what conditions would the Government consider resuming aid? In the meantime, do we have any plans to follow the example of the United States which has granted $250,000 in aid to students in the camps, both on humanitarian grounds and also to help some of them to complete their education?

What is being done by the international agencies? We were ready to use them in Cambodia. Are we prepared to involve them in what is happening in Burma? We seek fairness of approach because Cambodia and Burma have various things in common. They are beautiful countries, rich in natural resources. Both have been devastated—Burma by years of Socialism and both of them by having been involved in a geopolitical war.

One has a great sense of urgency about Cambodia. There is to be a debate in the United Nations on 15 and 16 November. I have the draft resolution here. I notice that the new words, in italics, are a change from the previous debate. They must sound very strange to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who went with me to Cambodia. The words sound very strange to me, too. They read:

> "Noting the continued and effective struggle of the Kampuchean forces under the leadership of Samdech Norodom Sihanouk to achieve the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutral and non-aligned status of Kampuchea".

That is an example of the fact that we are supporting only one side in what, in effect, is a civil war.

We seem to be unable to change our attitude quickly enough because we continue to support only the coalition, which I have described as a coalition of convenience. It is not a united coalition. They have separate camps. There are even separate camps for Aung San and Sihanouk. They have separate armies and different political philosophies. Nevertheless, we support a resolution that welcomes the continued and effective struggle of the Kampuchean forces under this leadership to achieve independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutral and non-aligned status for Kampuchea.

The only common theme in the coalition is its opposition to Vietnam, a theme that is shared by other Governments, even though Vietnam has withdrawn the majority of its forces from Kampuchea. That common theme makes it impossible to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the problem.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley and I have been twice to Cambodia—in 1987 and again very recently. We realise that we need a better balance between the Hun Sen internal regime, which is running the country with increasing success, despite immense difficulties, and the external Khmers. They have held together in coalition, but during the last 10 years they have done nothing towards assisting the country's development. Without question, the Khmer Rouge is most secretive. It will not reveal its military strength. It will not allow other people to enter its camps. Its military strength is the most powerful in the region. It is the only faction that stands to gain from the attitude that we adopt. I think that I am the only hon. Member who has visited not only the Association of South East Asian Nations countries and Thailand but Cambodia twice.

I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to the UNDP report entitled "Kampuchea Needs Assessment Study". The United Nations commissioned the report to investigate the state of Cambodia and to see what it needs, but it was prevented, by prejudice, from visiting Phnom Penh and was ordered to remain in Bangkok. To its credit, whether it worked from Bangkok or Saigon, it produced this report, which will shortly be published. It covers Kampuchea to an extent that one cannot do in this debate. The preface says:

> "Where discussion of prospects requires policy assumptions, the Mission has generally assumed continuation of the recent progress. It has become clear in our numerous discussions with all concerned, that there is an aspiration to return the country to the social and economic status that it enjoyed in the late 1960s, when the outlook was so promising, and to achieve this with less emphasis on state ownership and control of commercial activities. The Mission therefore makes reference to conditions . . . so as to provide a datum against which to measure the current situation."

The report analyses every aspect of life in Kampuchea, including social services, industry and the state of the roads.

That document should be considered in the debate on the draft resolution, because it is nonsense that we are taking sides against a regime that has built up the country in the past 10 years and recently granted freedom of religion. Furthermore, it has a market economy and has declared itself to be neutral. To that extent, it has abrogated its treaty with Vietnam. I object most strongly to the fact that we constantly seem to be taking sides against the Cambodian Government on behalf of people who have never been anywhere near it throughout the difficult times.

Does my hon. Friend the Minister accept that, unless we are able to stop the current hostilities, there is a risk of the worst scenario happening—that the Khmer Rouge could succeed militarily? That is too high a price to pay for our present policy. I do not know where we would hide our faces, given the statement of Western leaders, the Prime Minister and the American President, if Pol Pot and his regime were allowed to return.

I press my hon. Friend to state our support for the Prime Minister of Thailand, Chatichai Choonhavan, and for what he is doing to bring together the two sides. It is essential that we try to get hostilities and arms supplies from the Americans, Russians and Chinese suspended. If we are to make progress, it is essential that we accept the invitation of the Hun Sen regime for a mission to visit Kampuchea as a creature of the Paris conference.

One mission of the Paris conference has already paid a visit, but I should not have thought that it was too much to ask for a second mission to verify that the Vietnamese have withdrawn and that the 1 million Vietnamese settlers, who are constantly thrown into the argument by China and the coalition do not exist. The mission could take with it external Khmers, who could tell the difference between Vietnamese and Khmers and talk to the locals. That would be one way of dealing with the myths and arguments that so dominated Paris. As my hon. Friend may know, the arguments in the ad hoc committee were on the basis of genocide on one side and Vietnamese settlers on the other. The reality is that the genocide happened—we can all verify that—but the Vietnamese settlers can be found whether they are there or not.

If we want a comprehensive settlement, an interim government must be formed based on the Jakarta proposals for two sides—the internal Khmers and the external Khmers. There should be no special place for the Khmer Rouge. While it is agreed that it can be part of Prince Sihanouk's team, it is totally unacceptable politically to him and, I believe, to the people of Cambodia that it should be in a quadrapartite interim Government in its own right with its army intact. We could have what we all want—free and fair elections supervised by the international community that allow the people to decide —if we pursue that course. What we cannot do, and what we seem to be seeking to do, is to impose a regime from outside with too high a risk and, in my view, leading to the worst possible solution—the success of the Khmer Rouge currently fighting in Cambodia.

During discussions on my travels through this part of the world, people cry out for Britain to play a greater role. In Burma, the people look to us as a country steeped in diplomacy and fairness. Cambodians look to us as the only member of the Security Council which has not had a direct involvement in the geopolitical situation there. I only hope that I can put over the yearning of these people for Britain's greater involvement because of our history and our tradition and because we have something real to offer.

12.11 am

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Lady must have the consent of the hon. Member whose debate it is and the Minister. Does she have that consent? I see that she has.

Mrs. Clwyd: I join the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) in appealing to the Government to rethink their policy on Cambodia.

With the hon. Gentleman, I recently visited Cambodia for the second time in two years, and I totally agree with what he has said. I would like to ask the Government—this may be the one point on which the hon. Gentleman and I disagree—to challenge the seating at the United Nations when Cambodia is debated on 15 November. That may seem relatively unimportant to us, but it is of great importance to the people of Cambodia because they regard the seat as an important symbol of the world's attitude towards them. It is invidious to have in that seat, as the dominant partner in the coalition, people who represent the Khmer Rouge and who were closely associated with its regime.

Everyone who knows the Khmer Rouge and how it currently thinks, knows that its attitudes have not changed. The people of Cambodia fear that, in some guise, the Khmer Rouge may return. They have great doubts about involving it in any political solution. They believe that they can contain the threat of the Khmer Rouge on the border, but are deeply fearful about the effect of its being allowed back into the country as part of a political settlement.

We know of the desperate need of the country and the fact that it is still isolated by the West. The Leader of the House told me during questions last week that he had no doubt that the Vietnamese have withdrawn from Cambodia. There can be no doubt about the fact that the Vietnamese have not remained as settlers.

We know, too, of Cambodia's desperate need for proper development aid so that the people can improve their infrastructure and their health services and rebuild their country. I cannot stress too strongly their wish to be non-aligned. They do not want to be part of the Eastern bloc. They want to be non-aligned. That is why they do not understand the continuing attitude of the West towards them.

Last week, I put to the Leader of the House, who was answering on the Prime Minister's behalf, a question about an allegation made in *Jane's Defence Weekly* that the United Kingdom had been training guerrillas over the past four years on the Thailand side of the border in several secret camps. That point was repeated in a film by John Pilger, which was shown last night and in a headline in today's *Daily Mirror*,

"Thatcher orders the SAS into Cambodia's killing fields".

The Leader of the House said that the Minister would deal with that question in summing up this debate. I hope that he will, because it would be the greatest duplicity for the United Kingdom to be involved in training guerrillas to fight the Government in Phnom Penh having signed a communiqué in Kuala Lumpur on south-east Asia stating clearly that Cambodia must be allowed to decide its destiny free from foreign interference. I should like to have the Minister's assurance on that point.

[Mrs. Clwyd]

I thank the hon. Member for Broxtowe for giving me some of his valuable time. The eyes of the world are again on Cambodia and the civil war which persists there. The people are looking to the world, especially Britain because of its past role, to play a constructive part in getting a political settlement and ceasefire. We know the desperate need in that country. Unless we play an active role in trying to bring about a settlement, we too shall be guilty of causing bloodshed in that country.

12.16 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): I have three minutes per country and therefore cannot do justice to the expertise of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) or of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). I say with no false modesty that my hon. Friend knows much more about these subjects than I do. They are not within my remit in the Foreign Office. I have returned today from America to find myself answering this debate.

I know Burma a little. I suppose that one begins to feel old when one can say that 20 years ago one was doing something in a grown-up way. Twenty years ago, to this very month, I was in Burma, which is a beautiful, inherently rich country with a fascinating and ancient culture. It has been ruined by a system of government which made one weep then and makes one weep now. In the past, the wasted opportunities made one weep; now it is worse.

For the historical reasons which my hon. Friend mentioned, the many friends of Burma in the House and in this country, including my hon. Friends the Members for Keighley (Mr. Waller) and for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), share the British Government's horror at the violent suppression of the pro-democracy movement and the reversal of the initial steps forward which the State Law and Order Restoration Council appeared to take when political parties were first legalised.

For a few months, opposition leaders were allowed to make speeches. If anything, this respite from the authoritarian rule of the previous 26 years has made the crackdown even more depressing. Hundreds of political organisers and activists have been imprisoned or placed under house arrest, perhaps the most important among them being Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the National League for Democracy. It is clear from the evidence released by the United States Government and others that some of those arrested have been tortured. The SLORC has now announced that politicians under detention will not be permitted to take part in the elections. Also, visas have been denied to foreign journalists. All the developments this summer cast grave doubt on the sincerity of the regime's commitment to the democratic elections that have now been postponed until 1990.

Our clear opposition to the regime's disregard for human and political rights has been made clear and unequivocal. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment was the Minister for Overseas Development he announced in November 1988 our decision to freeze all but emergency relief aid to Burma. Similar action has been taken by our partners in the Twelve and by the United States, Japan and Australia. In every way, with our partners in the European Community, we have been trying to bring home to the Burmese authorities the concern that we feel.

I am summarising briefly the positions we have taken but they are unequivocal and clear. The most recent and perhaps the most powerful reference was in my right hon. Friend the present Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech to the United Nations General assembly on 27 September. He referred to the

"urgent need for the restoration of human rights and democracy through free elections".

I have only two minutes to devote to Cambodia. I congratulate the hon. Member for Cynon Valley on her election today. However, I must tell her and my hon. Friend that I have nothing new to offer the House tonight. The arguments put by my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Cynon Valley and the changing situation in the period following the failure of the Paris conference must make us consider the future carefully.

I will not waste time by repeating the arguments for the policy we have adopted. There are arguments for it, such as that absorption of some part of the Khmer Rouge movement might diminish the power of the rest of the movement and prevent it from overturning a Government who excluded it totally. Something like that has been the structure of the argument followed by countries in the Association of South East Asian Nations and others, and justifies the attempt to include some part of the Khmer Rouge movement—but not the Pol Pot supporters—in a future Government.

I understand the argument put by my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Cynon Valley that we must be extremely cautious even about that, since the basis for power that that might offer might be just the standing ground needed. As a result of the debate and world events, we will be analysing policy closely and I have no doubt, as my hon. Friend said——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-two minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 2 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

International Westminster Bank Bill *(By Order)*

Isle of Wight Bill *(By Order)*

St. George's Hill, Weybridge, Estate Bill *(By Order)*

Hythe Marina Village (Southampton) Wavescreen Bill *(By Order)*

New Southgate Cemetery and Crematorium Limited Bill *(By Order)*

City of London (Spitalfields Market) Bill *(By Order)*

Orders read for consideration of Lords amendments.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November.

British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

Order for further consideration, as amended, read.

To be further considered on Thursday 9 November.

Buckinghamshire County Council Bill *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

Orders for further consideration, as amended, read.

To be further considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

London Regional Transport (Penalty Fares) Bill *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

British Railways Bill *(By Order)*

Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Bill *(By Order)*

Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill *(By Order)*

Orders for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November.

Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 9 November.

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

That the Petitions against the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November.

Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November.

Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next

Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office no later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That the Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

That the Petitions against the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Birmingham City Council (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave, except as provided by these Orders, to suspend further proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration, signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

That, notwithstanding the suspension of other proceedings on the Bill, Standing Order 171A(1) shall apply to the presenting of Petitions against the Bill brought from the Lords in the present Session and only Petitions presented under this Order shall be received as Petitions presented under Standing Order 171A(1).

That any Petitions presented under the foregoing Order shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the British Railways Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (CRYSTAL PALACE) BILL

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which the Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 3) BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration, signed by them, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office that such a declaration had been so deposited has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

That, no petitions against the Bill having been presented within the time limited within the present Session, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the committee;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Medway Tunnel Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration, signed by them, stating that the Bill is the same in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time.

That the Petitions against the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL

That the Promoters of the City of London (Various Powers) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is rare that I table questions to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but today I drew Question No. 13 in the ballot. I returned to my office 15 minutes ago to find an orange removal crate, on top of which was a black dispatch box marked Northern Ireland. I wonder whether this is normal procedure when one tables a Northern Ireland question or whether it happens only when one draws the unlucky No. 13.

Mr. Speaker: Let us see if we can get to Question No. 13 and find out.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Irish Foreign Minister

1. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects to meet the Irish Foreign Secretary to discuss the situation in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): The next meeting of the intergovernmental conference is likely to take place later this month.

Mr. Parry: When the Secretary of State next meets the Irish Foreign Minister, no doubt the subject of the Guildford Four will be raised. That may also raise the question of the Birmingham Six. Will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Home Secretary to set up an urgent review of that case, particularly in view of the "World in Action" programme last Wednesday?

Mr. Brooke: When the conference last met, the Irish Foreign Minister raised the matter that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. We agreed that it was not natural business within the conference, but I gave an undertaking that I would bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Kilfedder: Does my right hon. Friend agree that hostility between the Irish Republic and the United Kingdom largely benefits terrorists, who use it as an excuse for further atrocities and as a means of recruitment to the terrorist cause? When my right hon. Friend next meets the Irish Foreign Minister, will he tell him that wholesale criticism of the security forces in Northern Ireland only gives joy to terrorists in Northern Ireland and hinders reconciliation between its people?

Mr. Brooke: I entirely take the point made by the hon. Member. The Irish Foreign Minister does not engage in wholesale condemnation. He has expressed to me his praise for the courage of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and we both agree that nothing should be said which gives comfort to the terrorists.

Mr. Molyneaux: I hope that the Secretary of State will persuade Mr. Collins to endorse the view set out on 9 May this year by a former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, now the Foreign Secretary, when he said of terrorists:

> "They are professional killers. . . . No political solution will cope with that. They just have to be extirpated".

On a day when we have all been greatly saddened by the pictures of the funeral of the young airman and his baby daughter, would it not be appropriate for the right hon. Gentleman to give an assurance that there has been and will be no change in the position set out by his right hon. Friend? Does he agree that it is vital that that assurance is given today in view of certain ugly reports which were circulating this morning in Belfast?

Mr. Brooke: I gladly give the assurance that I am at one with my right hon. Friend the present Foreign Secretary on that matter.

Mr. Peter Robinson: When the Secretary of State next speaks to the Irish Foreign Secretary, will he inform him of the steps taken by the Government to appease the Irish Republic in relation to photomontages of suspects? What measures are available to members of the security forces to identify quickly those who might want to kill them and other people?

Mr. Brooke: Notice of the subject that the hon. Member has raised was given some little time ago, and it has therefore been the subject of discussion between us. It remains the case that those going out on patrol go out armed with knowledge in terms of the photomontages of which the hon. Member speaks.

Mr. Mallon: Can the Secretary of State inform the House what firm decisions have been taken by the Anglo-Irish conference to promote cross-border economic co-operation? What efforts have been made by both Governments, working through the conference, to maximise EC funding, especially from the EC structural fund?

Mr. Brooke: At the last meeting of the conference, the Irish side and our side specifically discussed that matter. A working party of officials on both sides of the border is working for exactly the purposes that the hon. Member mentions.

Mr. Leigh: When my right hon. Friend next meets the Irish Foreign Secretary, will the two of them reflect that no newspaper image could have been so poignant as the pictures published today of a tiny coffin being carried in dignity from an RAF plane? Will they conclude that the only victim of such mindless terrorism is innocence and not national resolve, and will they redouble their efforts to co-operate to defeat terrorism?

Mr. Brooke: Everyone in the House must have been moved by those pictures. As I said, I hope that among those who support the terrorists there are those who ask themselves whether their aims can ever be justified by the murder of a baby in that way.

Mr. McNamara: I welcome the right hon. Gentleman to his first Question Time as Secretary of State. The issue of the administration of justice is continually raised at the intergovernmental meetings. At the last meeting, the role of the UDR was discussed and the question of the Guildford Four was raised. Can the Secretary of State inform the House whether, at the next meeting, he will discuss the case of the four members of the UDR known as the Armagh Four, the circumstances of whose convictions have raised considerable concern and doubt on both sides of the border and in both communities? Will the right hon. Gentleman announce that he is setting up a separate, independent investigation to examine the soundness of their convictions?

Mr. Brooke: As I said in answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry), that issue is not specifically one for the conference, but of course it may well arise within it. I have said that I am happy to look at new evidence or new factors put to me which might lead to the matter being referred to the Court of Appeal. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words in welcoming me.

Short Brothers

2. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the transaction for the acquisition of Short Brothers plc by Bombardier of Canada has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

12. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to meet the chairman of Bombardier; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met M. Laurent Beaudoin, the chairman of Bombardier, on 4 October 1989 when he visited Short's to mark the completion of the sale of Short's to Bombardier. There are no plans for a further meeting with the chairman in the near future.

Mr. Cran: My hon. Friend will be aware that before privatisation of Short's the Government placed high priority on the company's long-term future. What steps are being taken to ensure that priority is upheld? To what extent is Bombardier investing in Short's? If that information is regarded as commercially sensitive, why is that so?

Mr. Needham: I do not think that it is regarded as particularly sensitive. The total sum that the Government put into the Short's-Bombardier takeover was £750 million, and Bombardier put forward an additional £30 million. Bombardier, together with Short's, now represents perhaps the best hope for the aerospace industry in Northern Ireland and in Europe in the 1990s. Bombardier has brought a considerable amount of work to Short's with its new regional jet and will continue to bring more work to Northern Ireland. We have obtained guarantees from Bombardier that it will stay in Northern Ireland and that work will continue there. This marriage must be the possible news for Short's and it must give immense confidence to the people of Belfast to see Short's on such a sound and potentially prosperous footing.

Mr. Colvin: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that Short Brothers has been undercapitalised historically and that the welcome merger with Bombardier will provide its highly skilled work force with the tools to get on with the job of making the world's finest aerospace products? Does he accept that Bombardier's interest in Northern Ireland demonstrates the enormous advantages that both the Province and his Department can provide for inward investors to the United Kingdom who seek a springboard in Europe post-1992?

Mr. Needham: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. An enormous debt has been hanging over Short's and has led to enormous interest problems for a long time. The fact that the Government were prepared to invest such a vast sum illustrates their confidence in the future of Bombardier-Short's. I recently visited the company and saw its work, which is at the forefront of technology. The activities not only of Short's, but of Harland and Wolff and STC in Belfast should give real encouragement for the future. Not every hon. Member realises how fast Belfast is changing for the better.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: What price was obtained by the Industrial Development Board for the Lear Fan factory and what was the price for which it was subsequently sold to Short's-Bombardier? Will the Minister provide grant aid for the new purchase price?

Mr. Needham: The IDB sold the Lear Fan factory to Wilson's for £650,000. The sum paid by Bombardier-Short's to SRC Composites was £1·1 million and there was no grant aid from the IDB as part of the price.

Government

3. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about his plans to increase accountability and democracy of government in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I should like to see substantial responsibilities devolved to elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland. Progress depends on the willingness of local politicians to talk and work together.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Secretary of State be announcing any plans in the light of the Government's intention that care for the disabled should be provided in the community? Will there be an extension of powers, perhaps to directly elected local health boards, or does he intend to restore such powers to local government?

Mr. Brooke: Conversations have been going on in Northern Ireland about whether there are further powers which might be distributed to local government. However, the hon. Gentleman asks a rather larger question.

Mr. Riddick: To reassure the people of Northern Ireland that power resides wholly in the hands of the Northern Ireland Office, will my right hon. Friend reassure the House that if any changes are made in the structure or role of the Ulster Defence Regiment, those decisions will be taken after discussions within and between the Northern Ireland Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet, and that such decisions will not be taken as a result of pressure from the Dublin Government?

Mr. Brooke: I do not think that that question is exactly attached to the issue of devolution, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that observation, which I have noted.

Mr. McGrady: Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating those local government officials and councillors who succeeded in attracting to Newcastle, County Down yesterday the United Kingdom tourist convention, which was devoted to the promotion of tourism and, therefore, of job creation in Northern Ireland? Will the Secretary of State equally condemn the action of certain small-minded Unionist councillors who withdrew from that seminar and who added insult to injury for his ministerial colleague, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham)? Does he agree that that action was detrimental to the promotion of tourism and jobs in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Brooke: We live in a free society and it is up to individual councillors to decide their own actions. However, I am not sure that tourism has been advanced by the action that they took.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the Secretary of State accept that the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland desire to have a devolved Government in Northern Ireland and that the present direct rule is wholly unacceptable and undemocratic? Although the Secretary of State has said that he is waiting for others, perhaps he will tell us what steps he is taking to bring devolution to the Province.

Mr. Brooke: When I became Secretary of State, I invited the leaders of the political parties in Northern Ireland to tell me how they saw matters. All of them accepted that invitation, so I had the opportunity to talk to all of them. As they have all indicated that they are prepared to talk further, I envisage that we shall soon be having a second round of talks.

Community Workshops

5. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of community workshops in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: New arrangements for the funding and delivery of the youth training programme are being introduced in the year commencing April 1990 which are designed to enhance the quality of training and the cost-effectiveness of the programme. Community workshops will be included within the programme, provided that they meet the standards and criteria for which the arrangements provide.

Mr. Beggs: Will the Minister acknowledge the excellence of training provided in many workshops in Northern Ireland? Will he accept that that training has helped many young people to gain qualifications and, ultimately, employment? Will he acknowledge that considerable alarm is felt by those who manage the workshops as a result of the haste with which the changes in block funding are being introduced? I appeal to the Minister to consider deferring for one year the implementation of his Department's proposals on block funding to enable his officials to do their homework properly and to enable those who manage the workshops to plan and arrange for a successful transition.

Mr. Needham: I acknowledge that many of the workshops have done good work in training young people in Northern Ireland. It is because we want to ensure that that quality is provided in all workshops that we have introduced the proposals. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, we have appointed management consultants to help the workshops and the providers of training through this period and I am perfectly happy to talk to those involved in the workshops about the proposals. Nevertheless, it is important that we introduce into the workshops a system puts more emphasis on qualifications, that we incorporate a bigger competitive element than we have at present and, most importantly, that we achieve greater involvement of employers. I do not want to go back on the time scale that I have set, but I am, of course, happy to talk to the providers.

Dog Licences

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the system of dog licences in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Bottomley): District councils license dogs.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister agree that the system in Northern Ireland has been working very well and has been encouraging responsible dog-ownership and discouraging irresponsible dog-ownership? Will he recommend that Ministers responsible for the mainland of the United Kingdom introduce that system throughout to the whole of the United Kingdom instead of simply having it in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Bottomley: I brought the Minister responsible for rottweilers to Northern Ireland to consider that system and other things, but she was moved and became Minister for Health. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be able to see the information about the experience in Northern Ireland. However, the system there is not necessarily applicable here.

Local Government

7. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any proposals to re-establish local government in Northern Ireland on a basis close to that of local government in the remainder of the United Kingdom.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): We have no current plans for changes to the existing structure of local government in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Gow: Does my hon. Friend recall the commitment given in the 1979 Conservative party manifesto which stated that in the absence of devolved government we would seek to set up a regional council in Northern Ireland? Why has that commitment been abandoned, and why does my hon. Friend continue to withhold from the people of Northern Ireland the inestimable benefits of the community charge?

Dr. Mawhinney: The commitment has not been withdrawn. We have fought succeeding elections on a manifesto committing the Government, along with the other major constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland, to seeking a form of devolution for the Province. That remains our position.

Mr. Maginnis: Does the Minister agree that he was somewhat inaccurate in his reply to the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow)? Has he not in fact changed the democratic structure of local government in the proposals for the composition of health boards after March 1990? Will he at least concede that if he goes ahead with that plan the new health and social services councils will be accorded powers similar to those vested in Select Committees of this House?

Dr. Mawhinney: It is and remains part of the Government's desire and intention to give the people of Northern Ireland a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives in a whole variety of ways. However, the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question does not follow from the original question.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend look again at the reply that he gave to our hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) about commitments to devolution? I recommend that my hon. Friend the Minister to read the statements made by our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland who has very clearly declared views about the instability which would result from any form of devolved government in any part of the unitary parliamentary system. The Minister should bear in mind the impact of his thoughts in Ulster on politics in Scotland.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am aware of the strength of my hon. Friend's views because he has expressed them before at Northern Ireland Question Time. However, I must remind him that it is, and has been for a long time, part of the Government's policy and commitment to seek to have arrangements in Northern Ireland which command widespread support across the community and which give local people a greater say in the decisions which affect their lives.

Mr. Ashdown: I congratulate the Secretary of State on his new appointment and wish him well in a very difficult and demanding post. Can the Under-Secretary of State assure the House that if the Government were to give thought to increasing the powers of local government, which would be very welcome, he would ensure that that would in no way jeopardise the Government's commitment to speedy implementation of devolution, which is the Government's publicly stated aim in the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Dr. Mawhinney: First, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would wish me to express his appreciation of the right hon. Gentleman's kind words. In Northern Ireland we are seeking arrangements that command widespread support across the community. If any arrangements are introduced that do not command that support, they will not work. That is the Government's basic position. Nothing that might take place in future with respect to local government will get in the way of the Government's long-standing commitment to devolution, which predates the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Credit Unions

8. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many credit unions have been established in each of the past 20 years; what is the approximate size of membership of each of these credit unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The information for the past 20 years is lengthy and I will write to the hon. Member. However, I can say that there are presently 113 credit unions operating in Northern Ireland and their membership ranges in size from under 200 to over 12,000 with an average of approximately 1,200.

Dr. Godman: Does the Minister agree that many of those credit unions have been established in communities characterised by high unemployment, poverty and debt? Surely the time has now arrived for the repeal of the infamous Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act 1971? As there is no comparable legislation in mainland Britain, is not Northern Ireland being discriminated against by the retention of the PDA?

Mr. Needham: I do not agree. The Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act 1971 is important in being able to ensure that debt does not rise to totally unacceptable levels in Northern Ireland. However, I support the hon. Gentleman's view about credit unions, which play an excellent role in assisting those who are trying to save, in offering loans at low interest rates and so helping people to avoid getting into debt.

Local Government

9. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to issue a White Paper on local government in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government have no plans at present to issue a White Paper on local government in Northern Ireland. Any legislative proposals arising from the consultative paper on local government published last November will be issued in due course as a proposal for a draft Order in Council.

Mr. Corbett: May I congratulate the Minister on succeeding where so many of his predecessors have come to grief? Where they brought discord, he has brought harmony among virtually all the chairmen of local authorities who are opposed to the privatisation of council services.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman may do that, but he would be wrong to do so because I was not in post last November. What happens in the future will be determined by our actions and, no doubt, by local authorities.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Will the Minister assure the House that, in any future local government proposals, he will drop the suggestion, made in the recent local government consultative paper, that the chief executive should act as a paid informer for local government? Will he assure the House of that, because it would be completely unacceptable to councils and will cause nothing but untold trouble in the council chamber?

Mr. Bottomley: The proper reply to that is that the responses to the consultation are being considered. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that those who know that wrongdoing is going on should not declare it, I think that he and I are on different courses.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Has the Minister noticed that several meetings have taken place at the invitation of the Lord Mayor of Belfast at which all the Northern Ireland parties in the House were represented? Is he aware that, at that meeting, there was unanimous opposition to the Government's proposals on privatisation and compulsory competitive tendering, and there was a fairly unanimous view that some further powers should be given to local government, which presently has a consultative role? If the groundswell of opinion of parties represented in the House were that we should move in that direction, would the Minister include that in the new consultative document?

Mr. Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney)—the Under-Secretary of State—have said that if various parties across the country can agree on things, that makes it far easier for the Government to consider the proposals that come forward. Most people look with interest at what the Lord Mayor has managed to achieve. I do not think that many others have brought that many people together in such a harmonious way, for a long time.

Mr. Harry Barnes: In any plans for the change of local government in Northern Ireland, will the Minister consider developing plans that will fit in with devolved government there? If the Government are frightened of moving towards majority rule, will they protect the rights of minorities by producing a Bill of Rights?

Mr. Bottomley: That question goes beyond my competence. Most of the things in the consultative paper, especially competitive tendering, which is slightly different from privatisation, can fit in with any form of local government responsibilities.

Long-term Unemployment

10. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the impact of the Social Security Order (1989) on the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Needham: It is too early to assess the impact.

Ms. Armstrong: I am sure that the Minister will know that the result of similar legislation in England has been difficult times and increased debt for the long-term unemployed. What will he do to ensure that the long-term unemployed in Northern Ireland do not suffer in a similar way?

Mr. Needham: What we are trying to do for the long-term unemployed in Northern Ireland is find jobs for them. There are three legs to the stool of our proposals. I consider it entirely right for us to suggest that people may have to change their aspirations to find work. We all agree, however, that long-term unemployment inevitably leads to disillusionment and demoralisation, and that it is important to ensure that people move as quickly as they can to be assessed and to go on to the job training programme, Restart or ACE—action for community employment. I believe that those measures form a worthwhile part of our package.

Mr. Colvin: How many of the long-term unemployed have been provided with work building the security fence around Short Brothers? Is my hon. Friend happy that the fence will provide the security that the company requires, following the break-ins earlier in the year?

Mr. Needham: I have no idea how many are thus employed, but I am certain that security outside is crucial to secure jobs inside.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister agree that the social security system should be in place to support families when the head of household is prepared to take low-paid employment? Will he undertake to review the regulations that deny benefit to a person who takes a low-paid and initially temporary post because those regulations currently require the post to be permanent for a family to continue to receive income support?

Mr. Needham: Family credit is a great help to the heads of families in such circumstances. Clearly, a temporary job must be treated in a way that goes along with the existing rules.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the Minister tell the House whether it is true that the Government are considering the reintroduction of the old unemployment relief scheme to help the long-term unemployed in the Province?

Mr. Needham: No, Sir.

Ms. Mowlam: The Minister has just told us that it is too early for him to assess the impact of the Social Security Order (1989). May I tell him that it is not too early for the long-term unemployed in Northern Ireland? They are already feeling the impact.

What measures will his Department use to assess the impact of the order? Surely he can let us know this afternoon how much money has been expended on loans since its introduction, compared with the amount spent on single payments before it was introduced.

Mr. Needham: As the hon. Lady is well aware, the order deals with effects on the long-term unemployed. The reason why it is too early to assess its impact is that we have no knowlege of it at present. Let me repeat, however, that it is vital that the unemployed get back into Restart, ACE or some other form of training. The order offers them a spur, which is crucial to stop the demoralisation that long-term unemployment brings.

New Legislation

11. **Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will indicate the appoximate dates on which he proposes to introduce to Northern Ireland *(a)* the community charge, *(b)* the privatisation of water services and *(c)* the privatisation of the Northern Ireland electricity service.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Cope): There are no present plans to introduce to Northern Ireland the community charge or the privatisation of water services. The Government propose to privatise Northern Ireland Electricity in the first half of 1992.

Mr. McCusker: Why should the people of the most deserving region of the United Kingdom be denied the inestimable benefits of measures whose passage has been so hard fought over the past few years so that Scotsmen, Englishmen and Welshmen could gain from them? Why should the people of Northern Ireland be denied those benefits—if there are any benefits?

Mr. Cope: There are certainly many benefits for Great Britain, but we recognise the differences in the Province. That is why the time scale is different. With respect to local government which we have already discussed this afternoon, only about 10 per cent. of the services that in

Great Britain are carried out through local government are currently carried out through local government in the Province.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I am sure that the Minister will accept that fuel costs in the North of Ireland are among the most expensive in the United Kingdom. One of the consequences of privatising Northern Ireland Electricity will be a further price increase. If that is so, what action do the Government propose to reduce the impact of that privatisation on domestic budgets and on industrial costs?

Mr. Cope: I must ask the hon. Gentleman to await the White Paper on this subject which is expected next year.

Lear Fan Factory

13. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give an account of the circumstances surrounding the disposal of the former Lear Fan factory.

Mr. Needham: The Lear Fan factory was sold by the Industrial Development Board to F. G. Wilson Ltd. in 1988 to meet that company's expansion plans. Wilson, after deciding to expand elsewhere, sold the factory to SRC Composites Ltd. in spring 1989 for the manufacture of composite components. After the IDB refused financial assistance for this project, SRC sold the factory to Bombardier-Short's.

Mr. Wall: Is the Minister not concerned that, in essence, the factory and its equipment were resold for three times the value placed on them by the Government and the receiver? Will he ensure that when factories and equipment are sold in future, there is a clawback clause so that the IDB can share in the profits that are made? Will I be allowed to make the same sort of profit when I sell the dispatch box back to the Minister?

Mr. Needham: The original valuation carried out by the valuation and land office in Northern Ireland, which has great experience of industrial properties in Northern Ireland, valued the factory at £650,000, for which sum it was then sold to Wilson. As the hon. Gentleman knows, Wilson sold it, together with the autoclaves, jigs and tools that were later destroyed, for £3 million to SRC, which was one of the reasons why the Government had doubts about SRC. The factory was then sold by SRC for £1·1 million, which included additional amounts spent on it by SRC in the interim. In my judgment, that was a fair valuation. Of course, if it had been possible to see into the future and to realise that Bombardier-Short's would have the use of the factory and what was in it once it had merged, that would have been a good answer. However, we did not know it at the time. The sale was carried out according to a proper valuation on advice by the VLO and the receiver. I am perfectly happy about the way in which the contracts were decided.

Mr. McNamara: For what reason did the IDB refuse to give grant support?

Mr. Needham: The reason that we did not give grant support, as I wrote to the hon. Gentleman, was that having looked into the background of the company, we found, on advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, that it was an Iraqi-backed company that may well have had connections with the making of ballistic missiles. Under those circumstances, there was no question of the IDB giving support. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would congratulate the Government and the IDB on their precipience in finding that out.

Kilroot Phase II

14. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress in the development of Kilroot phase II.

Mr. Needham: Northern Ireland Electricity has been authorised to proceed with the necessary preliminary work, but it has not yet been decided when construction should start.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that there has been an exceptionally high increase in electricity sales by Northern Ireland Electricity? In view of that, when will the decision be made about funding the extension to Kilroot, which is vital not just for Northern Ireland, but for Ayrshire open-cast coal and the port of Ayr?

Mr. Needham: I understand the hon. Gentleman's constituency interest in this subject. We must consider carefully whether we should fit flue gas desulphurisation at Kilroot II and whether we could have an interconnection with Scotland, which would benefit Scotland also. I need to ensure that we do not import Ayrshire coal only to send it back to Scotland as acid rain. I accept that Kilroot II is important. Preliminary planning work is continuing and I shall make an announcement on it as soon as I can.

Education Reform

15. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many responses he has received on the consultation on the draft Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989.

17. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many responses were received in the consultation on the draft Education (Northern Ireland) Reform Order 1989.

Dr. Mawhinney: One hundred and fifty.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that hon. Members on the mainland share the concern of hon. Members representing Northern Ireland about the problems associated with Northern Ireland? Outside the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order I would like to know whether the Minister shares my belief that there should be total integration of children in schools?

Dr. Mawhinney: First, it is one of the sadnesses of the education reform proposals for Northern Ireland that the majority of hon. Members representing Northern Ireland have expressed no views on them during the consultation process. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that the Order in Council is likely to include specific proposals to promote and to facilitate integrated education in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Beggs: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: How can it arise out of that question?

Mr. Beggs: The Minister, regrettably, has misled the House and others in Northern Ireland. As the spokesman for the Ulster Unionists I did correspond with him having——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a continuation of Question Time.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting in the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Franks: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that she would not have a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in her Cabinet and that the Conservative party is not in the business of perjuring and prostituting its principles and policies in the pursuit of power?

The Prime Minister: I gladly confirm what my hon. Friend seeks. Nuclear deterrence is a fundamental part of our defence strategy and also of NATO's defence strategy. I notice that the Opposition refused to elect their official spokesman on defence to their shadow Cabinet and instead elected a member of CND—doubtless to keep the Leader of the Opposition company.

Q2. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Will the Prime Minister categorically deny that British military personnel have been involved in the Cambodian conflict through training forces now under the effective control of the bloodstained Pol Pot?

The Prime Minister: We are totally and utterly against Pol Pot and we have given no help whatsoever to him.

Q3. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dame Jill Knight: May I invite my right hon. Friend to use this opportunity to say a word of welcome for a document produced today—

"An Evolutionary Approach to Economic and Monetary Union"?

Does she agree with me that it contains a far better suggestion for closer economic and monetary co-operation in Europe than anything put forward so far by Mr. Delors?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it is an excellent paper which shows that one can achieve closer economic and monetary co-operation much better and more rapidly by working with the grain of market forces than by setting up new bureaucratic and highly centralised institutions which are not accountable to anyone. The paper honours the commitment which we gave at Madrid that we would put forward an alternative approach; this document is that alternative approach.

Mr. Kinnock: To be fair to herself, will the Prime Minister tell us why she rejected the former Chancellor's proposal for an independent Bank of England?

The Prime Minister: There is no change in the status of the Bank of England proposed at the moment. The main objective is to reduce inflation. That is the Government's task. We shall not abdicate responsibility for it.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister confirm or deny the dependable report that she turned down this proposal because she felt that it would have been admitting defeat in the battle against inflation?

The Prime Minister: No. It is the Government's job to get inflation down. That task we shall carry out ourselves. We shall not abdicate responsibility. It is not our system to place that responsibility on the Bank of England.

Mr. Kinnock: When the man whom she described as brilliant and unassailable made this proposition, why did she turn it down? Will she tell us candidly?

The Prime Minister: The matter was not widely discussed. It is not on the agenda. I wonder if it is on the right hon. Gentleman's agenda. Does he propose to pass responsibility to the Bank of England, which would require legislation and to which its constitution is so totally unsuited? Does he or does he not?

Q4. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November?

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the abolition of the national dock labour scheme has now been accepted by everyone in the port industry? Furthermore, has my right hon. Friend noted that in Gravesham a major wharf has already reopened, creating many dock workers jobs? In the light of that and other examples round the country, is it not the case that all who voted against the scheme's abolition should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the abolition of the dock labour scheme has been a great success and will be of particular advantage to those ports which were previously subject to it. They will be very much more prosperous now that they are not so restricted. We must congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on the skilful way in which the legislation was introduced and passed through the House.

Q5. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Boateng: Will the Prime Minister take time today to reflect on the plight of 53,000 war widows who, because their husbands died before March 1973, receive a pension of between a half and a quarter less than those whose husbands died after that date, and have a standard of living substantially below that of pensioners in Japan and Germany? Do we not owe these women a debt of honour and is it not time it were paid?

The Prime Minister: There are two pensions which war widows can receive. One is paid by the Department of Social Security. This is the war widow's pension which applies equally to all war widows regardless of the date on which they were widowed. The other is an occupational pension scheme which is run by the Ministry of Defence and which, like all occupational pension schemes, is not retrospective. Indeed, it could never have been introduced had it been retrospective. We try to help the older war widows who are not entitled to any help under the occupational pension scheme by an age allowance which gives them a higher pension as they get older.

Mr. Alexander: Will my right hon. Friend join me in expressing the sense of outrage by my rail commuting constituents at the prospect of an increase in rail fares of up to 21 per cent. for the second year running? Does she agree that the standard of timing is worse, the buffet service a joke and getting a seat a lottery? What will she do to help to have this proposal reversed?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, the British Rail and London Underground decisions are to be announced later this afternoon. I think I should point out that investment in British Rail is at its highest for a quarter of a century. As my hon. Friend has said, perhaps there needs to be a good deal more investment, but it has to be paid for. Investment in the London Underground is also at record levels. I am afraid that that partly explains the increase in fares which are to come about.

Q6. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Buchan: Will the right hon. Lady reflect a little more seriously on the deplorable answer that she gave my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) about Kampuchea? Has it not been abundantly exemplified that British troops have been involved in the training of forces under Sihanouk which are involved with the Khmer Rouge coalition? Is not our support for the United Nations resolution which, by definition will involve Pol Pot forces, even more explicit? Will she deny that, and if not, will she investigate it and put the Foreign Office in its proper place?

The Prime Minister: As I said, we are wholly against Pol Pot. I have made speeches to that effect, as the hon. Gentleman knows, and Pol Pot must not return to Cambodia.

Representation in the United Nations is done by the democratic alliance of Prince Sihanouk, which includes the Khmer Rouge. There has not been a vote on that since 1982, but the representation is that of the democratic alliance.

Mr. Conway: Would my right hon. Friend consider sending 500 copies of today's edition of the *Daily Mail* to the Prime Minister of Ireland with the message that this kind of slaughter of innocent victims—especially of children—only stiffens the resolve of the British people —*[Interruption.]* Wait for it, you rabble——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Remarks of that kind tend only to inflame tempers.

Mr. Conway: Mr. Speaker, if you could hear what this lot are muttering you would throw them out of the Chamber——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to put his question.

Mr. Conway: Will my right hon. Friend send these copies to the Irish Prime Minister with the message that the British people have the greatest resolve to stand behind their security forces against physical attack by the IRA or verbal attack by the Haughey Government?

The Prime Minister: Everyone in this House utterly condemns the murder by the IRA not only of the baby but of many other people. We are fully behind our security forces and we make that plain to the Government of the Republic of Ireland time and again. I fully endorse what my hon. Friend says about that.

Q7. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Do the Government intend to hold an immediate inquiry into the serious allegations of insider dealings? As a Cabinet Minister has been mentioned indirectly, will he make a statement to the House about the arrangements that he made with his stockbrokers?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, my right hon. Friend made a statement and I have nothing further to add. I am amazed that the hon. Gentleman has raised the matter.

Mr. Dunn: Does my right hon. Friend agree— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dunn: Does the Prime Minister agree that while it is right to promote the growth of democracy in the Eastern bloc, now is the time to promote it in some of the countries that are members of the British Commonwealth?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, not all members of the British Commonwealth are democracies. Some have military Governments and some have a different definition of democracy from ours. It is the purpose of the Commonwealth to help all countries to reach the objectives set out in the Singapore declaration of 1971—freedom under a rule of law and full democracy. We should sustain these countries through the intermediate period until they can attain that objective.

Q8. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Prime Minister support the suggestion made on Tuesday by her Chancellor that interest rates had to be raised in order to prevent young people being priced out of the housing market? Are Ministers so out of touch that they do not understand that high mortgage repayments are just as serious a barrier to home ownership as high prices?

The Prime Minister: I would not accept the interpretation put by the hon. Gentleman on my right hon. Friend's remarks. Interest rates were raised because monetary conditions were too loose and therefore it was necessary to get inflation down.

Q9. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Prime Minister now answer the question—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Prime Minister now answer the question asked so eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) in relation to Cambodia? This is a very serious matter and on two occasions in this Question Time the Prime Minister has dodged the issue. Now for a third time she has an opportunity to answer to the House. I hope that she will do so.

The Prime Minister: I note that the hon. Gentleman was taken by surprise, could not think up a question and had to repeat an old one. I will therefore repeat the answer that I gave. Our abhorrence of Pol Pot's murderous regime is well known and there is no question of our supporting the Khmer Rouge. I hope that the hon. Gentleman has got it clear now.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): May I ask the Leader of the House to tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The business for next week will be as follows:

Monday 6 November—Progress on consideration of Lords amendments to the Local Government and Housing Bill——

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order after business questions.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Tuesday 7 November—Completion of consideration of——

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please resume his seat? I will take his point of order and any other points of order after business questions.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I asked the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat. I now order him to do so. [HON. MEMBERS: "Name him."] If the hon. Gentleman persists, I regret that I will have to name him. I must ask him to resume his seat until after business questions.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I was saying, on Tuesday 7 November, there will be completion of consideration of Lords amendments to the Local Government and Housing Bill.

WEDNESDAY 8 NOVEMBER—Consideration of Lords amendments to the Employment Bill.

THURSDAY 9 NOVEMBER—Until seven o'clock there will be a debate on parliamentary pensions on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Proceedings on the Prisons (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*, followed by proceedings on the Statute Law Repeals Bill *[Lords]* and proceedings on the Opticians Bill *[Lords]*, which are all consolidation measures.

Motion to take note of EC document on shipping and dangerous goods and motions relating to merchant shipping regulations. Details of all the documents concerned will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

FRIDAY 10 NOVEMBER—There will be a debate on world climate change on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER—Supplemental guillotine motion on and consideration of Lords amendments to the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Opposition day (2nd Allotted Day—2nd part). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion, subject for debate to be announced.

The House will wish to know, Mr. Speaker, that, subject to the progress of business, the House will meet for Prorogation on Thursday 16 November.

The new Session will be opened on Tuesday 21 November.

[Thursday 9 November
Relevant European Community Document
7074/89 Shipping (Dangerous Cargoes)
Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee
HC 15-xxix (1988-89), para 1

Merchant Shipping Regulations:
Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collision) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989 No. 1798)
Merchant Shipping (Accident Investigation) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989 No. 1172).]

Dr. Cunningham: I pledge the Leader of the House my full co-operation in my new role for any measures that he may introduce to improve facilities in the House for hon. Members and others who work here, and my implacable opposition to those aspects of Government policy to which the Opposition are so consistently opposed. I have been informed that my responsibilities, like his, cover televising the House, and I am told that, for people of my height or above, there is a problem with camera angles. Therefore, I had thought to ask his permission to have a small trench dug in the Floor on this side of the House, but as he would probably like to see me start my job off in a hole, I shall put that request in abeyance.

We welcome the decision to provide time for a debate on world climate change, and we look forward to that debate. However, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman reconsider the proposed arrangements for Monday 13 November? As he has said, the second half of that day is to be given over to Opposition supply time. We urge the Leader of the House to change the business so that we can have the Opposition time first, to be followed by the timetable motion. I hope that he will give sympathetic consideration to that request.

As for the business on 6 and 7 November, the Leader of the House will know that more than 600 amendments to the Local Government and Housing Bill have been tabled in another place. That is an astonishing number of amendments, mainly from the Government. I acknowledge that one or two of the amendments resulted from defeats of the Government by Labour Members of the other place, and we welcome that. Bearing in mind the huge amount of additional work to be considered, may we have an assurance that there will be no move to restrict the time available for discussion of those issues?

The Leader of the House will have observed, as we did, the anger on both sides of the House about the announcement that is to come shortly from British Rail that fares are to be increased by between 10 and 20 per cent. He will know that millions of people, particularly in the constituencies represented by his right hon. and hon. Friends in and around the south-east, will be very angry about these increases, which are way in excess of the rate of inflation. Therefore, I urge the Leader of the House to provide time next week for the House to discuss these appalling increases in commuter fares, which will be so deleterious in their effect on the family incomes of millions of people.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his role of dealing with the business of the House. I have taken note, with interest, of both parts of his declaration of faith. I shall try as far as I can to help him with the first and hinder him with the second.

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

I have taken note of what the hon. Gentleman said about the business arrangements for Monday 13 November, and I shall look at the proposal that he has made for changing the sequence of that business. It is probably most convenient for that to be pursued through the usual channels.

I also heard what the hon. Gentleman said about the work that we shall be doing on the Local Government and Housing Bill. The Bill has already received its Third Reading in the other place, and he is right to say that we shall have a substantial number of amendments to consider. However, I emphasise that the vast majority of them are technical or consequential on points that have been raised during debate. The arrangements for debating those matters on the two days that I have identified have been discussed with representatives of the Opposition, and I hope that it will be possible for us to handle them within the framework.

Average rail fare increases have been announced—I recognise that no one welcomes any increase—and they are rather less than a great deal of recent speculation had led people to expect. The details of the increases are beyond my competence at this stage. I cannot offer the hon. Gentleman any prospect of a debate on that matter next week.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that I have been fortunate enough to be granted an Adjournment debate on 13 November on haemophiliac AIDS victims. Will he talk to our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health and ensure that I have a definitive reply so that these people are given some real hope that they will be compensated as adequately as is possible as soon as possible?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I have said on several occasions, it is a matter that I have brought to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. I congratulate my hon. Friend on having secured on opportunity to raise the matter on the Adjournment next week. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend to the importance which my hon. Friend understandably attaches to the debate.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Leader of the House reconsider the timetabling of business to reflect the concern that I am sure is felt on both sides of the House about the events in Cambodia? Would it be possible before the United Nations meets on 15 November—which is the date, as he will be aware, when recognition will either be given or refused to the so-called coalition democratic Government of Kampuchea—to have a debate in this place about which authorities in Kampuchea should be recognised, about the prospect of a change of policy so that recognition could be given to the de facto Government in Phnom Penh, and about what actual and potential links there are between British defence forces and forces there so that we and the British people may be assured that we are supporting people who are the servants and protagonists of democracy and not some of the people who the Prime Minister and others have condemned as being among the greatest tyrants in politics since the second world war? A debate would be extremely welcome.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I must repeat what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said. We can make no comment of any kind on allegations of relationships with the non-Communist resistance forces of the sort raised by the hon. Gentleman. Our objective is, and always has been, a comprehensive settlement that will allow the Cambodian people to elect the Government of their own choice. On the many occasions that I have said that, I have repeated that our abhorrence of the murderous Pol Pot regime is well known and that there is no question of our supporting that regime.

I cannot offer any prospect of a rearrangement of the business next week. I remind the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that events in Kampuchea were debated at the end of yesterday's business on the Adjournment.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): I welcome the Government's decision to hold an early debate on climate change, or what will undoubtedly be referred to as the greenhouse effect. My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that the Select Committee on Energy, which I have the privilege of chairing, has recently produced a report on the energy policy implications of this. Will the Government's reply to the report be available in time for the forthcoming important debate? Secondly, will the report that is being produced by the Select Committee on Science and Technology in another place, which I gather is at an advanced stage, if not already in draft, be published in time as it will have a material contribution to make to the debate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for the debate that we have foreshadowed. I cannot give a precise answer to either of his questions. I shall be sure to let him have that information as soon as I can.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a debate next week on safety measures for large chemical plants such as Allied Colloids in my constituency, where a serious explosion took place earlier this week? We could then receive an explanation of why it is that the local council is trying to remove the only green area left in that industrial area with the purpose of bringing in more industry. Its actions have been backed, apparently, by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman understandably raises a point of interest to the community he represents with which he is, also understandably, more familiar than I am, but I shall draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. and learned Friend's decision to have a debate next week on the climate will be welcome, but since the reports are not yet out it is premature. Would not the Government be doing the House a better service by having a debate on toxic waste disposal as a result of the report published by the Select Committee on the Environment, which has been out for some considerable time and is of great interest to everyone in Britain?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can understand my hon. Friend advancing that point of view, but it is not a point of view that has prevailed with those who arrange the business of the House.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Is the Leader of the House aware of difficulties regarding the allocation of debating time to the minority parties? Can he give an assurance that during his tenure of office past obligations entered into will be honoured?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I will take account of the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): If we cannot have a debate next week on the fares increase for London Transport, London Underground and British Rail, may we have a statement so that I can bring out the position of my constituents in Northolt and Northolt Park? In a letter to me today Sir Robert Reid, the chairman of the British Railways Board, said that those people receive a thoroughly unsatisfactory service from Network SouthEast and that something must be done about it. Is it not wrong that they should have to pay a 10 or 10-plus per cent. fares increase on top of an unsatisfactory service?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can understand my hon. Friend expressing concern about that matter, but I cannot promise to rearrange the business to make it possible to have such a debate next week.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The right hon. and learned Gentleman will no doubt have noticed that various innovations have been introduced into the Chamber, about which the majority of Members were never consulted and which a feeble Committee seemed powerless to control. What does he think of these lamps hung with Malaysian moth catchers? What does he think of these cameras that, contrary to earlier assurances, intrude into the Chamber?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Hung almost as well as my hon. Friend.

Mr. Faulds: Not quite as well, I can assure my hon. Friend. Regardless of the rather puerile comments of this inevitably loquacious colleague of mine, should not the House examine these internal decorations and should the matter not finally be referred to the Royal Fine Art Commission?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I would hesitate to adjudicate in the competition on loquacity between the hon Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). As the hon. Gentleman well knows, the arrangements now in place are part of an experiment that is starting in its full form shortly. They are certainly not intended to represent the final state of the art.

Mr. Faulds: When does the experiment end?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The experiment ends or continues when the House debates it at the end of the Session that is shortly to start. It will not surprise the hon. Gentleman to know that one of the matters that has already been drawn to the Select Committee's attention has been a certain lack of enthusiasm for these designs and the Committee has decided that further work should be done on the preparation of alternatives to take the place of those in due course if the House should so decide on the continuation of the experiment. I understand how aggrieved the hon. Gentleman is with his enormous sense of taste, but the matter has already struck a number of other hon. Members.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Has my right hon. and learned Friend received a letter from an organisation which calls itself CMB Image Consultants telling him that 55 per cent. of the impression that we make on television depends on our appearance?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions should be about business next week.

Mr. Marlow: With the imminence of this wretched experiment, the sooner the matter is debated the better.

Such a letter to my right hon. and learned Friend would suggest that, as we all know, body language is five times as important as what is said, where he can find a change of hairstyle if he wants one and, if he does not like his glasses and they do not look right on television, what he should do about it. That is an impertinence, and the sooner we debate it the better. For the short period that we must endure this wretched experiment, will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that television serves the House and not the House television?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have not had the opportunity of studying the text of the document, nor do I think that I should have been as moved by its contents as my hon. Friend obviously is. If that is how he feels about it, he must respond to the treatment recommended.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Lord President will not have heard the answer that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland gave the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux). We welcome the commitment that he gave of no change in Government policy in extirpating the IRA. Would it be possible for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to make a statement on policy in Northern Ireland early next week in view of the rumours circulating in Northern Ireland that press statements will be made tomorrow, the contents of which would have, if they are correct, an adverse effect on security? Does the tradition guiding ministerial replies—that they should not knowingly mislead the House—still apply, because today we had a misstatement from a Minister in which he implied that Northern Ireland Members had not responded to a draft Order in Council? Is a reply from a subject spokesman not a reply?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman asks a comprehensive range of questions, which, as he recognises, could have more appropriately been posed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State earlier.

Rev. Martin Smyth: He is not here.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: He is not able to answer questions when he is not here, nor is he able to answer questions beyond the time allotted to him. I shall draw to his attention the continuing concern of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends. There is no question of any change in Government policy on Northern Ireland. If anything must be announced or discussed, it will be drawn to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): In view of the so-called leaked document, will my right hon. and learned Friend consider holding a debate next week on the future of the

[Mr. Andy Stewart]

coal industry so that we can ensure that the people who work in the industry have a secure future after the privatisation of electricity?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand my hon. Friend's continuous interest in the welfare and well-being of those who work in the industry. I cannot promise him the prospect of a debate next week, but he will have an opportunity to raise the matter in the debates on the Gracious Speech.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Will Thursday's debate on parliamentary pensions be on the basis of a take note motion? Will the Leader of the House be in a position to give the Government's response to the dangerous suggestions from the actuaries that the Government should reduce their contribution to the Members' pension fund to soak up the surplus largely accrued by the 9 per cent. of salary contributions of hon. Members?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The debate will be on the Adjournment, which will enable hon. Members, including Government spokesmen, to express a view not only on the recommendations of the Top Salaries Review Body but on the report of the Government actuaries. The debate will be framed in that way to enable views to be expressed on both reports.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time next week to discuss in depth the implications of the Silberston report on the multi-fibre arrangement? There is much concern in my constituency about that report on textiles and the future of the arrangements to protect workers in my constituency. Is there any chance of us soon having a proper debate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs announced on 19 October, we have invited comments from all parties interested in the report by 17 November. We shall then want to consider those in conjunction with the contents of the report, which we recognise is important. I recognise that the House will want an opportunity to consider the issues thereafter.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Does the Leader of the House realise that the millions of our constituents who watched John Pilger's film about the realities of Cambodia are apparently more aware of what is really happening in that part of the world than the Prime Minister showed she was in her answers today? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman reconsider having a statement made in the House next week, before the United Nations General Assembly meets, to justify the Government's decision to support a delegation to the United Nations which is nominally a coalition but in reality consists entirely of representatives of the murderous Khmer Rouge?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is probably no other issue on which I have expressed my view with more consistent strength than on our condemnation of Pol Pot and his cronies. There was a debate on that very issue last night in the House. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I answered questions about it today. I shall draw the points which have been made by several hon. Members to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, obviously ahead of the debate in the United Nations.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My right hon. and learned Friend will know that British Rail today announced a rail price increase of an average of 9 per cent., which masks an increase of some 15 per cent. on some long-distance commuter lines. I welcome the unprecedented investment in British Rail, to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred during Question Time, but it is also true that many travellers do not yet receive the benefits of that investment. Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider finding time for a debate on the need for a price differential on British Rail services so that travellers such as the commuters on the appalling north Kent line who are currently paying the same prices as everyone else do not have to pay for what they are not yet receiving?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As one who represents a commuter constituency, I do not under-estimate the extent to which my hon. Friend thinks that it is right to bring this matter before the House. The details of the pattern of fares are a matter for the operators, not the Government, and I cannot add anything on that aspect.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): May I take the Leader of the House back to the issue of next Thursday's business and press him on the matter of private business? He has been asked several times to announce the Government's approach to the reform of private business. Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman now give us some assurances from the Dispatch Box that the Government will take some action rather than simply have rumours going round the House that he is sympathetic to some reform? It would do much to speed up the business next Thursday if the right hon. and learned Gentleman could make clear announcements that the Government will reform private business, which has become a scandal.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the hon. Gentleman's continuing concern with this matter. Obviously, I cannot make any announcement now. I assure the House that I am giving close and serious consideration to the suggestions made in the report which is already before the House. I cannot begin to foreshadow what the conclusions will be. Plainly, the suggestions deserve, and are receiving, my careful attention.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Will my right hon. and learned Friend provide time for a debate on the working of the legislation regarding experiments on animals? There is wide concern in Northern Ireland about the slaughter of about 100 greyhounds at Queen's university as a result of experiments which must have caused great agony to the animals before they died.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not know the details, but I shall draw that case to the attention of my right hon. Friends and reflect upon that point.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The Leader of the House will be aware of intense press speculation, especially in the earlier part of the week, about the future of the nuclear industry. National Power has made an application to build a pressurised water reactor in my constituency. My constituents are worried about the cost of nuclear power, which seems to have escalated beyond all reason.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell the House whether the Government will make an early statement on this issue so that I can reassure my constituents?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no express notice of any intended statement on that topic, but I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's anxiety to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Is my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House aware that the British Railways Board is likely to announce later today its decision not to present a private Bill dealing with the construction of a high-speed line from Ashford to London? If British Rail returns in a year's time with precisely the same proposals as they have put forward to date, it will cause the most grave anxiety and hardship to the people of north-west Kent, central Kent and south London. If an announcement is made, will he arrange either a statement or an early debate on that vexed matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot comment on speculation about a decision that British Rail may make on this matter today. My hon. Friend will understand that the project is the responsibility of the British Railways Board. If any announcement is made today that may lead to the anxiety that he describes, I shall bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Several hon. Members asked questions about Cambodia earlier today and the Leader of the House will have seen my early-day motion 1322.

[That this House calls upon Her Majesty's Government to reconsider its support for the seating of the Kymer Rouge-controlled coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea at the United Nations, as the seating of the regime responsible for the 'Killing Fields' at the United Nations gives them major advantages while damaging the people of Cambodia; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government in the United Nations General Assembly debate on Cambodia on 15th or 16th November to challenge this proposal which will lead to further intensification of the civil war and an increase in human suffering in one of the poorest countries on earth.]

It has been signed by more than 18 hon. Members. Will he ask the Foreign Secretary to ensure that we vote against the United Nations' proposal, to show that we are opposed to Pol Pot?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the report of the United Nations' credentials committee was adopted by the General Assembly without a vote on 17 October. The representative of the United Kingdom emphasised then that adoption of the report did not imply support for the Khymer Rouge and still less for the abhorrent Pol Pot.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time next week for a further statement on the ambulance dispute? While many of us have great respect for the ambulance staff, a further opportunity is needed to explain to the House that their central condition of comparability with the police force and fire brigade has been investigated by an independent tribunal—the Clegg commission—and rejected. Ambulance staff pay has always been determined by the Whitley council, and until the trade unions return to that council and cease their action it is difficult to see how the dispute will be resolved.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has done a service to the House by drawing its attention to what the Clegg commission said on the matter. I cannot promise a debate on it in the near future. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health keeps a close eye on the dispute. I am sure that the best way forward is for the unions to call off their disruption and resume discussions with the Whitley council.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Is the Leader of the House aware that television licence charges increased this week, that we had a debate some time ago about the television needs of parliamentarians, and that next week we shall debate the pension needs of hon. Members? Will he find time before the end of the Session to discuss the communication needs and pension needs of pensioners?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That topic has been discussed on many occasions, both inside and outside the House. I cannot guarantee a further debate during the week immediately ahead.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend reaffirm that he agrees that it is important to draw attention on the Floor of the House to the work of the parliamentary Select Committees? Will he discuss with me and some of my hon. Friend's next week the need to put before the House the full report of the Parliamentary Commissioners for Administration and for the Health Service, more commonly known as the ombudsmen?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know that my hon. and learned Friend has a close interest in the work of the Parliamentary Commissioners to whom he referred and I understand why he makes that point. I shall try to find an early opportunity to discuss it with him.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the Leader of the House examine the leaked document to which the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) referred and then reconsider his earlier reply? That document contains statistics and statements which support the case that my hon. Friends and I have been making for a considerable time and which the Secretary of State for Energy has constantly denied. It refers not only to the closure of a third of Britain's coal mines, 18,000 redundancies in mining and 12,000 redundancies elsewhere, but to the possibility that electricity prices will be increased by 15 per cent. for domestic consumers and 25 per cent. for industrial consumers. Such an increase would devastate the steel industry. It is important that we should have the facts and figures and that everything should be clear before flotation of the electricity industry takes place.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The measures providing for the future of the electricity industry will come before the House in the ordinary way over the weeks and months ahead and they will provide many opportunities for raising matters such as the one to which the hon. Gentleman has just referred. I cannot accept any responsibility for the idea of promoting a debate on a leaked document.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Has my right hon. and learned Friend taken note of the issue of the

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

Polkinghorne report this summer which said that research would be allowed on live foetuses up to 20 weeks old only if controlled by an ethical committee? There is a strong feeling throughout the country, especially in the light of possible Bills next Session, that this is an important matter. Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider providing an opportunity for the House to debate this important report?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: At this stage, I cannot add to what I said in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) last week.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): As the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has not seen fit to make a statement this afternoon on the announcement this morning by Ford, which is the logical conclusion of his Pontius Pilate sell-out of thousands of Jaguar workers in Coventry and tens of thousands of components suppliers in the west midlands, will the Leader of the House pressurise his right hon. Friend to come back to the Chamber later today to make such a statement? We could then discuss not only the global chess match for Jaguar's name and badge, but the wider question about what happens now to the so-called golden shares in Cable and Wireless, Sealink, British Telecom, British Aerospace, Vickers, British Airports and Rolls-Royce, and not least in water and electricity. If Britoil and Jaguar have shown that the so-called golden shares are worthless pawns in the Government's hands, why is the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry not here this afternoon to defend himself?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am most unlikely to bring these matters to the attention of my right hon. Friend on the basis o[illegible] intemperate a presentation.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Will my right hon. and learned Friend discuss through the usual channels as soon as possible the suggestion that the Opposition day a week on Monday should be on the subject of housing, especially the effect on young couples seeking a mortgage for the first time and couples seeking to trade up their house for a larger house as the family grows? If the Government were to accept the policy advocated by the new Opposition environment spokesman, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who in the Walden interview on 15 October pledged the Labour party to freeze mortgages for young couples, which would be disastrous.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is difficult to keep up with the movements of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), as the Leader of the Opposition seeks to conceal his more intemperate views.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is great pressure to take part in the subsequent debate. I am reluctant to curtail business questions, but I will allow them to continue until 4.15 pm, after which we must move on because I have already had to put a 10-minute limit on speeches.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the Leader of the House please find time for a debate on the disruption caused to people's lives by the widening of roads and the driving of roads through residential areas? Is he aware of the complete lack of consultation and communication with the residents of Evesham road in my constituency as a result of the Bede island development, which is causing anger and alarm? Will the House have an opportunity to discuss such anxieties, which affect ordinary people in their everyday lives?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is aware, for example, of the anxiety that arises from such prospective development, especially in relation to the assessment studies being undertaken in Greater London. He intends to announce which options will be considered as soon as possible, probably in early December. I will draw to his attention the comparable anxieties described by the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Does the Leader of the House recall that during business questions last week my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) asked him whether the United Kingdom had troops in secret bases in Thailand? The Leader of the House said that he would alert the appropriate Minister to give an answer in the Adjournment debate which took place last night. Is he aware that the Minister did not answer last night? The Leader of the House must surely be aware that today the Prime Minister refused to say. Can we have an urgent debate about Cambodia? Is it true that United Kingdom personnel are training guerrillas in secret bases in Thailand?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Lady knows very well that it is not customary to comment on allegations about the possible engagement of forces in that way.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Will the Leader of the House make time available for a debate about the issue highlighted by the Carnworth report? Does he agree that our planning laws are in need of major reform? To that end, will he join me in condemning firms like Neal Brothers in my constituency, situated in residential areas, which hide behind outdated stop notice planning laws? Does he agree that that is an important issue? When can we have a debate on it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot offer the hon. Gentleman the prospect of an early debate on that subject. However, I assure him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is aware of the importance of the report to which he referred.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): May we have a debate on the state of the franchise? The Leader of the House will be aware that we have been in correspondence on that matter and I maintain that it is due to the operation of the poll tax. In the light of that correspondence, will the Leader of the House comment on the statements in a secret document sent to Right-wing Members by "British Briefing", which——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are discussing debates next week, and we have only four minutes left.

Mr. Barnes: We could have a debate on the "British Briefing" document which was sent around the House which describes me as an

"emerging, vigorous, Stalinist underminer of democracy."

How does that tie in with my concern for the franchise? The document has placed that label against me for opening a *Morning Star* bazaar in Chesterfield.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I would find it difficult to comment on a secret document which the hon. Gentleman has seen but I have not. I dare say that the hon. Gentleman has a better chance of answering his questions than I have.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If hon. Members are brief, I may be able to call them all.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motions Nos. 1308, 1321 and 1346——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only one early-day motion will be printed in the *Official Report.*

Mr. Corbyn: Early-day motion 1308 relates to the ambulance dispute.

[That this House fully supports the ambulance crews in their pay claim, which is absolutely justified, especially against a background of salary increases of 26 per cent. awarded to themselves by company directors and top executives.]

Will the Leader of the House find time next week for an urgent debate on the ambulance dispute, the just claims of the ambulance workers, and the Government's preparedness to use the police and the Army to smash that dispute and the unions with it instead of recognising the importance of the work of ambulance workers, their dedication and the debt which we owe to them all? Will he ensure that there is a debate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman knows as well as anyone, more than 94 per cent. of National Health Service staff have settled their pay claims without recourse to industrial action, most at or around the level of the offer available to ambulance crews. The unions should call off their action against patients and return to the negotiating table. I can offer no prospect of a debate on the subject.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): May we have a proper statement from the Prime Minister on Kampuchea, or is she so arrogant that she feels that she does not have to tell the House whether British troops are involved in a war out there?

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Cohen: The Leader of the House is deputy Prime Minister and was previously the Foreign Secretary. Was he told what was happening or, like so many other issues of State, was he kept in the dark like an old, ill-treated dog?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have nothing to add to the answers which have already been given by myself and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Ministers from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the debate which took place as recently as last night.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Is the Leader of the House aware that not too many moments ago he announced that we would have private business next week? Is he aware that we had some private discussions about a Bill that was debated last night? What happened in this House was shocking. I believe that the Government introduced a payroll vote during our previous discussions of that Bill. Will the Leader of the House assure us that he will keep his eye on the Government Chief Whip so that we will not see the payroll vote in future? That is the responsibility of the Leader of the House——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Haynes: I warn the Leader of the House that Labour Members will be in government after the next election and the present Leader of the House will be on the Opposition Benches. What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that the hon. Gentleman is well able to keep an eye on my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip himself.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I know that the Leader of the House is a great lover of parrots—he bears more than a passing resemblance to a giant African grey himself. Is he aware that there are 330 species of parrot in the world, and that about one third of them are under threat of extinction? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman arrange a debate next week on the threat to parrots and to all endangered animal species?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for imparting to me some additional knowledge about parrots which was not previously available. However, even in response to that, I cannot provide time for a debate next week on that topic.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made as soon as possible on insider dealing, in view of the fragility of the stock market and the announcements made this morning that it is possible that a Cabinet Minister is involved? Before a statement is made next week, will he make sure that every Cabinet Minister is checked out on insider dealing, and that they, not stockbrokers, give statements?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister pointed out that my right hon. Friend has already made a statement today. I have nothing to add to that, except to join in what the Prime Minister said, and to regret the way in which the matter has been raised in the House this afternoon.

Points of Order

4.16 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You probably consider me to be a nuisance but, as I have always been a nuisance, I intend to continue to be one as long as I am here. I think that you have to reconsider your ruling on hon. Members raising genuine points of order when an issue is raised in Question Time or at any other time. I know that you, or perhaps your predecessors, were quite rightly concerned about frivolous points of order, for example, when hon. Members got up, as a knee-jerk reaction, to say that they disagreed with an issue, and that they would raise it on the Adjournment debate. That used to annoy all of us, as they never raised it on the Adjournment anyway. Other hon. Members use points of order to stop the proceedings of the House.

I understand your point of view, Mr. Speaker, but once hon. Members know that there is no point in raising frivolous points of order, they will raise only genuine points of order.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) raised a point of order today but he has had to go. That is understandable. He has probably had to go to another meeting. The Minister has also had to go. Ministers cannot remain in the House. However, an hour and a half later the issue is being raised, and the hon. Members involved are not here. The issue needed to be dealt with there and then.

I am serious about this matter and I have raised it before. I understand your position, Mr. Speaker, but I ask you to reconsider. If a genuine point of order is not dealt with at the time, the issue is lost sight of.

Mr. Speaker: I shall deal with the matter now, because I have given it careful consideration over a long time. It is the consistent practice of the Chair to hear points of order after questions and statements. The whole House knows that; but I will always hear a point of order if it concerns irregularities which require immediate attention. Today, the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) raised a point of order to argue that he did not like the answer that he had been given in Question Time. That was a clear continuation of Question Time.

I say to the whole House that if I allowed that, the danger, when the Commons is televised, is that there could be a rash of points of order at what is judged to be prime time after questions, thereby delaying the debate, and taking time from right hon. and hon. Members who wish to participate in subsequent business.

I shall always hear points of order if they require my immediate attention. Otherwise, points of order should come in their proper place which is after questions or statements or Standing Order No. 20 applications.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Not long ago, we sought to protect Back Benchers by reducing the number of questions asked by the Leader of the Opposition. At that time it was normal for him to ask two questions; occasionally, you said that that might spread to a third. Now he is asking three on a regular basis. Will you, Sir, take the usual opportunity to speak to the right hon. Gentleman and tell him to get his questions down to two?

Mr. Speaker: It has always been the practice for the Leader of the Opposition to be allowed a certain tolerance at Question Time.

May I remind the House that many hon. Members wish to participate in today's debate? Some may already be seeking to raise points of order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order take time out of debates, and that is unfair on hon. Members' colleagues.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It concerns efforts by South Africa to influence unduly the elections taking place in Namibia. I wonder whether it would be possible to arrange—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pike: There is a British involvement, Mr. Speaker, in that the signals that South Africa is claiming to intercept are British signals. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. But that is plainly not a point of order for me. If the hon. Gentleman had risen to ask me whether I had received a request for a statement, that would be another matter, but I cannot hear arguments about what is going on in South Africa. That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise again a matter that I raised with you nine months ago. You will know, Mr. Speaker, that when a Minister says that he has nothing to add to a statement, he is, in effect, blocking questions. I tabled 10 questions at 2.5 pm today about insider dealing in the City——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has not tabled the questions; I understand that they are still in draft.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I tabled them, and was told that they might well be amended. That is where my point of order comes in.

Mr. Speaker: It has never been the practice for hon. Members to challenge Mr. Speaker on matters that he has not had an opportunity to examine. The hon. Gentleman cannot do that in the Chamber.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is not the question, Mr. Speaker. The issue is that the questions that I have tabled are now the subject of a block, and I am asking you to exercise your discretion to allow my questions——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I was in the Chair before the hon. Gentleman tabled his questions. How on earth can I have an opportunity to make any definitive promise or statement on a matter that I have not even considered?

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that the point that my hon. Friend is trying to make concerns not what you may not yet have seen, but what has taken place in the Chamber this afternoon while you have been in the Chair, namely that in several answers the Leader of the House—the deputy Prime Minister—has used the phrase, "I have nothing further to add." That phrase becomes a blocking motion, which may then prevent the tabling of further questions. My hon. Friend and I are asking you to consider that, Mr. Speaker, and to rule against the Leader of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I certainly cannot make such a ruling until I have had an opportunity to look at the matter.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Between 1976 and 1979, on every occasion but three, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—then Leader of the Opposition—was at the Dispatch Box to ask the Leader of the House in the then Labour Government to name the business for that week. That tradition seems now to have lapsed: the Leader of the Opposition appears only infrequently to make the request. Surely that is a grave discourtesy to the House, and I seek your ruling on it.

Mr. Speaker: It has been the practice that when the Leader of the House announces the business, he is frequently asked to do so by the shadow Leader of the House. There is nothing wrong with that.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the difficulty, but my hon. Friend was not trying to continue an earlier debate; he was trying to clarify an issue. It is one thing for a Minister to make a statement politically, outside the House. It is another matter for him to make a statement in the House that has the import of misleading the House.

You, Mr. Speaker, do not expect Back Benchers not to be interested in a statement made from the Front Bench on their behalf. Is it not a tradition of the House that when a party's spokesperson makes a statement, responding to a departmental request in writing, that is taken to be the response of his party? That was the issue on which my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) sought your guidance.

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. Gentleman to calculate what would happen if that practice became general. There would be a rash of hon. Members seeking clarification of answers to their questions. Question Time is limited, because otherwise we would never have time for the business before by the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Molyneaux.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I shall be brief, Mr. Speaker, because I know that many hon. Members wish to participate in the next debate. The Leader of the House came to your aid, Mr. Speaker, when he put his finger on the spot by deploring the fact that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) had asked a question in the absence of the Minister. However, it could not have been otherwise because the Minister had left the chamber. The hon. Member for Walton raised that point to obtain a correction at the time but naturally you had ruled against it. I believe that the Leader of the House has got the message.

Mr. Speaker: The truth of the matter is that Northern Ireland questions come to an end at 3.15 pm.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must advise the House that about 30 hon. Members, many on the Opposition Benches wish to take part and may be disappointed.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Further to an earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will doubtless be delighted to see me back in action, so that we can continue our dialogue about points of order. You said just now, Sir, quite clearly, that it was your consistent practice to take points of order after other procedures in the House had been pursued. May I simply point out with great respect, Sir, that that was not the practice of your predecessor? You also said, Sir, that the proper place for points of order was where you had chosen to put them. The proper place for points of order is when they arise——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has not been here for a while, and I welcome him back. May I repeat and underline—because perhaps he does not read *Hansard* as regularly as some hon. Members—that I will always take points of order—I said this to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer)—on matters that need my immediate attention. Other points of order are taken in their proper place—it is not a new practice—which today was after business questions or after a statement if there had been one. That has always been the practice, and that I shall continue.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have listened closely to what you have said during this exchange about points of order being taken at various times—either before Question Time, in the middle of Question Time, at the end of Question Time or after statements have been made. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that some considerable time ago you tried to take a definitive stance on taking points of order at the very end. It was suggested by some hon. Members, including myself, that that could not be carried through successfully because there would be cases when Front-Bench spokesmen in particular would want to raise points of order. Eventually, the thing broke down, albeit on a limited scale.

Today, for instance—it is important that we get this right before the cameras or anything else intrude—at the very opening of Question Time, my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) raised a point of order about a Northern Ireland case in his room. You allowed that point of order, and heard it and I believe that it was sensible of you to do so. However, an hon. Member representing a Northern Ireland constituency later tried to raise a point of order, but before the proper explanation was given—it was about misleading the House—the whole thing collapsed because of your intervention. At the end, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) then wanted to raise a point of order arising out of something that occurred during Question Time, but before you had heard what he had to say, you said that he would not be allowed to make his point of order.

If you say, Mr. Speaker, as you have said three times —or rather twice—today, that you will allow points of order where they are attributable to procedure as distinct from argument, and if you want matters to continue on an even and decent plane, I suggest that you give Back Benchers an opportunity to raise points of order—Front Bench spokesmen always have their chance—and my guess is that you would be wise to hear what hon. Members have to say before giving any ruling.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall first deal with the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

The hon. Gentleman is totally incorrect. I heard the point of order from the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs), but it was plainly not a matter of order for me; it was challenging what the Minister had said. I am not responsible for that.

I will always hear points of order if they need my imediate attention. I am not prepared, however—and I believe that the House would not want it either—to have a rash of points of order arising out of Question Time. That would merely mean that we would delay the start of a debate. Other points of order should be raised at the proper place which, as the House well knows, is after a private notice question, a statement or a Standing Order No. 20 application.

Mrs. Mahon: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek clarification from you. You will be aware that I asked the Leader of the House a question about troops in secret bases in Thailand, which was based on a question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) last week. Then, the Leader of the House said that an explanation would be given by a Minister, but things seem to have changed this week because a procedural gag appears to have been used. The Leader of the House said that he had nothing further to add. Does that mean that I cannot table a question asking whether British Troops are being used from secret bases in Thailand?

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical question, and until the hon. Lady tables her question it is difficult to say whether it will need my attention. I think that we should move on to the Adjournment debate.

Economic and Monetary Union

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

4.31 pm

Mr. Speaker: We have had a late start and a large number of right hon. and hon. Members want to participate. I must put a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock, but I implore hon. Members who are called before that to bear that limit in mind because I greatly regret that, if not, few Members are likely to be called today.

4.32 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. John Major): I greatly welcome this opportunity for a debate on economic and monetary union in the European Community. This is an important occasion and one on which the Government are particularly keen to hear the views of the House. The idea of moving towards economic and monetary union in the Community is not new. It has a long history. As long ago as 1970, a report by Mr. Pierre Werner, then Prime Minister of Luxembourg, made detailed proposals for progressing to economic and monetary union. He proposed transferring major economic policy decisions to Community level, adopting a single currency and setting up a single central bank. The Community endorsed those proposals in 1972 and agreed that full EMU would be achieved by December 1980 at the latest.

After that endorsement, other events intervened and nothing much came of the Werner proposals. They were, in practice, buried. Nevertheless throughout the 1970s the Community continued to endorse the principle of progressing towards economic and monetary union. It was reaffirmed again at the European Council in Brussels in 1977, and the objective of the progressive realisation of EMU is recalled also in the Single European Act of 1986. It has since been reaffirmed again at the European Councils of Hanover and Madrid. There is thus a long-standing commitment to the objective of the progressive realisation of EMU. But there is no universal view of what EMU means or what it entails; or when it should be achieved. That is the issue before us now.

One definition was offered in the Delors report, which was published in April this year. The Governor of the Bank of England, a member of the Delors committee, explained its approach to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee in May. It devoted itself

> "very much to how economic and monetary union might be achieved, rather than whether or when. We took the view that whether or when was a matter for political leaders".

The Delors report—which was a report from a group of technical monetary experts—was considered by the European Council in Madrid in June. The Council agreed then to adopt the first stage of its proposals, and to set in hand further preparatory work on developments beyond that stage.

The Council of Finance Ministers and the General Affairs Council are now engaged in that further work. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will be attending a meeting of the General Affairs Council next Monday at which economic and monetary union will be on the agenda. It will then be the central subject for discussion at the ecofin Council on Monday 13 November, when I will present a paper setting out the British Government's view.

Copies of this have been placed in the Library of the House and put in the Vote Office. Following the ecofin discussion it will again be discussed in December at the European Council. So this debate is a timely opportunity for the House to express its views as we prepare for those important discussions.

As I said a moment ago, there is no agreed definition of what actually constitutes economic and monetary union, but there is a large measure of agreement among all member states about what we want to achieve. We seek price stability, and currency stability. We want to achieve a single market, with free movement of people, services, and goods, free movement of capital, and equal access to capital and financial services for all citizens and businesses in the Community.

We want those things for practical reasons: because they will make our businesses and industries stronger and more flexible as they compete in world markets; because they will enable our economies to grow; and because they will bring higher living standards, and greater choice.

There is no real controversy about these objectives either in the Community or in the House. The disagreement lies elsewhere. It is about the means by which we move towards them.

There is a fundamental question that determines the positions in this debate. It is this: do we want to start moving towards a federal Europe, with all that implies, or do we instead concentrate on developing a yet closer partnership, of individual nation states, and achieve in that way the objectives upon which we are all agreed?

It will be no surprise to the House that this Government favour the latter approach. It harnesses the strength of our national traditions and political structures. It builds on the policies—the liberal, free market policies—that we have followed both here and in Europe, and which have brought success; and it respects both parliamentary accountability and the diversity of member states. In essence, it takes the sting and controversy out of moving to our shared aims. It is this approach that we have adopted to the debate on EMU, and the Delors report.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The Chancellor referred to parliamentary accountability. Will he confirm that in practice, when he or other Ministers go to the Council of Ministers or when such an agreement is reached, it is made under the royal prerogative of treaty making and is not subject to previous or subsequent enactments by the House of Commons? Therefore, to speak of parliamentary accountability in that context is to mislead those who are listening intently to this debate.

Mr. Major: There is certainly no intention to mislead. In essence, we are talking about significant changes which are proposed in the Delors report and which would have far wider significance than most of the previous ones. It is that issue, and the extent to which the House retains its control over monetary and economic matters, that concerns me and to which I shall turn in detail later.

We have already agreed to implement stage 1 of the Delors prescription. The elements of this are familiar to the House. They include establishing a genuinely single market in goods, services, and capital; the strengthening of competition policy; and the development of co-ordination of member states' economic and monetary policies. The Commission's proposals for revised co-ordination arrangements are among the documents listed for our debate today.

Stage 1 of course, also requires all Community currencies to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system on the same terms. This we shall do, as I told the House on Tuesday, when the level of United Kingdom inflation is significantly lower, when there is capital liberalisation in the Community, and when real progress has been made towards completion of the single market, freedom of financial services and strengthened competition policy.

Our position on stage 1 is clear and constructive, and we are committed to it, but we part company with the Delors recipe on the next steps. Let us be clear at the outset what the report proposes: permanently fixed exchange rates; a single Community currency; binding central rules on national budgetary policies; and a European system of central banks, with sole responsibility for formulating and implementing Community monetary and exchange rate policy. The Government—and, I suspect, the overwhelming majority of this House—have very great difficulty with these proposals.

We do not believe that Community rules on the use of national budget deficits are either necessary or desirable. They are unnecessary because monetary unions can and do tolerate diversity of budgetary positions. That is true in nearly all existing federal states. It is markets which impose a discipline and prevent deficits from getting too far out of line. On the desirability of binding rules, I can do no better than quote the conclusion of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins):

> "The power of the House of Commons over the centuries has depended fundamentally on the control of money, both taxation and expenditure. This would be jeopardised by the form of monetary union proposed by the Delors Report which would involve central undemocratic direction from within Europe of domestic budgetary policies."

I agree unreservedly with that judgment by the Select Committee, and I hope that our partners in Europe recognise the seriousness of this issue to us. It is fundamental to our parliamentary constitution and practice, and is not a matter which can be bargained away or cast aside.

The Delors proposals for increased regional and structural aid also seem to us to be misconceived. There must, of course, be greater opportunities for the living standards of the less prosperous regions to rise. No one denies that. Indeed, the Community's structural funds are already being doubled in the five years between 1988 and 1993 for precisely that reason. But there is no reason whatever to believe that a route to economic and monetary union that relies primarily on the operation of the market —rather than primarily on Government intervention— would harm the less prosperous areas. I believe the reverse to be the case.

Thirdly, the Delors report's proposals on monetary union are unacceptable, for monetary policy is at the very heart of macroeconomic policy and the proposals in the report make no provision for accountability for monetary policy to national Governments or national Parliaments. Yet the electorate would still hold Governments and national authorities responsible for their economic well-being, and rightly so.

Moreover, there would be no effective means of bringing the central banking system to account for any

[Mr. Major]

failings—and there can be no guarantees that it would pursue successful anti-inflationary policies, whatever the treaty might require. Indeed, by eliminating competition between monetary policies, it seems likely that the proposals would lead to harmonisation not on the best inflation performance but on the average.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The Chancellor is inviting the House and the country to accept an alternative proposal set out in this document, which is an invitation to a race that the Bundesbank would be almost certain to win—to an independent central bank of the sort favoured by his predecessor.

Mr. Major: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me for a few moments, I shall turn in detail to our proposals, which may be of some interest to him

In short, the Government's fundamental objection to the Delors approach beyond stage 1 is that its prescription for economic and monetary union centralises power. It relies on administrative fiat and institutional change. It skates over vital issues of political accountability. Changes in economic and monetary arrangements must reflect real changes in economic behaviour in the market place and they must work with the grain of the market and not against it. In our view, the Delors route is quite simply the wrong way for the future development of Europe. But there is a better way to meet our agreed objectives.

The better way is set out in the paper that I laid before the House earlier today. It proposes an alternative approach, an evolutionary approach, to economic and monetary union. It represents the contribution that we promised to the debate within the Community.

We start from three principles: first, the overriding objective of price stability—that is clearly desirable; secondly, increasing the influence of markets and competition, which builds directly on the single market proposals already accepted throughout the Community; and thirdly, retaining national control over economic policy-making to the maximum extent possible, which fully reflects the principle of subsidiarity to which the Community rightly attaches such importance.

Recent debate in Europe seems to leap over the main work that we currently face to contemplate the many steps necessary for stage 1 of the Delors report. That is unwise, because stage 1 is a massive enterprise in itself. It will have very far-reaching consequences for all our economies and a profound effect on monetary policy and it will give a significant impulse to economic convergence.

Stage 1 means establishing a genuinely single market in capital movements and removing all exchange controls. A timetable has been agreed, starting with France and Italy by next summer. We of course are 10 years down that track. We welcome the commitment by others to follow suit, and the sooner the better.

Secondly, stage 1 means completing the single market. That is a huge task, and it is the dominant priority for the Community between now and 1992. Nearly half the legislative programme has been agreed, and the United Kingdom's influence in formulating that programme has been very great indeed. But there are tough issues still to be resolved, and, of course, all member states must then implement the directives agreed. On this, the record of this country is significantly better than that of many of the proponents of a great leap forward on monetary union. By any standard, we have one of the best records in Europe —and we should never be afraid to say so.

Thirdly, stage 1 means strengthening Community competition policy. A single market must necessarily have a level playing field. That patently does not exist when one large member state gives about eight times as much subsidy to manufacturing industry as does the United Kingdom. The Commission has powers to tackle this. It must use them, and not delay doing so.

More generally, the completion of the single market will progressively increase freedom of trade in all goods and services, and freedom of movement of capital and labour. Regulations and technical barriers will be drastically reduced; industries will be restructured; businesses will become more efficient and consumers will benefit. So while we consider the Delors prescription for what should happen after stage 1, let us not overlook the crucial importance of stage 1 itself, and the firm and enduring United Kingdom commitment to its early implementation.

All this has a particular importance for monetary policy, for stage 1 will create powerful pressures on member states to adopt low-inflation policies. With the removal of exchange controls and the creation of a single financial area, the capital markets will react more speedily and directly when they fear that a country is not operating sufficiently sound monetary policies. That will prove to be a powerful discipline. Greater stability of prices will in turn lead inevitably to greater stability of exchange rates. All this will be achieved not through centralised regulation and direction, but directly through the market. It achieves the desirable aims of the Delors report without the Delors apparatus.

We need to build on this. Our paper proposes that we should take the market approach of stage 1 forward to its logical conclusion rather than switching in mid-stream to a bureaucratic and centralised plan. Even after the current single market programme is complete, market forces will be muted by a number of unnecessary restrictions. For example, some countries control too strictly the investments of their savings institutions, or forbid the issues of foreign currency debt by their residents, or the purchase of their Government debt by overseas residents. Our proposal is that, as a priority after 1992, all restrictions of this kind should be examined and, where possible, removed, so that the competition between currencies and, therefore, between monetary policies is further sharpened.

This is not, as some people suggest, a matter of paying for a pint of beer at one's local with Italian lira or Greek drachma. Such a parody is to trivialise an important debate. The proposal is quite straightforward and entirely practical. It is to do away with unnecessary restrictions on individuals or firms doing business in whatever currency best suits the two parties. It is not a matter of compelling either party to use a particular currency: the aim is to reduce restrictions limiting their joint freedom of choice, thus enabling currencies to compete.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Like all hon. Members, I am trying to listen carefully and to understand what my right hon. Friend is proposing. I put it to him that the Government paper of today is restating what his predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby

(Mr. Lawson), put forward during the summer at the Antibes meeting of Community Finance Ministers, which I understand was rejected out of hand——

Mr. Major *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Nelson: If I am wrong, I should be delighted to hear so. As the proposal essentially involves the use of all currencies in member states, surely the tendency will be for prominence to be given to the lowest inflation currency within the system, if this ever comes to pass? That would be to the advantage of the deutschmark and might well be to the prejudice of sterling.

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is mistaken to suggest that my right hon. Friend's proposals were universally rejected at Antibes—that is by no means so. This is a significant development of what was initially trailed at Antibes, and if my hon. Friend continues to listen he will see the areas to which it has been extended. As for the deutschmark, the whole purpose and intention of what underpins this is to provide a system under which nations will seek low inflation policies. That will most certainly ensure and affect the monetary behaviour of each of the currencies in the system. It may be that at any one time a particular currency dominates, but the market will ensure that that dominance will not necessarily be perpetual.

Mr. Benn: Assuming that all the conditions that the Chancellor has set out were met, could he now relate that to his claim to uphold parliamentary accountability? Is he not saying that he wants the market instead of some Brussels structure to control all Governments here? Is he not also saying that in future no political party could come to power on a manifesto that included exchange control and varying the currency, because once such a Government were elected a decision taken by this Parliament—if it went through on the Chancellor's basis —would tie all future Parliaments and would make it illegal for political parties to come forward and be elected using instruments that the Chancellor's mechanism would exclude?

Mr. Major: I do not think that that follows in precisely the way that the right hon. Gentleman has in mind. Of course in strict terms an incoming Government are sovereign. That is a matter for the House and nothing that I am proposing changes that basic and essential feature of the House of Commons.

With competing currencies, the pressure under the system that we propose will be for Community monetary policies to harmonise at the level of the best. That will inevitably strengthen the process of convergence on price and exchange rate stability. Realignments should therefore, become rarer, fluctuations within the bands of the exchange rate mechanism should become smaller, and we could eventually see a system of more or less fixed exchange rates. With the minimal exchange rate uncertainty and reduced costs of switching between currencies, our approach will lead to a multi-currency solution with interchangeable Community currencies. In that way we would achieve a practical monetary union as a result of a gradual evolutionary process, but without disruptive constitutional change. In our judgment that is the right way forward.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Would my right hon. Friend care to comment on a concept arising from competing currencies, which is that efficient British farmers would be able to compete more effectively than hitherto with their continental counterparts in a more open market once monetary compensatory amounts and other artificial exchange mechanisms had been abolished? Is that not a progressive market solution to what hitherto has been an intractable European problem?

Mr. Major: On that point my hon. Friend is almost undoubtedly right. I welcome the pamphlet to which I know my hon. Friend has contributed. It has also reached the conclusion that competing currencies are the right way forward in terms of the future development of Europe.

I should like to deal with one argument for a single currency which I know has attractions for some in the House and beyond. Many people say that a single currency would reduce transaction costs for business men and travellers in the Community. Of course, that must be right. By definition, transaction costs must be reduced if there is one currency rather than 12, but we need to consider at what price and at what risk that convenience is bought. By going for one currency, enormous faith is placed in the ability of the European system of central banks to keep inflation down. Much safer in our view is our approach which maintains national monetary policies and allows currencies to compete to provide the non-inflationary anchor in the European monetary system.

That apart, there is the lack of political accountability to national electorates of a European system of central banks to which I have already referred. I suspect, too, that the requirement to abolish the pound and the franc would be deeply unpopular both in this and in other countries when electorates appreciated what was intended.

In any event, there can be no doubt that as the single market develops the costs of changing between the Community currencies will be reduced as a result of technological improvements and increased competition between banks. Our market approach is intended to encourage just that process.

There are those who would seek to portray the United Kingdom's advocacy of a step-by-step approach to economic and monetary union as foot dragging. I emphatically reject that view. We advocate an evolutionary approach, but not because it is slow. It would not be slow. There is no reason whatever to suppose that it would be any slower than the controversial Delors route. The merit of our approach is that it is evolutionary and practical. It is also robust—more robust than the Delors approach, which courts great risks, needlessly in my view, by proposing that decisions should be taken on the next stage of the process before we have had a chance to assess the outcome of the first stage.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I am sure that my right hon. Friend is not alone in what he is saying. I have here a letter from the Board of Economic Advisers to the Federal German Ministry of Economic Affairs. It states:

> "Informal co-ordination of economic policies through market forces shall have priority over formal ex-ante co-ordination by European bodies."

It also says:

> "There is no need for an early commencement of negotiations to modify the Treaty as required by the Delors report."

That shows that my hon. Friend has a powerful ally in the German Government.

Mr. Major: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that view. I recall that Professor David Currie, a former economic adviser to the Labour party, has also broadly endorsed the approach that I commend to the House. Plainly, we have very compelling support.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Do I understand the Chancellor of the Exchequer to be saying that Professor Currie advocated the competing currencies theory which the Chancellor has been putting to the House?

Mr. Major: A recent paper that I saw the other day by Professor Currie broadly endorses the approach that the House has in front of it. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman cares to read that, he will find that that is the case.

Our view is gaining ground in terms of the report to which my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) referred and it is gaining ground elsewhere in the academic world.

I categorically assure the House that we have no intention of being swept into unwise and premature decisions. The Delors report is important but it is not definitive. As the Madrid council agreed, it is a basis for consideration. It was also agreed that more work was needed. That work must be thorough and very well considered. It must not be rushed because the future development of Europe is of enormous significance.

I hope that it will be clear to the House and, equally important, clear to our partners in Europe that it is our policy to play a central and constructive part in the debate on economic and monetary union in the European Community. Our commitment to its objectives is just as strong and just as deep as that of any of our European partners. Britain is playing a full part in Europe and we intend that to continue. I commend our approach to the House.

4.57 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer that today's debate is timely and important. That is because it is, I think, the first time that the House has been able to debate in full the issues of economic and monetary union and the report prepared under the chairmanship of Jacques Delors, the President of the European Commission. The House will be assisted in its task by the excellent report on the subject published in June by the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service. That report and the evidence provided by the Governor of the Bank of England and the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), the former Chancellor, also provide useful background information for the debate.

It is noteworthy that the Select Committee report felt it was necessary to warn against and even anticipate the lack of clarity and the deliberate ambiguities in the Government's policy on European economic issues. Hon. Members will recall that the Select Committee complained that at the European Council in Hanover in June 1988 the Government had

> "accepted far-reaching language too lightly"

when they endorsed the idea of economic and monetary union. The report recommended:

> "It is important that the Government should make its position absolutely clear at the Madrid summit and should not again go along with language whose full implication it does not accept."

The Select Committee concluded:

> "It is obviously dangerous for the Government to go on paying lip service to ideas to which in reality it is fundamentally opposed."

Those were prophetic words. That is precisely what the Government have done and continue to do. In Madrid, they endorsed stage 1 of Delors while they were still internally divided over whether to join the exchange rate mechanism. As they had completely ignored the Select Committee's prescient advice, is it any wonder that the ship of state hit such troubled and turbulent waters, and that the Cabinet has been wrecked upon such "a singularly ill-concealed iceberg"?

Recent events have revealed all too clearly that the Madrid formula was a fudge—lip service designed to conceal the confusion and disarray in Government policy—and it has now been totally blown apart. The gulf between the former Chancellor and the Prime Minister could not be more clear. The House, our European partners or the electorate would not find credible the argument that the former Chancellor's support for United Kingdom entry into the exchange rate mechanism—I quote his latest formulation—at the "earliest practicable time"—can be squared with the Prime Minister's sceptical and reluctant attitude towards what she calls a "higgledy piggledy system".

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I will give way, but I warn the hon. Gentleman that this must not become a habit.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, and I promise that it will not. I wonder whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman would be kind enough to address himself not to Tuesday's debate but to today's.

Mr. Smith: I can understand that the events that we were discussing on Tuesday might be painful for Conservative Members, but I insist that they are highly relevant to the matters that we are debating today. Were the hon. Gentleman to cast his mind back to the matters that we were discussing on Tuesday, he would recall that they were to do with the chasms of differences within the Government over European issues.

The events after Madrid convinced the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) that he could not persuade the Prime Minister on the issue of the exchange rate mechanism. He knew that advisers advise, and the Prime Minister decides. On the basis of Sir Alan Walters's advice, the Prime Minister has decided to postpone indefinitely United Kingdom entry into the exchange rate mechanism. Having struck his iceberg, the Chancellor resigned and, with his resignation, the credibility of the Madrid formula, which is highly relevant to what we are discussing today, has collapsed.

It will not do for Conservative Members to try to obliterate the events of the past two weeks from their memory. We will not allow them to obliterate their memory of the events. I invite Conservative Members to turn on the television on Sunday, when they will find the right hon. Member for Blaby going over some of the issues again.

The attempts by the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, to square the circle and recover a commitment in good faith to join the EMS will fail to convince, because the credibility of the Government's commitment to stage 1 of the Delors report is clearly questionable. One might almost say that it has been undermined. The House will recall that Delors stage 1 envisages that all member states should participate in the exchange rate mechanism, and stage 1 will begin as from 1 July next year.

It is plain from the Prime Minister's Walden interview and from her infinitely expanded preconditions that the Prime Minister has no intention of accepting United Kingdom entry into the exchange rate mechanism before the next election. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Professor Patrick Minford, a monetarist colleague of Sir Alan Walters, believes that the issue of the EMS is "effectively dead". I suspect that the issue will not be laid to rest so easily, even if the Prime Minister and many Conservative Members wish it to be so.

At the Strasbourg summit next month, decisions will be taken on the convening of an intergovernmental conference due to be held in the autumn of next year to consider the consequent stages 2 and 3 of the Delors report. The current and future presidencies of the Community show no sign of wanting to delay the decision-making process. In fact, they appear to want to speed the process up. It is also apparent that the proposed intergovernmental conference may, on majority voting, proceed to draft an entirely new treaty, rather than amending the existing treaty, which would require a unanimous decision of all the member states. There is no guarantee that Britain can veto proposals that we do not believe to be in Britain's best interests. There is a clear risk that vital decisions can be made about the future of European economic convergence that would leave Britain on the sidelines. Given the Prime Minister's attitude, that may well be the legacy of a decade of Thatcherism.

During the Prime Minister's Walden interview, it became evident that the conditions now attached to United Kingdom entry require the whole of Europe to embrace Thatcherism, but despite all the hype about Thatcherism being exported, it has not happened over the past 10 years; nor will it happen in the decade ahead. Let us take, for example, the Government's isolated position on the social charter, which the Prime Minister has described as Marxist. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Tory Members may not think that the social charter is relevant to the future of the European Community but we think that it is highly relevant. They have no right to determine unilaterally the terms of debate.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Did I hear the right hon. and learned Gentleman say that a treaty amendment would not require unanimity? On what footing does he say that?

Mr. Smith: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would pay minimal attention to our debate. I said precisely the opposite, and I will not give way to hon. Members who ask such stupid questions.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I will certainly not give way to really stupid questions. I cannot be accused of not giving way. Of the many accusations that might be hurled at me, being unwilling to give way is not one of them. I hope that hon. Members who do not think that the social charter is important will at least listen to what I am saying.

The extent of the Government's isolation on the social charter reveals how out of touch they remain on other key issues of economic co-operation and convergence. Our approach is to accept stage 1 of the Delors report and to negotiate entry into the exchange rate mechanism on reasonable and prudent conditions. These conditions, as I explained to the House on Tuesday, include entry at an effective rate, adequate central bank swap arrangements to tackle speculative flows, increased support for regional policy and agreement on a co-operative growth strategy. These conditions are important and not unreasonable.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: Two weeks ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and I visited Paris, Brussels and Bonn, to discuss these concerns with the relevant authorities. It was encouraging to find on many of these issues a common basis of understanding and shared concerns with our partners in Europe. In key respects, the points that we raised——

Mr. Mans: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I will not give way. Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to proceed with an important part of my speech without constantly interrupting me?

In key respects, the points that we have raised are already under discussion and are being addressed as the debate provoked by the Delors report unfolds. We find common acceptance of the need to tackle the growing payments imbalances within the Community, the importance of collective action by the central banks to tackle speculative attacks against currencies within the EMS and the crucial importance of regional policy, which features prominently in the Delors report, to ensure that growth and development are balanced and evenly spread throughout the Community as the single market unfolds after 1992.

These are not impossible conditions. They are practical concerns already on the agenda for Europe in the decade ahead. The Labour party is ready to shape that agenda. Only last week, the European Parliament voted for a resolution that embodies the Labour party's proposals, and is concerned primarily with stage 1 of the Delors report. It urged:

> "The pound should participate in the EMS as soon as possible".

It called for

> "active industrial policy . . . coupled with extensive regional policies . . . control of speculative movements . . . and the elimination of the largest inter-Community deficits and surpluses."

This resolution, which includes all Labour's conditions for entry into the exchange rate mechanism, will be presented to the Strasbourg summit as a decision of the European Parliament. I am delighted that the Parliament has embraced so much from the Labour party's agenda for Europe in the decade ahead.

Mr. Smith: I have heard hon. Members say that that is what makes them suspicious, but let me give them some further information. I was surprised, although not

[Mr. Smith]

disappointed, when I heard that the Conservative group in the European Parliament not merely voted for the resolution that I have just quoted but also supported some key amendments proposed by Labour Members of the European Parliament. Indeed, a Conservative Member of the European Parliament, Mr. Bryan Cassidy, the Conservative group's economic spokesman, attributed the key amendment to

"the influence of the 45 strong British Labour group which now dominates and controls the Socialist group as a whole."

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to intervene on this issue?

Mr. Shersby: Yes.

Mr. Smith: On the Labour group?

Mr. Shersby: Yes, the Labour group.

Mr. Smith: Very well.

Mr. Shersby: The right hon. and learned Gentleman claims that the Opposition's policy reflects that of the Labour group within the European Parliament. How does he square the policy with the views of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and his colleagues, who take an entirely contrary view?

Mr. Smith: I think that we are allowed to have different views. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and I will have differences on a number of subjects. It seems pretty rich for the Conservative party to say that there is not total unanimity among the Labour party on issues which have divided both parties. The Cabinet is entirely divided. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield has tabled an early-day motion, and I think that some of my hon. Friends have signed it. My right hon. Friend will probably attract some support from some Conservative Members.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Yes.

Mr. Smith: Perhaps the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) should have checked before he asked me his deadly question that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) would not undermine him. He knows perfectly well, however, that if the EDM were passed round the Cabinet and the members of it were asked whether they would sign it, they would reply, "Cabinet Ministers do not sign these motions. You must understand that it would be difficult for us to do so." We could easily get two EDMs from the Cabinet, but neither would be published because the Prime Minister would not let either of them see the light of day.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): If an EDM were circulated around the House and the Cabinet, a list of conditions would be imposed by the Government. Another list of conditions would be imposed by the anti-marketeers. My right hon. and learned Friend has already referred to four conditions and I am sure that my hon. Friends and I could produce another dozen. It would be an extremely long EDM.

Mr. Smith: If Conservative Members ever need any assistance, they should turn to the practical working knowledge of my hon. Friend, who has described the position so well on this occasion. It is not for the first time that he has offered Conservative Members help that they do not deserve.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I want to understand precisely what is being said. My right hon. and learned Friend has said that the Labour party's proposals were accepted by the European Parliament. When did the Labour party discuss these matters? Were they discussed at the party conference, or were they discussed by the European Labour group and agreed to? Have we discussed the matters within the parliamentary party? Surely we started that discussion only yesterday. I am not being difficult.

Mr. Smith: I draw the attention of my hon. Friend to the Labour party's policy review, which was discussed at the Labour party conference.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that we have arrived at a stage where we should suspend the sitting so that the Opposition can get their act together.

Mr. Smith: The less said about that intervention, the better.

We are delighted that some Conservative MEPs understand and even welcome the wisdom of the Labour party's approach. The fact that they are taking our lead and following the Labour party's team in Europe speaks volumes for the style of leadership and the quality of teamwork that they have seen operating within the Conservative party in the United Kingdom. Unlike Conservative Members, they have recently had an encounter with the electorate. That concentrates the mind wonderfully. At the ballot box in June they saw all too painfully the result of the Prime Minister's attitude to Europe and her bungled European election campaign.

In recent years, the British people——

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hamilton: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is frightened.

Mr. Smith: I resent that remark, and I shall take it into account when deciding whether I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman on another occasion. He must learn that there are some courtesies in this place. It is obvious that he has one or two to learn.

In recent years, the British people have become increasingly concerned at the growing gap in terms of economic success, standard of living and social provisions between Britain and other leading Community countries. They perceive—I believe that this was reflected in their votes in the European parliament election—that it is harmful to the Community as well as to the Government to resist in a niggardly negative manner the moves to raise social standards and provide a floor of rights for employees. They understand that that is bad for Britain generally. We are not leading Europe; we are falling behind. The Government's obsessional insistence on unrestricted market economics, the removal of social protections and a minimalist role for Government, in opposition to the widely held views of the rest of the Community, prevents progress and harms Britain's political interests. It shows that Britain is being unreasonably unwilling to compromise and co-operate with our European partners.

I fear that Ministers are as partisan abroad as they are at home. Whenever their narrow ideological obsessions collide with the idea of greater European co-operation, it is the European concept which is sacrificed. The coming clash on the social charter at Strasbourg is wholly unnecessary. The Government are wrong. They will once again isolate themselves within a Community which is becoming increasingly less tolerant of the Prime Minister's Don Quixote-like charges at European windmills.

The plain truth is that Europe will always be politically diverse. It is as unlikely as it would be illiberal to expect or to demand the entire Community to embrace one economic or political set of values, let alone the absurdities of Thatcherism.

The social, economic and environmental issues of the 1990s will not be resolved by the universal panacea of laissez faire. The EMS has spent the past 10 years curbing the excesses of the currency markets, but in other important policy areas more than the price mechanism will be required to sustain growth and improve the quality of life. Such realism about the limits of market forces will dominate the agenda of the 1990s and influence the evolving trend of economic convergence in Europe. It is vital that in the decade ahead Britain has a Government who are capable of combining that realism with the commitment to deal constructively with our partners in Europe.

Mr. Beith: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us at some stage whether the Labour party's policy on one of the main issues in the debate remains as it was at the time of the European elections? It was then said that the Labour party saw no advantage at that time in trying to create full-scale European monetary union.

Mr. Smith: I shall deal with that when I reach the appropriate part of my speech. I ask the hon. Gentleman to wait a little longer.

For the reasons that I have given, it is important that Britain participates in good faith in the debate on the Delors report. The Labour party has indicated its willingness to consider these issues. We are prepared——

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): Come on.

Mr. Smith: Perhaps the Minister will allow me to proceed with my speech. The hon. Gentleman is in the Parliament of the United Kingdom and not at a Conservative party conference. He is not sitting at some Thatcherite footstool. He will be questioned in an environment in which debate is allowed. I might have to say everything again so that the hon. Gentleman understands my arguments.

The Labour party has indicated its willingness to consider the issues. We are prepared to accept stage 1 of the Delors plan and are ready to negotiate the conditions under which the United Kingdom should enter the exchange rate mechanism.

What will follow stage 1 of the Delors report remains to be seen. The agenda for the proposed intergovernmental conference has yet to be agreed. The proposals set out by the Delors committee for stages 2 and 3 of economic and monetary union are very far reaching, and represent only one among a number of possible proposals to achieve greater monetary co-operation and economic convergence.

There has been—*[Interruption.]* Will hon. Members please allow me to continue my speech?

There has been cogent criticism of the Delors report. In many ways, it is far too schematic in tone. It makes assumptions which are neither argued nor justified, and it is on the whole dangerously insensitive to the political dimension of economic decision taking and the need for democratic accountability. Perhaps it suffers from being the product of a committee dominated by central bankers.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: By a Socialist.

Mr. Smith: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees with that. The Delors report may be a useful starting point for debate and discussion, but it could never be regarded as a blueprint for the future of Europe. I hope that that answers the question that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) addressed to me.

I mention two major reservations that we have about states two and three. Let me make it clear that we would not be willing to accept any system of central banks which would be independent of political control, just as we strongly oppose an independent status for the Bank of England such as the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Blaby appears to have been considering a year ago and which was only tantalisingly revealed in his post-resignation comments this week. I do not know whether the present Chancellor will pick up that idea and seek to persuade the rest of his colleagues——

Mr. Major *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Smith: Almost undoubtedly, the Chancellor looked as if he was saying no, but I am not sure.

We are firmly against such a concept for the EC and we do not accept that binding rules for budgetary or fiscal policy are a necessary condition for the achievement of monetary union. I remind the House that that is one of the central parts of stages 2 and 3.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am following closely what my right hon. and learned Friend is saying, particularly on the matter of democratic accountability, with which all Opposition Members would agree wholeheartedly. Is it in his mind that such accountability would be with the Council of Finance Ministers, appointed by their respective national Parliaments, or has he some other method in mind?

Mr. Smith: In the proposed system of independent central banks there is no democratic accountability at all. The whole point of having an independent banking system, Bundesbank-style, is that it is insulated from politics. That was somehow regarded as a desirable feature. There is no form of democratic accountability either from Ministers or from any kind of parliamentary mechanism. That is a fundamental objection to the proposal, and, as my hon. Friend reminds me, that will be the unanimous view of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

The binding rules are not a necessary condition for the achievement of monetary union in any event and I agree with what the Chancellor of the Exchequer——

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Smith: May I finish the sentence?

The Chancellor of the Exchequer drew attention to the Select Committee's conclusion that

> "The power of the House of Commons over the centuries has depended fundamentally on the control of money, both taxation and expenditure. This would be jeopardised by the form of monetary union proposed by the Delors Report which would involve central undemocratic direction from within Europe of domestic budgetary policies."

I am happy to accept that enthusiastically, and I am sure that all Opposition Members accept it too. Does the hon. Member for Southend, East still wish me to give way?

Mr. Taylor: I thank the Minister for his excellent recent remarks. We have had some fun, but he has made some excellent recent remarks. He seems to agree with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor that stages 2 and 3 of the Delors report are completely unacceptable as a blueprint for the future. Would he honestly say—I mean this sincerely, John—whether there is anything at all in the three conditions laid down by the Government and the Chancellor for joining the ERM with which the Labour party would disagree—apart from its own reservations? If we could agree, we could send a unanimous message to Strasbourg. Is there anything in our three conditions—freedom of movement of trade, freedom of financial stability and the right exchange rate—with which he would disagree? If not, we can for the first time for many years send a unanimous message to Strasbourg.

Mr. Smith: I am tempted to say, "Well, Teddy, I can't remember when I last heard you speaking like that, whether it was in Cathcart or at Glasgow university." The hon. Gentleman referred to me as the Minister. I must ask him to exercise just a little patience in that respect. In two years' time I shall be happy to accept his words. But I shall do him the courtesy of answering his question. The conditions that have been attached to stage 1, not stages 2 and 3, by the Government are not the appropriate conditions, and the ones that the Labour party has proposed are.

For example, I do not know to what level inflation has to be brought down before the Government are satisfied. I suspect that that might be a moving goalpost. If the Government really mean what they say about these conditions, they would define the level of inflation that would be regarded as desirable. That might be a useful line of inquiry for the hon. Gentleman to pursue when he is asking questions of Ministers who are responsible for formulating policy now and for conducting the negotiations in the EC.

Mr. Benn: What my right hon. and learned Friend said about the retention of the Bank of England under the Bank of England Act 1946 is important and welcome. He will know that under that Act, the Treasury has the power to give directives to the Bank of England, the Bank of England has the power to give directives to any other bank and the Treasury has the power to define what a bank is. Therefore, enormous powers will fall to him as Chancellor and I hope that he will follow that through by saying that, if necessary, he intends to use all of them.

Mr. Smith: The constitutional position of the Bank of England in relation to the Government is satisfactory at the moment. I see no reason why that should be changed. A wide range of powers is available to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and no Chancellor should willingly give them up. He certainly should not contemplate handing over power over key economic monetary issues to bankers who are not accountable to the British people. As I think my right hon. Friend has gathered, that conditions our view of the proposals contained in the Delors report for a system of central banks and it is consistent with the view that we take at home.

I was shocked and astonished to discover that the former Chancellor was contemplating handing over the power to decide some of those matters to the present Governor of the Bank of England. I am sure that most hon. Members would basically agree with that proposition, although the fact that the former Chancellor revealed that view makes one wonder whether there are not some in the Conservative party who might take a different view.

The Chancellor has revealed a new plan today. He has produced the plan for competing currencies—to give it a shorthand title. It formed an important part of the Chancellor's speech I am tempted to say that it is one of the matters that should be referred to the Select Committee, since the right hon. Member for Worthing is the Chairman. I am rather torn on whether this wheeze of competing currencies should trouble the Select Committee. I would enjoy the prospect of the Chancellor explaining it to my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), but I am sure that there are many more useful matters that could occupy the Select Committee's expert attention.

It is clear that the Treasury's plan for competing currencies would have pleased Heath Robinson. It is yet another example of the Conservative's addiction to unfettered market forces. It is envisaged that currencies in Europe would engage in a Darwinian struggle for supremacy within the single market after 1992. It is an idea which, as the Chancellor knows well, received a cool reception—to put it as politely as I can—from the other European Finance Ministers when it was informally floated at the regular council meeting at Antibes in September. No other member state in the Community supported the scheme and typically, even the Conservative Finance Ministers of Europe found the idea more than a little bizarre.

A multi-currency scheme would lower the efficiency of the single market. Not for the first time, the application of free market ideology would damage the very market that it seeks to advance. Transaction costs would soar dramatically with the complexity of making payments in numerous different currencies. It is much more likely that a multi-currency system would quickly degenerate into a single currency system. The laws of the currency jungle would guarantee the supremacy of the deutschmark, and to adapt a well-known sentence from Thomas Hobbes, life for the pound would be "nasty, brutish and short."

It is hard to imagine a scheme that would more rapidly hand British monetary sovereignty to the German authorities in the Bundesbank. If ever there were a "half-baked scheme", this is it. It does not reach even the minimum level of plausibility. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the plan for competing currencies is nothing but a diversion, a further attempt to conceal the Government's divisions over the EMS. As the editors of the latest edition of the *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* conclude:

"The idea seems so risible that we can only believe that it is not a serious suggestion but a delaying tactic to confuse the debate over economic and monetary union."

I thought that it might be the last joke by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, left as a little surprise for whoever might be his successor. I am astonished to discover that his successor takes it seriously enough to present it unvarnished and unamended to the House.

The other 11 member states of the Community show no sign of wishing to indulge the Government's enthusiasm for competing currencies. Still less do they accept the patronising tone of the Prime Minister when she demands that they catch up with Thatcherism. Far from Europe catching up with us, it is high time that the Government concentrated on catching up with our Community partners and competitors.

Economically and socially, over the past 10 years Britain has fallen behind. We have failed to match the level of investment in education and training, in research and development, in the regions and in manufacturing industry, which has been achieved, for example, by West Germany. The result is our massive trade deficit with the Federal Republic. Despite all the hype about economic miracles and arrogant assumptions that we have now surpassed the German miracle, there is still a lot of catching up to do.

Why are the Government prepared to stand back while social provision in this country falls behind the best practice in Europe? When will the Government conceive the ambition to catch up with European levels of pensions, with European standards of protection for the low paid and with the best levels of European child care provision? Those are the key elements of the social dimension to Europe which the Conservative party opposes, cannot understand and does not even want to discuss today. That is why it has tried to block the social charter, even though it is clearly supported by the majority of British people.

The social charter and the legislative action programme that will flow from it are indispensable to the successful conclusion of the single market. Without adequate minimum standards, the social and political cohesion of the Community will be seriously weakened. Without the social charter, it will be harder to build the strong economy and fairer society that Europe and Britain will need in the years to come. Labour Members know that there can be no lasting economic convergence and monetary co-operation without a strong commitment to a social Europe, which is why Britain needs a Labour Government to build a Europe that is not only a market for business but a community for people.

5.34 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I suspect that the last occasion on which a European issue of such complexity and with such an unattractive name as the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system was debated in the House was probably the Schleswig-Holstein question last century. Both controversies are difficult to understand and the arguments hard to remember.

It is fortunate that the House has this opportunity to debate the issue in depth. The extent to which there is a considerable degree of common ground among hon. Members has emerged from the speeches made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). I believe that that will strengthen the hand of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor when he pursues these matters in Europe.

I regret that the Delors committee—or, more accurately, Mr. Delors—has succeeded in setting the agenda for this discussion. I profoundly disagree with paragraph 39 of the Delors report, which says:

"The Committee agreed that the creation of an economic and monetary union must be viewed as a single process. Although this progress is set out in stages which guide the progressive movement to the final objective, the decision to enter upon the first stage should be a decision to embark on the entire process."

There are strong arguments for proceeding to join the exchange rate mechanism, but that does not imply that we should go further down the road of stages 2 and 3 of the Delors report. Considerable advantage, such as exchange rate stability and co-operation between members of the Community, is to be gained from joining the exchange rate mechanism. I agree with those who say that it is not a panacea, but none the less I believe that we should join. It is important to appreciate that joining the exchange rate mechanism would involve no greater loss of sovereignty —indeed, rather less—than we gave up for many years under the Bretton Woods system.

I do not believe that Professor Alan Walters's views on the idea of perverse capital flows are valid. In my view, they are not so much half-baked, if that is the right expression, as grossly overdone.

The Government have made their position absolutely clear—we shall join the ERM when the time is right and the Madrid conditions fulfilled. Clearly, the object of the exercise is to achieve a degree of exchange rate stability. Today is not the right moment to join, because it is obvious that once exchange controls are removed in France next July there is likely to be considerable readjustment of currency. It would therefore be paradoxical to say that we shall join to achieve exchange rate stability without anticipating that there are likely to be further changes in the next 12 months or so. None the less, I hope that we shall be able to join soon after that.

Much attention has been given to the Walden interview with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. There were many interpretations of the fact that she elaborated on the Madrid conditions. If we are to join the ERM, it is not unreasonable at the same time to insist on certain moves towards the European single market. That is how I interpret the Prime Minister's position, rather than her saying, "I shall impose a series of conditions which effectively mean that we shall not join at all." The Chancellor of the Exchequer clearly set out the position in good faith, which is important.

However, there may be a problem if, as I hope, we join in the near future, because sooner or later—perhaps not that much later—we shall be facing a general election. If we join the ERM, the danger is that as we approach that election the prospect of a Labour Government may exert considerable downward pressure on sterling. If the Government then have to realign the currency, it will be difficult to make it clear that that is the fault of the Opposition and not a defeat for the Government. The window for joining, between next summer and the election, may be quite small. None the less, we should take the opportunity whenever it arises because the case has clearly been made. I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor clearly set out the basis on which we should proceed.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Higgins: Alas, I do not have time because I want to try to keep my speech to 10 minutes.

I turn to the broader issues of economic and monetary union. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee report—I am glad to see that a number of points made in it were endorsed by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)—makes a valuable contribution, as does the evidence that we received. Often the evidence that we receive is more valuable than the report. Members of that Committee will know that, although I wholeheartedly endorsed the report, I was not entirely happy with one paragraph of it. Chairmen of Select Committees can express their views on amendments only if there is a tied vote, and that did not happen.

My feeling is that the proposal for a single currency is seriously defective because it means that giving up for all time any opportunity of using a change in relative prices between countries to deal with fundamental changes and variations in underlying costs. That could have a serious effect on regions. I do not believe that the proposals, even on the elaborate and expensive scale put forward by Delors, would be sufficient to overcome that on a permanent basis.

I have serious reservations, too, about the proposals for a European central bank and I concur fundamentally with a view that has been put forward by hon. Members on both sides of the House—that it would be unaccountable to the House and to other Parliaments. Of course, in some countries—for example, the United States and West Germany—existing central banks are not so accountable. Strangely, I find myself once in a while in favour of nationalisation. We nationalised the Bank of England, and the present relationship between the Treasury and the Bank of England is desirable. It would be highly undesirable to extend the idea to a system of European central banks which are in no sense accountable—in Delors, it is not clear to whom they would be accountable—and I would not wish to go down that road.

The trouble with the expression "economic and monetary union" is that it is the wrong way round. The progression must clearly be from monetary union to economic union, not the reverse. We come to the crux of the matter, and there the Select Committee was unanimous. Progress towards monetary union does not require the abdication of control over fiscal matters to any supranational organisation, accountable or not. I wish to make a rather technical, but fundamental, point, which is stated in paragraph 22 of the Select Committee report and is spelt out in greater detail in our earlier report on international monetary co-ordination. The report states:

> "We wish to stress that . . . it is by no means clear what the impact of fiscal policy is on exchange rates. Fiscal policy may affect demand, but its direct impact on exchange rates is ambiguous. Binding rules on fiscal policy seem to be unnecessary even in stage 3 of a monetary union."

There is a strong case for joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. It does not involve any more of an abdication of sovereignty than we had for many years under the Bretton Woods system, but stage 2 of the Delors position, where he seeks to hijack control over taxation and public expenditure, is irrelevant and simply a device to expand the powers in Europe over national Governments. As has rightly been pointed out by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, that is the fundamental basis on which the power of the House has rested over the centuries. For that reason, and because the proposal is irrelevant, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will continue to make progress on joining the exchange rate mechanism but that he will make clear, as he did this afternoon, our view on the longer-term issues set out in the Delors report.

I hesitate to comment in depth—alas, I do not have time—on the paper that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor lodged in the Vote Office this afternoon, but I should like to make one slightly technical point. I was brought up on Gresham's law—the idea that bad money drives out good—and I am slightly worried about what I suppose one should even now call Lawson's law, which is that good money drives out bad. It does not follow that the most inflation-proof currency is necessarily the one that we most use for transactions. Many companies conduct transactions in a multitude of currencies. They will not necessarily use the most inflation-proof one most often. They may well use that which is weakest and which has the highest rate of return on short-term balances.

These are more complex matters which it is perhaps difficult to explore in great depth, even in a debate as concentrated on a particular subject as this one, but I hope that we can consider them again, perhaps in the Select Committee. The degree of common ground between the two sides of the House is remarkable and I hope that we can make progress on the basis that I have described.

5.44 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) talked about the nationalisation of the Bank of England. One of the most interesting parts of the resignation speech of the former Chancellor dealt with that. He said:

> "a year ago, I proposed to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister a fully worked-out scheme for the independence of the Bank of England."—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1989; Vol. 159, c. 209.]

It is astonishing that the Prime Minister could not recall that—a fully worked out scheme from the Chancellor for the privatisation of the Bank of England, and she was not able to remember it. It is so important that I should have thought that everything in the economic or financial sphere would have been subordinated until those matters were dealt with.

It did not come so much as a surprise to me, because I had been present at the debate on fiduciary note issues in 1976, which I took, and those in 1978, taken by the then Minister of State—my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). There was practically no one in the House on either occasion. I heard the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) say:

> "the Government could lay before Parliament each year in statutory form the annual monetary target for the coming year. The Bank of England would then, in effect, be charged by Parliament with ensuring that the target was met."

There would be legislation to give those powers. The right hon. Gentleman went on to quote someone approvingly, saying that it was

> "no accident that West Germany and Switzerland, which in recent years also have managed their economy better than others, happen to have strong and independent monetary authorities".—[*Official Report*, 13 March 1978; vol. 946, c.168-9.]

I assume that that was an early indiscretion by the right hon. Gentleman which he had subsequently been able to overcome. With that in mind, as the House will recall, I frequently taunted him with that view. It was interesting to see that the right hon. Gentleman returned to that point.

All these matters were fully discussed in the debates on the nationalisation of the Bank of England. Those debates still make excellent reading because they are about the same problems that we have today. The circumstances are rather different. We have had exchange controls, which has changed things dramatically. Our background is exchange controls and we are comparing what happened under exchange controls with what is happening now.

What is happening now and what is likely to happen are the same features to which Boothby and others were referring when looking back to the 1930s. A number of important people spoke in those debates—Nigel Birch, Hugh Dalton, Hugh Gaitskell among them. Nationalisation of the Bank of England was the only issue on which Boothby voted with the Labour Government. Quoting, he said,

> "They who control the credit of the nation direct the policy of Governments, and hold in their hands the destiny of the people".

Boothby went on to speak about what had happened in the 1930s:

> "What was perhaps worse, credit was denied to modernise our industrial plant, to build houses for our workers at home . . . On the other hand, into Central Europe and, above all, into Germany, millions of pounds of good British money were poured, much of which we never saw again."

He went on to say that

> "not only in the City but far beyond its confines"

there was

> "the embodiment of power without responsibility."

Again quoting, he said:

> "We returned to the Gold Standard in 1925 for the benefit of the City of London and so ruined our basic industries. It does not follow that what is best for the City of London is best for the country."

The speech is well worth reading in full. Boothby said:

> "This Government . . . might one day want to go back to a Gold Standard"—

or, if one likes, an ecu—

> "but if any Government ever committed such an act of insensate folly I should want to attack the Chancellor across the Floor of the House. Further, I should not want him to say that it was really the business of the Bank of England rather than his affair."—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1945; Vol. 415, c. 112-6.]

That is the same accountability which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) rightly said was crucial. I hope that it will be an important part of the negotiations.

It is important that we have political control. When the German Bundesbank increased its interest rates, no one in Europe questioned it. Was there no division within the Bundesbank about whether the rise should be 0·5 per cent. or 1 per cent. and whether it should follow M0, M1 or M3? A decision was made that affected the lives of 200 million or 300 million people and no one questioned whether it was the right decision. The decision on that matter of enormous importance may have been made by a majority of just one.

My right hon. Friend is right to set firm conditions for our entry into the ERM. The experts always say that these are technical matters, but my experience has always been that banking decisions tend to be political decisions. The British people are entitled to make those decisions, as are all the peoples of Europe.

People say that the Bundesbank has done wonders for the German economy. I say that German industry, has done wonders for the German economy. German industry, with its excellent training and manufacturing potential, created a strong German Bundesbank, not the other way round. The countries that owe a great deal to their Governments are not Germany and Italy. The north of Italy is strong—it is even able to bear the nonsenses of the third of the population in the south—but its success has nothing to do with the Government.

If we enter the exchange rate mechanism it will be essential to have proper political control, as my right hon. and learned Friend said. That will not be easy to achieve, even with the Bank of England.

Mr. Mans: Would the right hon. Gentleman apply the same argument to the Federal Reserve bank in the United States of America?

Mr. Sheldon: The Federal Reserve bank is different. It has a greater measure of political control and links with the White House. Those who have experienced its operation know that it is more complicated than the German Bundesbank.

It is not easy to achieve political control. Those who work in the Treasury know how difficult it is to deal with the Bank of England. Crises can arise in minutes and decisions have to be made in a hurry. General policy can be laid down, but much depends on matters which have to be decided immediately. The following comparison illustrates my point. If, for example, I were in charge of investment in any organisation, I should expect my actions to be closely circumscribed, but if 12 superiors to whom I owed equal allegiance were appointed, I could do exactly as I liked. When dealing with day-to-day market operations, greater control is needed, not less.

The Bundesbank has the powers to which I referred. There are those who say that it does not matter and that we are subservient to the Bundesbank because Germany is so strong. I say to them that that problem stems from our balance of payments deficit of £20 billion, which looks as though it will persist for no one knows how long. That is why we are and shall continue to be subordinate to strong bankers. If we had the balance of payments surplus that Germany has, I should have no worries at all. Other countries would then have to listen to the Bank of England and follow money market operations here. Our balance of payments deficit means that we shall need flexibility and a wide range of rates.

It is said that before we can enter the ERM we must sort out our inflation problem. Some say that to enter the ERM would help us to reduce our inflation to the levels in other countries. That is probably right. Inflation would probably come down for a time because people would have confidence in sterling because it was tied to a strong currency, but the cost would be a greater problem later. No one can genuinely think that we could reduce inflation immediately, if at all. We would require greater deflationary measures than if we had not joined the mechanism. That is not to say that we should not join. We have political reasons for not showing too great a reluctance towards our European partners, but we have problems which need attention and the cautious approach that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East outlined.

[Mr. Sheldon]

Some say that the nature of foreign exchange trading has altered fundamentally. They see enormous swings across the exchange markets and say that they are completely different from what went before. They say that we cannot have neanderthal attitudes, because we have new problems. However, our problems are not new although they are probably more common than they were 10 years ago before exchange controls were abolished. Until then, it was difficult to hedge on the foreign exchange markets. Now people can do what they like. There are huge flows and speculators abound. They abounded in the pre-war years.

History did not begin in 1979. Vast sums were traded on the foreign exchanges before then, although there was less international trade. There were vast fluctuations on the foreign exchanges. One has only to consider the history of John Maynard Keynes, who nearly lost his shirt playing with foreign currencies until on one occasion he got it right and made a great fortune. The foreign exchanges were the great casino of the wealthy and large sums were traded —probably larger than the sums traded today, when genuine world trade has increased enormously, creating genuine foreign currency movements.

Speculation or, as is also common, prudent anticipation of one's foreign exchange requirements—the two cannot be distinguished—have always been with us and will remain with us. A speculator or investor—sometimes it is hard to separate them—seeks high returns with security. In Britain today he obtains a high return and looks for a weekly or even daily reaffirmation that the Government do not intend to allow the pound to fall. The Chancellor of the Exchequer knows that he has to state repeatedly that he supports a strong currency. If he stops saying that, speculators will abandon sterling. We are paying heavily for that in high interest rates. The Government give that assurance, but for how long? Such questions are of great importance to investors. Large sums are involved and analysis is keenly undertaken by those with large sums to lose if they get it wrong.

How long the Government can continue to pay exorbitant rates of interest to support the market and the pound depends on the income or the capital of the borrower. If I have capital, I can deal with outflows; if I have income, I can deal with them more easily. Speculators are aware of our foreign exchange reserves—our capital —and our negative income of £20 billion per year. They see that our capital does not last long and is being eroded.

Once again we return to fundamentals. The balance of payments surpluses of Germany and Japan make them strong. Our deficit makes Britain increasingly weak. For that reason, my right hon. and learned Friend is right to be cautious, to outline firm conditions which must be fully met, and for those reasons I support him.

5.59 pm

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): It is almost nine years since I last spoke from the Back Benches. In the intervening years, I was a Whip and therefore silent in the House, and I was then the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, speaking from the Dispatch Box. Others now do those jobs, and I wish them well. There is no iceberg here, but a shire horse unharnessed and put out to graze on the blue Conservative grass, which I now find is turning greener in every way and every day.

I will be brief, so I hope that the House will allow me to be a little parochial. Europe—both the European Community and the wider Europe—is of the greatest importance to my constituents in Calder Valley, as manufacturers on a multinational, national and local scale, as traders, financial marketeers and citizens. Many fled from the Ukraine, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Serbia to establish themselves in our valleys. Their families still live there and form an invaluable part of our community. How delighted they must be to see the breaking of the iron grip of Socialism in their homelands. However, this debate is about the European Community and, although events in old Europe are, to say the least, making the Eurocrats in Brussels tremble, I will stick to the European Community and its effect on the United Kingdom and my constituents.

Without doubt, my constituency is lucky enough to be the most enterprising in the west Yorkshire industrial area. There are several reasons for that, including the traditional adaptability and tenacity of the people, and their ability to get on is paramount. As their Member of Parliament I have endeavoured to channel any assistance I can to that enterprise. The local "Business in the Community" team has sought to mobilise and maximise available European and Government assistance. Led by the Prince of Wales, who is their unstinting and hard-working chairman, it sets an example to the rest of Europe, showing what can be done when European, national and local resources are harmonised sensibly.

The elimination of inflation—or price stability, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor called it—is paramount for British industrialists. High interest rates are hard to bear, but not as hard to bear as the destruction of the value of stock or of work in progress. Inflation is a tax on everything. It is permanently debilitating to have goods in store paid for yet losing value day by day and to turn those goods into manufactured items on prices that are losing profitability week by week. We should look for lower interest rates soon and low inflation permanently.

The Opposition call for us to enter the exchange rate mechanism. Many of my constituents think that the conditions are right and proper, and that the Commission and the European Ministers should accept them at once so that we can all get on with it. A responsible Opposition should be calling on Europe to accept our conditions, not bandwagoning in Europe with a set of conditions that seem to some of us to have been scribbled on the back of an envelope during a lengthy parliamentary intervention and then expanded on the instructions of Members of the European Parliament.

The details of our conditions have been spelt out and include the freedom of capital movement and the abolition of exchange controls. Unless companies can invest and reinvest freely in Europe, whether those companies are nationals or multinationals, small companies or large, their freedom is being attacked. They need that freedom, and Europe is not about inhibiting business but about creating employment.

A single market with a level playing field or, as my right hon. Friends have described it, a strengthened European competition policy, is essential, especially for my textile companies. They have enough worries with the renegotiation of the multi-fibre arrangement and imported Turkish yarn without a tilt here and there on the Common Market pool table.

Free movement in financial services is a prerequisite. To give up that negotiating card would be considered a betrayal by companies ranging from the Halifax building society, through insurance companies and into the board rooms and the shop floors of my companies, which are not only selling into other countries but buying and running companies in non-EEC countries. British financial companies should be able to sell their products Europewide. Europeans should be able to invest their money in the Halifax or the Leeds at will. The same life policy should be available in Brighouse and Baden-Baden. Just as importantly, if one of my companies wants to buy a manufacturing company, or any kind of business, anywhere in the world, it should not concern the European Commission.

British business can help itself and the Government in this respect. Here in the United Kingdom, often with the help of the Opposition, it is possible for commerce and industry to approach Ministers who are responsible for United Kingdom policy. Industry can at least make its point, and it can and does ask the Opposition to emphasise its views. However, such systems are not always in place in other European countries. I urge British business to thrash out its own responses to directives and proposals from Europe and then to seek out its counterparts in Greece, Spain, Italy or wherever and impress on them the arrangements made for a proper way to conduct competitive business. British business should urge those abroad to adopt those ideas and to press them on their national decision makers.

Decision makers abroad, as we all know, are not necessarily Members of Parliament or Ministers. They may be bureaucrats, business men or trade associations. It is vital that our companies reach them before the Commission and the Council impose their will and their methods, which may not be the best for international business.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) chides British Ministers for being "at it again". He says that the cry continually comes from Europe that the Brits are at it again, complaining, moaning and wanting to change the rules. However, on the few occasions when we do not do that, he complains that we have not made the British point. It would be wrong for our Ministers to stop making the British point.

We must teach our business and political counterparts how to influence the decision makers in the Council. We must teach them to lobby as well as our trade unionists lobby us. How often have we sat in Central Lobby, on the Terrace or, if we are lucky, in the Kremlin bar with trade unionists from all over the country, while they urge on us the unfairness of Europe. They tell us that "prato"—the unfairness of the social security system and slave labour in Italy coupled, with the Italian Government's massive aid —is killing their trade. They tell us about the diabolical social security systems that allow foreign farmers to get away with murder. The fishing industry, the steel industry and every other industry tell us the same.

We are now urged to accept a social charter composed by a little Jack Horner of plums from different pies. It is not a realistic concept. My constituents look rather for a huge, liberal, deregulated market, which will give small firms confidence and our largest firms a springboard to sell not only in that market, but unimpeded throughout the world. The united Socialist Europe urged on us a few years ago is not a runner anymore even in East Germany.

Now that the Commission has got us—or is getting us —to 1992, its role must change. It must become the secretariat to the Council of Ministers and the Council must propose the next steps after 1992. The ideas that the Council of Ministers brings back to sovereign Parliaments must be thrashed out here. The Commission can then polish those ideas and the European Parliament can at last take up its proper role of administering the wishes of the Council of Ministers.

I have been lucky enough to represent British interests on several occasions in various Councils of Ministers. We must press for British interests relentlessly, not only on behalf of my constituents, but for the country as a whole.

6.9 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I will not respond to the speech made by the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) because it was very much a maiden speech. I believe that it is the courtesy of the House not to criticise maiden speeches.

I accept the point of the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who is Chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, that there is common ground between the parties about Europe. The cautious pragmatism to which the right hon. Gentleman referred extends across the parties. However, there is not enough common ground on the key issue, the first stage of the exchange rate mechanism, within the Cabinet itself.

Anyone who watched the Walden interview must have gained the impression from the Prime Minister that she was basically against the ERM. The former Chancellor in his valedictory bore that out. There is a fundamental divide which has been papered over by a formula about conditions—there is the Prime Minister on the one hand and a number of senior Cabinet Ministers, including the Deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and, I believe, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer on the other. That is the political reality and I am not surprised that the right hon. Member for Worthing did not mention that problem

When the Labour Government decided not to enter the ERM when the European monetary system was set up in 1979, I supported that decision because I feared that linking the pound to the mark—the strongest currency in the system—could have severe deflationary consequences.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): It would.

Mr. Radice: However, I believe that the situation has now fundamentally changed, and I will explain why.

The EMS has been operating now for a decade and it has proved itself to be a considerable success. There has been a significant convergence of inflation rates within the ERM down towards the low German level. In particular, the gap between the French and German rates has been substantially narrowed. There has also been far greater interest rate stability. It is noticeable how, despite some variations, the level of interest rates within the EMS is far nearer the low German rate than to the high United Kingdom interest rate outside the EMS. Above all, there has been far greater exchange rate stability. Although the ERM is not a fixed exchange rate system, the limitation on changes has created the original intention of the EMS—"a

[Mr. Radice]

zone of monetary stability." That has been very much in contrast with the much greater exchange rate volatility outside the system.

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): How can the hon. Gentleman say that about interest rates in view of the level of interest paid on the Italian lira over the past five years?

Mr. Radice: I said that there was much greater interest rate stability within the ERM as all the studies have shown. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will accept my word for that and if he does not, he should look at the evidence.

There has been an even more important change in the conditions in comparison with the 1970s. I take issue with my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). He did not quite grasp the point that the volume is less important than the fact that today, in contrast with textbook economics, the flows of international capital are driven as much by interest rate differentials and the desire for speculative gain as by differences in the balance of payments or inflation rates. That is a very important difference.

Mr. Sheldon: That was the case before the war.

Mr. Radice: No, it was not.

Outside the ERM, the United Kingdom exchange rate has been highly volatile. If hon. Members do not accept that, I remind them that in 1980-81, the pound was driven to a level which made manufacturing industry totally uncompetitive, so much so that 20 per cent. of manufacturing output was destroyed. In early 1986, the pound was driven down to an all-time low, to almost £1 to the dollar. There has been a considerable fluctuation.

Of course British manufacturing wants a competitive rate, and it is right to want that. However, it also wants a stable rate so that it can plan ahead. I conclude that although it is important that we should enter the ERM at a competitive and effective rate, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said, it is even more important that rates should remain stable.

I want now to consider the sedentary intervention made by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). The argument about tying the British economy to a more deflationary European level has far less validity in 1989 than it had in the 1970s or early 1980s. I accept that European unemployment levels are still high, but we should remember that our unemployment levels are affected by the way in which we calculate them. Also, the French were able to narrow the gap between the French and German inflation levels without having to experience the massive squeeze which British industry faced in 1980-81. Those who talk about a stagnant western European economy must consider the fact that over the past two and half years, the main European economies —West Germany, France and Italy—have been able to expand as fast as, if not faster than, the United Kingdom economy, but in a far more sustainable way because they are not running our massive balance of payments deficit.

We are also told that the Prime Minister attaches great importance to independence and sovereignty, but the truth is that, even outside the ERM, we are affected by what happens within it. After all, the Bundesbank's decision to raise interest rates a few weeks ago triggered corresponding increases not just in the ERM, but in the United Kingdom as well.

I do not claim that joining the ERM is a panacea. No one would do that. It is no substitute for operating and managing the economy in a balanced way or improving the supply side of the economy, which the Government have failed to do.

I believe that there is now a powerful case for joining the ERM sooner rather than later. It would help to stabilise exchange rates and secure lower interest rates than we would have outside. In addition, it could provide a useful counter-inflationary discipline, certainly a far more effective discipline, than the discredited system of domestic monetary targets in which one or two Conservative Members still apparently believe.

In addition, we must take our political argument very seriously. Unless we join the ERM, we will not be in a position to influence the future direction of economic and monetary co-ordination in Europe. Membership of the ERM would give us the influence that we so clearly lack at present.

Mr. Spearing: While it may be true that there would be a seat at the table, does my hon. Friend believe that our £20,000 million trade deficit might reduce our influence?

Mr. Radice: I warned this Government about the problem with the trade balance a long time before many other hon. Members, and I realise that it is very important.

I want now to consider stages 2 and 3 of the Delors report and the moves towards full economic and monetary union. I want first to consider the principle of economic and monetary union. Strangely enough, there is nothing about that in the Delors report and no one in this debate has so far made much of it. However, there is a powerful case to be made in principle for such a goal, albeit a long-term goal.

The basis of a monetary union can be defined as an arrangement between countries by which their exchange rates are permanently fixed in relation to one another. Because that commitment makes currencies freely interchangeable against one another at the same rate, they become, in effect, one currency.

The benefits of such a system, which are not set out in the Delors report, are that it reduces the transaction costs of doing business and, more important, it removes the cost of exchange rate instability, which is very great at the moment.

I accept the case that has been put by my hon. Friends that the disadvantage of monetary union is that it would no longer be possible to use the exchange rate to provide adjustment to economic changes or shocks which affect individual countries.

However, as I have already argued, the use of the exchange rate as a means of adjustment is increasingly problematic for Britain in a world in which international capital is not linked, as it used to be, to differences in balances of payments, but which goes after interest rates and speculative gains.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): It may be problematic to use the exchange rate to solve our appalling balance of payments problems, but does my hon.

Friend agree that it is inconceivable that the balance of payments problem can be solved without some major change in the value of sterling?

Mr. Radice: I agree. There will also have to be massive cuts in internal demand because we need to cut imports. We need a depreciation of our currency and that is why my right hon. Friends are right to say that we have to go in to the exchange rate mechanism at a competitive level. That is an important proviso. Once we are in the system, there will be a limit to the variation in the exchange rate. That is good counter-inflationary discipline, because we cannot go on depreciating, as that would undermine the whole economy, as we have found out before. Once we find the right level, we must try to stick to it—that is an important part of balancing and managing an economy. As the Swedes and other nations have found out, one cannot go on devaluing all the time.

Mr. Shore: Surely the additional problem is to decide what is an appropriate rate, against the background of our massive trade deficit and, I regret to say, our serious lack of competitiveness. Once that rate has been decided, there is also the problem of having to adjust it again, as so many other countries with fixed exchange rate regimes have had to do. Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be sensible to defer the whole thing until we have reached balance of payments equilibrium?

Mr. Radice: I believe that, if we continue to run a balance of payments deficit of the size that we have at the moment, the market may decide what that level should be.

There is considerable disagreement about what the level should be. I cannot give a figure, but I suspect that it should be considerably lower than it is at the moment, as that would be competitive and we certainly need a competitive edge—I think probably something in the region of DM2·50.

As I have said before, we are not talking about joining a fixed exchange rate system. The ERM is not a fixed system, but one with variability, albeit limited. It is true that full economic and monetary union would mean a fixed exchange rate system, but that will come later. I am talking about the principle of the thing.

A more pragmatic argument for supporting the long-term goal of monetary union, is that the single European market is likely to lead to greater integration of European economies. That integration will require a response at a monetary level.

Under the terms of the Single European Act, as we have been reminded, trade barriers will be removed and all exchange controls will be dismembered. That will lead to greater co-ordination of monetary policy and particularly of interest rates. We have seen how the other ERM economies are increasingly following the lead of the Bundesbank. That partly explains why France supports so strongly the idea of the European central bank. The French hope to retrieve a share of sovereignty that they have lost to the Bundesbank, by participating in the decision making of such a bank. In a European economy which is increasingly interdependent, one can recover control by sharing, and that is the principle behind the idea.

One can support the long-term goals, but that does not mean that one is not sceptical about the details of the Delors proposals. The important thing is that they ar not immutable but can be cast aside.

I do not believe that it is necessary, with full monetary union, to have binding rules on budgetary and fiscal policies of member states. It is essential that member states should be able to use fiscal policy to provide adjustment to short-term problems of balance in their own economies or the gap between the rich and poor economies will widen.

It is true that the Delors plan envisages wider structural and regional policies at the European level, but they have to be buttressed by fiscal policies at national level.

The Government have to adopt a more positive approach to economic and monetary union. Instead of the negative, nationalistic attitude of the Prime Minister, we should develop a policy that ensures that we are able to influence the outcome in a sensible, practical way.

The Treasury proposal for competing currencies is not a serious runner. It has already been rejected by our European partners and it is a pretty odd proposal, by any standards. It either means little more than the present arrangement or, if competition works, everyone will turn to the deutschmark, which will become the common currency of the union. That is the reality of the situation.

A more genuine approach to EMU should be based on two things. The first is a genuine commitment to the long-run objective of EMU, and not the kind of commitment that Government have used as a bargaining proposition. Secondly, we have to insist that an irrevocable fixing of exchange rates should take place only after the full effects of 1992 have worked through the European economies. That is not likely to take place before the end of the century.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The year 2010.

Mr. Radice: Perhaps not that far ahead, but it will take some time.

Meanwhile we should join, and then build on the existing exchange rate mechanism, develop greater co-ordination between central banks and ensure that we get realignments at increasingly rare intervals. We should also develop the ECU as a parallel and increasingly important currency. Gavyn Davies, one of our advisers to the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, said, in his valuable study of the European monetary question, that the more important the ECU becomes, the nearer European monetary policy will be to the average of member states. There is something to be said for that. He also said that that would make the Bundesbank less dominant in setting European monetary policy.

A European central bank will not be necessary until exchange rates are finally, irrevocably fixed. That is a long time ahead. Economic and monetary union has to be preceded by a major expansion of regional and structural funds, and the implementation of the social charter. We should also develop democratic institutions at national and European level, and give greater powers to the European Parliament.

Europe is one of the most important issues facing the House. Instead of standing on the sidelines, like the Prime Minister, shouting nationalistic slogans, it is essential that the United Kingdom starts to play a full part in the development of Europe's future.

6.29 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): I will be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I therefore hope that you will bear with me if I take my argument at something of a gallop.

[Mr. John Biffen]

I much enjoyed the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). He seems to have established himself as one fully conversant with European debate: his remarks were wide-ranging and, on the whole, paradoxical. He was almost a one-man pantomime horse—one half, the rear half, trying to establish Labour's credentials in warm and charitable European terms and making the party fit once more for Roy Jenkins, the other half much more pragmatic. Addressing my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), the right hon. Gentleman reflected on the absurdity of some of the ambitions in phases 2 and 3 of the Delors report. It would not have been difficult for those in the Press Gallery to assume that a good deal of consensus existed between the two parties on what constituted the wider challenges, and on what was the appropriate national reaction to them.

Let me again place on record my innate ambivalence —if not hostility—in relation to fixed exchanges. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) will remember struggling, as first a supporter and then a member of the Labour Government, to validate an unreal exchange rate between 1964 and 1968. Every social and economic value of that party was prostituted in the unreasonable pursuit of the untenable. The speech of the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) prompted the same reflections.

European monetary union would involve both pluses and minuses. The idea is not for constant changes of parity to take place to offset that, but for surpluses to be recycled through a regional policy—and doubtless a social and industrial policy. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) who is clearly growing into a good European after a shaky start, has mentioned energy policy. But I can think of nothing more daunting than mechanisms whereby the resources for such policies were provided in such circumstances—that those resources should be available for judgment and distribution through public processes about as remote as they could possibly be. I do not take into account the relationship between the Council of Ministers and the House; I merely say that the circumstances in which resources are created for distribution should cause us to think very seriously, Socialists as much as Tories. The remoteness of government is an equal challenge to both sides.

My first point of substance concerns the exchange rate mechanism. This is the immediate problem. It is alleged to be a test of the authenticity of our attempt to relate to our European partners. I must say that I am sorry that there has been so much acrimony over the safeguards that have been attached to British membership, the Madrid settlement and the statements made thereafter. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is clearly the object of considerable political attack, which is inevitable—I do not think that anyone would resile from that.

When I watched the Walden interview, I thought that my right hon. Friend was changing her style. In contrast to the economical use of verbiage in her statement after the Madrid summit, she now elaborated on the safeguards, as though, under the emollient influence of Woodrow Wilson, she wanted to reach the magic figure of 14. As I listened, I reflected on Clemenceau's observation that 10 was good enough for the Lord. Let me put back on the record what my right hon. Friend said in the House after the Madrid summit. She talked of the practice that would accompany—that would, indeed, be a precondition of—our membership of the exchange rate mechanism:

> "These include completion of the single market, abolition of all foreign exchange controls, a free market in financial services and strengthening of the Community's competition policy by reducing state aids."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1989; Vol. 155, c. 1107.]

Does anyone contest those four safeguards? Does any hon. Member on the Opposition Front Bench contest them? The silence is eloquent, and I am immensely grateful.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Biffen: Although I have great affection for my right hon. Friend, he is not a member of the Labour party; but I will give way to him none the less.

Mr. Howell: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, and I am listening with fascination to his speech, as I always do. I have only one contesting point to make—not entirely minor, but interesting. The Madrid communiqué said something slightly and crucially different: it mentioned the exchange and other controls of major countries within the EMS, not all countries. That is just a little point for us to bear in mind, should we ever come to textual hair-splitting in the future.

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. In fact, I recollect that Mr. Brian Walden pressed the question of Portugal in his interview. The issue did not bring that to a halt, and I do not believe that it would bring our relationship with our European partners to one either; I am glad, however, that my right hon. Friend has sought to fill the void left by the parliamentary Labour party.

We must emphasise the seriousness of our safeguards, and, moreover, the Labour party's safeguards. Labour makes great play of the problems of parity. The hon. Member for Dagenham, after all, said:

> "We must not be forced to sacrifice competitiveness to maintain an ERM parity".

It is well known that deep concern is felt about the need for legitimate and defensible safeguards before we proceed with the arrangements. There is deep scepticism on both sides of the House—I except the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)—about the wider ambitions of economic and monetary union and Delors stages 2 and 3. What better way to demonstrate the authenticity of that scepticism than to insist on safeguards at stage 1? otherwise, the very signals set up by a relaxed "Let's get in and work it out once we are in" approach will merely encourage those who believe the old French proverb, "C'est le premier pas qui compte." I believe that the scepticism is well founded.

We have argued the matter in economic terms; the Minister, although he is from the Foreign Office, knows that this is basically a Treasury debate. That is natural and within the conventions of the House, but make no mistake: the debate must be set in a highly political context, created by the present turmoil across Europe. I can well believe that Mr. Delors—who is, I think, as good a Frenchman as he is a European—has on his desk those wonderful words of Francois Mauriac: "I like Germany so much I want two of her."

Developments in the Soviet Union and in other Warsaw pact countries are unfolding at a pace that few would have anticipated. Old nationalisms are being refurbished; old institutions are being re-established. They may be old, but set in today's circumstances, they provide a powerful new dimension to the whole of European relations. We see within that all the indications of a potential German reunification, however much it is whispered behind hands, rather than proclaimed openly. We know that there is the prospect of an eventual, but perhaps not too distant, American military disengagement from western Europe, if America can make the appropriate arrangements with the Soviet Union.

It is against that background that, to my mind, there is the imperative of thinking, in the words of De Gaulle, of "a Europe from the Urals to the Atlantic". We should think about the political, social and economic structures that could provide the shock absorber for the impending re-unification of Germany. We should ask ourselves whether in continuing to try to bring about a closer, more integrated and centralised western Europe, we are facilitating a process that will have to reconcile those emerging factors in central and eastern Europe.

All that I can say as I bid my right hon. and learned Friends godspeed on this enterprise is that I hope that it can be done in the spirit of cross-Bench co-operation. If the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East wants to set out the Labour party's stall on Community affairs along the lines that the Government are foolishly trying to protect national interests in the way in which they are proceeding over the question of membership of the European exchange rate mechanism, I advise him that the debate will not end there. It will be translated to the wider issues that I have mentioned, and I look forward to that contest with relish.

6.41 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): For years I have believed that this Prime Minister would never take us into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. I have felt that that would and was gravely weakening this country's capacity to play a constructive and full role in the development of Europe. Listening today to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), I believe that we will now enter the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system some time in 1990. If Italy and France abolish their exchange controls—as I think that they will early in 1990—it will be possible for us to enter in the first half of that year.

However, I do not think that it will be easy. I believe that the Prime Minister will continue to put up stubborn resistance to it. The resignation of the former Chancellor will have had a substantive effect. I am one of those who believe that policy differences and principle still matter in politics. As resignation from such a great office is not done lightly, as the former Chancellor said, I believe that it will have a profound and long-lasting effect. Indeed, I believe that it will have an effect far beyond the mere matter of joining the exchange rate mechanism because, important though that is, it is as nothing to the fundamental debate about European economic and monetary union. There is no doubt whatever that if this country continues to hold out—unreasonably, in the eyes of most people in Europe and, I would suggest, in the eyes of most hon. Members—we will not have the political weight to stop some of the more foolish aspects of the European economic monetary union that are contained in the Delors report.

I speak as a lifelong European, but I believe that to force the European Community down the federalist route would not only damage the European Community but possibly destroy it. It is an unnatural beast, which the European Community was never meant to be. But it has never before been given such a massive federalist twist than by the Delors report. The concept of an independent and free nation giving up the right to fix its own levels of direct taxation and its own borrowing requirement is to emasculate the nation state to the extent that there would be no other option than to be a united states of Europe.

I am married to an American and my children are therefore half American, but to believe that one can draw any parallel between the United States of America and a united states of Europe is to live in a world that is wholly different from the one in which I live. If that federalist model were forced on Europe, it would eventually split it apart.

The war cemeteries of Europe are a massive demonstration of the folly of nationalism, but in the strains and stresses, and in the potential break-up of the USSR, we are also seeing all the dangers of forcing independent nations into an artificial grouping.

The cultural history and traditions of Europe allow us to develop European unity in a unique way. Few have been able to predict the path of European development in the past and the title of the Government paper "An Evolutionary Approach to European Economic and Monetary Union" uses well-chosen words. Evolution is a progressive and natural development, but one can never be sure of its pace or the ultimate direction in which it is leading.

Mr. Spearing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: Time is short, so I shall not give way.

The development of Europe is therefore of fundamental importance and this is possibly one of the more important debates that we will have in this Parliament. There are some signs of an interesting consensus developing on this question as there are in relation to the European exchange rate mechanism.

The Prime Minister has allowed her prejudices and instincts to triumph on the issue of the exchange rate mechanism. It does not raise fundamental questions of sovereignty, and to pretend that it does is nonsense. We went into the European monetary system in 1978 and the Labour Government took the necessary legislation through the House, but it was always permissible within that legislation for any Government to go into the exchange rate mechanism over a mere matter of a weekend. No other form of parliamentary approval was needed. That was a recognition that we were dealing with a mechanism that did not raise the fundamental questions that are raised by some aspects of the Delors report.

I turn to some aspects of that Delors report that trouble me. I believe that the Government's competitive currency arrangement will not run. Indeed, I am surprised that the new Chancellor has put his authority behind that non-runner. It is not necessary at this stage for any of us to take firm and fixed positions about the development of the currency. None of us knows how successful 1992 will be and none of us knows the effect of all the Community countries—I hope—being in the exchange rate mechanism. It may turn out to be a naturally stable system of

[Dr. Owen]

virtually fixed exchange rates, although there will always be—and rightly so—the capacity to change the exchange rate.

I would not go back into a fixed system. If we were to get stable currencies, as is well argued in a document by the Social Market Foundation, by Sam Brittan and Michael Artis, entitled "Europe Without Currency Barriers", if we were to have a virtually fixed system, there would not be transaction costs; there would be exchange rate stability. It may well be that we could use the extension of the ecu and that that would form a sufficient balance. As has been said, we may develop a dual currency so that a European currency will run alongside national currencies.

However, when the wider public comes to understand that the system might mean giving up the franc, the deutschmark, the pound and the peseta, there will be an instinctive reaction against it. Those advocating it will have to prove that they have solid arguments for necessitating such a major cultural change. I believe that they will be hard pressed to do so.

I would be cautious about being hostile to the idea of a European system of central banks. It will not be like the Bundesbank system. That system was developed in peculiar circumstances—in the inflation of the 1920s and 1930s and the post-war German situation. If it was modelled on any existing system of banks, it would be much closer to the Federal Reserve, which has a stronger political element, as has been mentioned already in the debate. I suspect that it will be different even from that. We must recognise that at this very moment the 12 national governors of the banks within the European Community meet regularly. That co-ordination has already been found to be necessary. When exchange controls are completely lifted, there will be a need for greater co-ordination. The governors of the banks will become more important within the European Community.

I beg the Government not be too pedantic. Many of our European partners like creating institutions; frankly, I do not. I found that my European enthusiasm always used to wane the closer I got to Brussels. We must, however, be a little flexible on this. The phraseology that describes a European system of central banks is about as neutral as one can get. If our European partners feel that such a system is an important symbol of making progress towards greater unity in this sphere, we would be most foolish to put up artificial road blocks against it. We should accept such a system provided that it meets some of our essential safeguards and provided that, within that system, our own Governor has an input which reflects his relationship with the Government of the day and, through that Government, with the House of Commons.

It will be difficult to get the balance right, but it is right to accept that we are living in a much changed world of exchange rate movements. Massive sums of money move rapidly, and within a fully fledged exchange rate mechanism we will need co-ordination mechanisms which have an indigenous authority and which operate quickly.

We should be more flexible, but I will not push it any further. I do not think that I would argue against, in principle, some institutional development in that regard provided that certain democratic and national safeguards were maintained. I cannot offer a blueprint, as I think that it would be impossible even to design such a blueprint until we were within the exchange rate mechanism, seen it work and we were a little past 1992. Jacques Delors must frankly be told—I hope by more than one country, Britain—that a lot of the stuff he proposes is arrant nonsense. It may serve as his presidential launch pad, but much of it does not make sense within an evolving European Community.

Within that context it may be that we are developing, once again, a consensus on European matters in this House. No one can deny that that is of great value. It does not make sense for the Chancellor, the Foreign Secretary or the Prime Minister to stand up for British interests in a European Council meeting and then to come back and always have to justify being in a minority of one. There are times when it is right for a British Prime Minister to be in a minority of one—but not quite so frequently as the right hon. Lady finds it necessary to be. There are moments when it would be greatly helpful for a British Prime Minister to go into negotiation knowing that he or she is likely to be in a minority of one, but knowing that they can speak for a united House of Commons or at least for the main thrust of the political contributions made in the House. That sort of consensus—I know that the Prime Minister will not like the word—is rather helpful in diplomatic terms.

It is also helpful within the European Community to go out deliberately to make a few friends and there are friends to be made. The Federal Republic of Germany has great reservations about whole chunks of the Delors report. It is very happy, however, for Britain to take the flak and all the odium for making sensible points against that report. For the past two decades, the German technique has been to nuzzle close to and to butter up the French on such issues. It recognises that President Mitterand and Prime Minister Michel Rocard are committed to those issues. These days they are more or less federalists and, unfortunately, we cannot rely on Gaullist attitudes to withstand some aspects of the Delors report. It is necessary to try to prise France and Germany apart on this issue.

Holland has a splendid and independent-minded Prime Minister, Mr. Lubbers. On a number of occasions he has displayed a sensible view from a committed European position, in common with previous Dutch Prime Ministers. Mr. Lubbers now heads a grand coalition with the Dutch Labour party—it has been party to negotiations despite having lost the election—with the Christian Democrats. The Danes and Portugal could also be reasonable allies on this question.

It is also important to consider the social contract—

Mr John Smith: The social charter.

Dr. Owen: That was a Freudian slip. The social contract has a long history in French politics and it is not something that has been discussed in this country alone.

The biggest absurdity in the social charter is the minimum wage legislation. It is a big enough nonsense to argue in favour of such legislation for the United Kingdom, but it is an even greater nonsense to argue that it can be run on a European level. It has its political advantages, but they evaporate the moment one fixes the level. Any Government—I am sure that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East would discover this—would find that they would have to fix the minimum wage at such an embarrassingly low level that they would back off it.

What we should be talking about is a guaranteed minimum income. That is a perfectly legitimate demand on a national Government and there are strong demands, in social terms, for Europe to have guaranteed minimum incomes. That would link wages, sometimes grossly inadequate, with the benefit and tax systems. If we were signing up for a social charter that stood for a minimum wage or income, it would not cause many problems to the present Government. Why do they not argue that case instead of getting themselves into a great lather?

There are other aspects of the social charter to which objections can be raised. The Commission has modified it substantially and has made it clear that most of the legislation is the responsibility of the member Governments and that it will become Commission responsibility only where appropriate.

Every possible piece of phraseology within the social charter does not fit us and it does have some grandiose elements within it, but it is fairly harmless stuff. If we get ourselves into a great lather about it and put ourselves in a minority of one, it looks as though we are incapable of giving any ground in what is, essentially, collective bargaining. Effectively we are expected to operate within a coalition. We know that the Prime Minister has some difficulty with that even within her Cabinet, but we should remember the basic facts. We are in the European Community and we are not coming out. There is no question of a two-tier Europe, which would be strongly against British interests. At various times we must give a little to maintain a vital national interest.

I hope that the Chancellor's resignation means that the Prime Minister has been reined in. There is no doubt that the former Foreign Secretary and the former Chancellor bent her over before the Madrid summit. No sooner was the agreement reached, however, than it was clear that, with one bound, she was free. One had only to listen to the press conference that she gave to understand that. She was undoubtedly heading to undermine that agreement.

The Prime Minister has a political purpose in not wanting an exchange rate mechanism. She fears that in the four weeks during an election campaign an opinion poll may well be published to show that the Labour party might win. There might be a run on the pound, although if people listen to what the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said, I am not sure that there would be. If there was a run on the pound, instead of letting the rate go down we might be forced to raise interest rates because of the exchange rate mechanism. That might be slightly embarrassing during a general election campaign.

That mechanism could also stop a consumer boom being generated before an election. Some of the disciplines within the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system would be helpful in stopping the gross manipulation of the economy prior to an election. We saw that happen at the time of the 1987 election, but the Conservative party did it in 1955 and 1959 and it jolly nearly got away with it in 1964. If it could, the Labour party would have done the same. The disciplines within the mechanism would inhibit to both sides of the political scale at the time of the general election. I welcome that.

The European Community has been a political, divisive issue in this country from 1962 until about 1988, which is far too long. I have listened to the debate today, and for once I am beginning to believe that our membership of the European Community is becoming something to which all sensible people in this country can give a wholehearted commitment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The 10-minute limit on speeches begins at 7 o'clock. Hon. Members will find the digital clock winking at them when they have half a minute to go.

7 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I must begin by saying how much I agreed with a large part of what the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has just said in a good-humoured and sensible way.

The idea of economic and monetary union obviously poses problems for this House and for political decision makers in this country. That is mainly because, although a distant goal, it implies a real shift of political power away from politicians at national level to politicians, bureaucrats bankers and judges at the European level. In the long run of history, this may happen. If it does, it will do so only with the prior approval of the national Governments and Parliaments concerned—through a new Community treaty which will need the unanimous approval of all the member states if it is to be brought into being.

In the shorter term, the priority for Her Majesty's Government must be to resolve the doubts and contradictions in their attitudes towards the European monetary system. The *Financial Times* correctly argued in an editorial yesterday:

> "Membership of the EMS has become a litmus test for Britain's commitment to the broader political aspirations of the European Community".

The most pressing problem for the Government is to resolve the issues raised by the interaction of European policy and monetary policy. That cannot be sensibly managed without taking full account of the European—and even the global—dimension of monetary policy. We should consider carefully the interaction of these two great issues before spending much more political time and energy on the longer-term issues of institutional shifts and political deficits in the European Community, to which this House will doubtless return on numerous occasions.

In an open economy such as that of Britain today, with more than 30 per cent. dependence on foreign trade, the Government cannot be indifferent to significant movements or volatility in the exchange rate. If they are, damaging consequences will follow. Between 1979 and 1981, Ministers seemed indifferent to a rapid and large appreciation in the pound which rendered at least 20 per cent. of our manufacturing capacity obsolete, drove up unemployment, exacerbated the seriousness of the recession and significantly tightened the monetary stance.

In early 1985, the dollar shot up like a rocket and the pound plummeted towards parity with it. Not even the most relaxed monetarists felt able to sit on their hands in those disturbing circumstances for the exchange rate and British interest rates were raised by four percentage points in as many weeks to prevent the pound falling further and weakening the monetary stance.

The moral of the tale is that monetary policy must have regard to significant movements in the exchange rate. Indeed, that is an understatement of what is required in the modern world because internal indicators of monetary

[Mr. Nigel Forman]

conditions, and hence future inflation, have been shown to have only limited utility. M0 is an accurate coincident indicator of monetary conditions, but a poor predicter of future inflation. Sterling M3 should have had a better record of prediction, but experience in the mid-1980s showed that it was not giving the correct signals. M4, sometimes known as broad money, probably provides the least unrealiable domestic indicator of monetary conditions, and hence future levels of inflation.

However, all these internal indicators of monetary conditions take insufficient account of changes in monetary velocity and especially of externally triggered economic developments such as changes in German interest rates or violent swings in the dollar, both of which can have a significant impact on monetary conditions in this country.

Any Government of this country, which is no more than a medium-ranking power in today's world, are obliged to run their monetary policy with more that one eye on external monetary conditions. The only reliable way to measure these and their impact on the economy is to look at the pound's performance in relation to a particular key currency of a basket of currencies.

It may be possible for great economic powers such as the United States, Japan or West Germany to run their monetary policies principally according to domestic conditions, but it has become effectively impossible, and hence most unwise, for Britain or France, South Korea or Taiwan, Australia or Canada to attempt to do so. We are forced to recognise the reality of our position. If we really want to defeat inflation—and we do—we have no alternative but to give considerable and perhaps overriding weight to an external standard for our monetary policy.

Before the first world war, this was provided by the gold standard and it was relatively easy for us to work within it because for much of that period we were the dominant economic power in the world and it suited us better than anyone else. Between the wars, there was no absolutely reliable monetary standard and leading currencies gyrated for a variety of reasons. A weakened Britain attempted heroically to go back on to the gold standard in 1925—at an overvalued parity—and was eventually obliged to break the link and devalue in 1931 at the time of the great depression.

From Bretton Woods in 1944 to the Smithsonian agreement in 1971, the world was effectively on a dollar standard and the regime of fixed dollar exchange rates provided the necessary signals and disciplines for periodic adjustments in British monetary policy. That period was brought to an end by the surge in United States inflation associated with the Vietnam war, which obliged the Americans to break the link between the dollar and gold, and by the emergence of other economic power centres in the world—notably West Germany and Japan—which began to create what Henry Kissinger described at the time as an emerging multi-polar world.

That is the world in which we have been living ever since—a world that is multi-polar, increasingly liberalised and economically interdependent, in which the turnover in foreign exchange dealings in one day on Wall street may be equivalent to three times the total foreign exchange reserves in this country. In a world subject to capital and currency movements on such a scale, the idea of achieving national monetary autonomy is no longer realistic, especially in a country of the economic weight of Britain today. It is not even completely possible for the economic super-powers. We should recognise that reality and apply its lessons to our policy.

We are left with three choices in the conduct of monetary policy. First, we can operate an ineffective, misleading and vulnerable monetary policy based on the best available indicators of internal monetary conditions —perhaps M0 and M4 together. Secondly, we can operate a more realistic but still vulnerable monetary policy based on a mixture of internal and external monetary indicators. In the process, however, we run the risk that our policy will be misread and misunderstood by the markets, thus forcing us to incur unnecessary extra costs in terms of short-term interest rates which are higher than they might otherwise have needed to be, and exchange and interest rate volatility greater than might otherwise have been the case.

The third, and most effective, choice is to opt for a framework capable of providing both a higher degree of certainty and a higher degree of financial confidence in the markets by joining the exchange rate mechanism at the earliest sensible date. In effect, that will mean putting ourselves and our domestic monetary policy on to an external deutschmark standard. That may be disagreeable for those who cling to anachronistic notions of national monetary autonomy, but our recent experience of having to maintain our interest rate differential with the Germans by raising our rate 1 per cent. when they raise theirs should have cured us of any lingering misconceptions on that score.

Even that course of action will be no panacea and may bring considerable difficulties for us, especially in the early stages after we lock ourselves into a fixed parity with the deutschmark. With French experience as the best evidence to go by, it may take between three and six years in the ERM for us to converge completely down to German inflation levels, and we may not even achieve that if we persist with the short-sighted industrial attitudes shown by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions. Initially, we would almost certainly have to pay the price of high interest rates and considerable interest rate volatility, but after a while the markets should settle down, confidence that we are in to stay should increase, and hence the interest rate premium and the inflation differential should gradually diminish.

Since all this could be a difficult political pill to swallow, the question of timing becomes important, as does the question of the best institutional arrangements to support it. With the next general election now probably delayed at least to the autumn of 1991, and perhaps even the spring of 1992, the best time to lock ourselves into the ERM would be either in the autumn of 1990—once French and Italian exchange controls have been fully removed and our own inflation rate has fallen closer to that of Germany —or in the first week immediately after the next general election.

If the latter choice seems politically preferable, it should be accompanied and supported by an unambiguous commitment in our next manifesto to establish the Bank of England on a new basis of strength and independence analagous to that of the Bundesbank or the Federal Reserve. That will give extra confidence to the markets and increase the credibility and, if necessary, the austerity of monetary policy in this country. I had meant to read a quotation from Mr. Poehl in my support, but I have not time to do so. This will also make it institutionally easier for Britain to co-operate in a future European system of central banks such as that proposed by stage 2 of the Delors plan for progress towards economic and monetary union.

These are large issues. The interaction of economic and European policy will probably be the most critical area of decision-making for the Government between now and the next general election, and probably well beyond that. Despite the temptation to follow the advice of many in this House by playing the nationalist card, it would be an historic mistake for the Government to do other than to follow through the European commitments that they have already made in the Single European Act and at the Madrid European Council. Let us therefore press ahead, as the Government and the party best equipped to defeat inflation, restore a competitive edge to our economy and lead Britain further towards its European destiny in the 1990s and beyond.

7.11 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): It is interesting that this debate has concentrated on the EMS and the exchange rate mechanism. That is appropriate because commitment to the ERM is a central part of the first stage. It is also interesting to look back at the conditions set out in 1978 by the Labour Government for membership of the EMS, two of which—and they are basic—have not yet been fulfilled.

There were eight conditions. The third was that the EMS

> "should provide a basis for improved economic growth and higher employment in the Community".

Since the system came into being on 1 April 1979, Europe has become both the high unemployment and the low growth black spot of the advanced industrial world. Between 1980, the first full year of operation, and 1988, manufacturing output in France grew by only 4 per cent. and in Italy by 8 per cent. Both countries were growing far more rapidly before they entered the exchange rate mechanism. Unemployment in both countries is now at record levels; that is not unconnected with the fact that they are members of the ERM.

The other condition that was not met was that the system

> "should impose obligations on its stronger members symmetrical with those falling on its weaker members".

As with Bretton Woods, it does not do that. West Germany is still running up a huge surplus and dominating the Common Market economically by keeping the mark deliberately undervalued to enhance its surplus in manufactured trade and its domination of the markets of other countries, all of which are in deficit to West Germany.

This is a real problem. The only way in which Europe can trade fairly is if the mark is revalued upwards—yet the exchange rate mechanism acts as a series of guy ropes using the other currencies to keep the deutschmark down. The system forces these currencies down to the unnaturally low level of inflation in West Germany. In that sense, it helps Germany to keep the deutschmark down so that Germany's manufacturing surplus can grow to the dominant level at which it now stands.

The system has ruined the Mitterrand attempt to recapture the French market; it ruined his expansion in 1981 when the French Government were forced to choose between membership of the exchange rate mechanism and sustaining their expansion. They chose Europe, and Delors went off to his reward in Brussels.

If, as the document on the evolutionary approach suggests, we join the ERM, we should issue another Green Paper to explain why the two unfulfilled conditions can now be dispensed with and why they are no longer relevant. I believe that they are still relevant.

My party stipulates that we shall enter the ERM on four conditions. I am happy with that—although I was not consulted—because those four conditions are unattainable, especially the one about a full and competitive exchange rate. What is a competitive exchange rate? The only possible definition is the exchange rate at which a country can balance its trade in conditions of full employment and a high and sustainable rate of growth. We are nowhere near that, and it is difficult to imagine the scale of the devaluation that would be necessary to bring us to that level of competitiveness. The pound is substantially overvalued in real terms against the deutschmark, even compared with 1986 levels. The deficit in manufactured trade is directly due to that over valuation.

This brings me to some of the more naive arguments for membership of the mechanism. They are advocated by the Democrats and the Confederation of British Industry in a united chorus. They say that the mechanism would help to bring inflation down. It will: it is easy to achieve nil inflation in a graveyard. The exchange rate mechanism has certainly been successful in giving France and Italy high levels of unemployment and low levels of inflation—that is its achievement.

The other argument advanced by this group is that industry wants a stable exchange rate because that would encourage trade. But we are a country in massive deficit. If the system encourages trade, it encourages those who import into this country to build up the deficit as much as it encourages those who export to whittle it down. If that is the benefit of stability, we shall suffer under it.

None of the studies carried out by the Federal Reserve or the Bank of England shows that such stability is necessary—fluctuations are no great barrier to trade. In a context of massive deficit it will be impossible to maintain any exchange rate at which we entered the ERM.

The central difficulty and the nub of the argument over the ERM is that it imposes on us—if we enter it—an externally determined exchange rate. That was the difficulty on which the Labour Government broke themselves in the 1960s, but with this difference: this determined exchange rate would be determined by competitors who have every interest in seeing the currency of this country overvalued because of the massive surpluses that they are running up in their trade with this country. That is the treadmill that will be imposed; we shall be back in the trap of the 1960s, only worse.

It is true, as hon. Members have said, that there are wild fluctuations, but it is also noticeable that they mainly affect the deregulated economies with strong financial sectors —the United States and Great Britain, which are the only two countries to have experienced the wild overshoots that have been so detrimental economically. Over the long term, we can still affect and manage the exchange rate largely through interest rates. That is what the

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Government have done. They have done so for the wrong purposes, keeping interest rates too high and thereby greatly overvaluing our currency. That is folly, but it proves that we can manage and use the exchange rate for national purposes. It would be central to the policy of any Labour Government whom I would want to see in power to use the exchange rate for the purposes of the people —for expansion and growth, to rebuild the manufacturing base of this country.

We are at a turning point. The economy has fundamental problems; it is in comparative decline and it has just wasted the great opportunity that oil gave us to expand our industrial base, which is now too shrunken and weak to fulfil these purposes for the people—providing growth and jobs and generating the surplus that we need for our well-being. If we now go further and faster into an open market that weakens weakness and strengthens strength, leading to the phenomenen of peripheral decline —draining development from the periphery to the centres of population and wealth—we compound our problem. If we also accept monetary union on top we compound the problem of peripheral decline even more for then a balance of payments problem becomes a regional problem.

This is the danger, and we are now at a time of choice. Either we act for ourselves using the traditional weapons of the exchange rate, interest rates, control of credit and tax policy to rebuild our industrial base, or we throw ourselves on the mercy of Europe. That requires us to demand as a weaker element in that relationship ever stronger central institutions to help us even more. That is implicit in the commitment to allow the EC to redistribute in the way that the national state redistributes in a national economy. In other words, if we pursue this path, we shall become dependent, especially on West Germany. Is West Germany's record of generosity such as to encourage the belief that it will support us in that situation, or will it look, as it must, towards reconstruction in eastern Europe? That is the choice. The Opposition have no alternative and certainly I have no alternative but to choose our own weapons for our own purposes for building up our own strong economy.

7.20 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): It is a great privilege for me to speak after my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), who made a first-class contribution to this important debate. If one of the possibilities that emerges as a result of the unfortunate events of the last week or two is that my hon. Friend is free to speak on economic issues, the House will be better for it.

We are having two debates—one about the relatively short-term policy impact of the conditions on which we join the exchange rate mechanism, there no longer being any doubt by the Government that we shall join, and the second about the longer-term problems of how the consequences of the development of the exchange rate mechanism would work out in terms of economic and monetary union. Britain has been committed to economic and monetary union for a long time, and that was reinforced by the Single European Act. The definition of how that should be shaped was never made crystal clear until it came to the Delors programme. I shall return to that.

In the short time that is available it is difficult to rehearse all the arguments that led me to conclude that it would be better for this country and for sterling to join the ERM sooner rather than later. The arguments advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington were clear and concise. However, it is important that if we regard exchange rates as an important part of economic policy, although not the most important part, it is better to look upon them in the context of a co-operation agreement with our major trading partners rather than to try to continue treating them in isolation. For that reason I do not agree with some of the arguments of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell).

The protection that will be provided for stability within the exchange rate mechanism, the benefit of the collective action of reserves, can have a major beneficial impact and also give the clear sign that there is a policy of stability that will require strict monetary discipline in this country rather than an excuse to avoid it. That seems to be a double advantage. The benefit, of course, would be increased because, as soon as our rate of inflation was declining, we would be more able to manage the problems of our interest rates on the downward side if we were part of the exchange rate mechanism at that stage.

There is no questioning the clear conditions that were laid down at the Madrid summit about our entry. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his speech two days go, it would not make sense either for this country or for the members of the exchange rate mechanism for us to join if the conditions were not being met. Therefore, I fully endorse the reality that we must make sure that the conditions are adhered to.

As regards timing, we need to look closely at exactly what is happening to those conditions and keep them under supervision. We can leave aside for the moment the prospect of a declining rate of inflation in Britain and the rate to which it will decline. We must not assume that the member countries of the Community are static. For example, the French have gone a long way down the track of removing their exchange controls and liberalising their currency movements. There remains a problem for individuals who wish to have foreign bank accounts or hold foreign exchange in France. But as any French Minister will confirm, France has already removed most of its controls and yet that has not had a destabilising effect on the exchange rate mechanism.

It is most unlikely that the Italians will fail to reach their target, despite the problems that anyone who looks at the Italian economy will understand. Politics comes into this, because the Italians will hold the presidency of the European Community in the second half of next year and 1 July is the target date for the removal of exchange controls. That may be when the intergovernmental conference is held, should one be called.

It is possible to say that by July 1990 there will be no exchange controls in countries which represent 80 per cent. of the Community's output. That is a significant and important factor. The timing must also take politics into account. The highly desirable achievement of the conclusion or a move to the conclusion of the internal market could well be speeded up if our colleagues understood that joining the exchange rate mechanism was part of a political trade-off. That needs to be kept in mind, because it is in Britain's interests that the internal market should be realised. That implies that we must support the Commission when it wishes to take tough powers to enforce the deregulation of the European Community. That applies particularly to Sir Leon Brittan, the Commissioner responsible for competition policy and for removing state subsidies in countries which still practise it to an alarming extent. We should bear those factors in mind, because occasionally statements are made which appear to give the contrary view of our attitude to the Commission.

I shall now deal with economic and monetary union. It is not at all inconsistent for me to have stated clearly that I believe that we should join the exchange rate mechanism earlier rather than later and then to say that I utterly reject stages 2 and 3 of the Delors plan. They seem to be reminiscent of the constitutional discussions that are quite popular in France, where people spend much time trying to set up an edifice in order to solve a small problem. It seems that that is exactly what is happening in stages 2 and 3 of Delors. It is an unacceptable transfer of sovereignty to somewhere. I do not like the word "sovereignty". Let us say influence, power and decision-making being transferred somewhere with no provision for democratic accountability. Many of the measures relating to whether countries should be allowed budgetary and fiscal control seem to be meddling of the worst sort. What is worse—this is where we accord with the Bundesbank and the advisers to the Ministry of Economic Affairs in Germany—is that it does not guarantee the one thing that is very important in the whole process—sound money.

There is no guarantee that stages 2 and 3 of the Delors plan will ensure the one thing which will come out of the exchange rate mechanism, which is that we shall be linked to a sound monetary policy and the anchor currency, the deutschmark. The Bundesbank is worried about that. It has made it clear that it does not wish to see the move from the current system, where it calls the shots with a strong anti-inflationary policy, to something that is amorphous and in which no clear ground rules are laid down. Therefore, it must be clearly rejected.

I welcome as a major contribution to the debate the Government paper "An Evolutionary Approach to Economic and Monetary Union". The evolutionary approach must make sense because we are moving into an unknown area. It is impossible for us to try to invent institutions in the hope that the path that the process is taking will meet them at the right time and in the right place. That could well not happen and, as I said earlier, it could undermine the whole exercise. I am delighted that it is called "An Evolutionary Approach to Economic and Monetary Union" because there is an occasional thought that the Government might wish to keep resubstituting the word "co-operation" for the word "union". That is a significant point, because we have now to show our Community partners that our ideas are the best way to achieve in a much more effective manner what they have already decided that they want to achieve and that therefore they are not going back on their political commitments towards the realisation of economic and monetary union.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury to make sure that we develop allies among the members of the European Community who think in a similar way. As has been pointed out, there is often a tactical difference because we go in making our objections well known when it is clear that many other members of the EC have profound worries about what the Delors report has done. We must realise that our job is to get a lot of them on our side so that we can have a great influence on any outcome of calling an intergovernmental conference. A block of 11 against us on the continent, pursuing a different economic and monetary union, would be a grave disadvantage to us. Therefore, I urge the Government to make their proposals with great energy and to win friends for our cause.

7.30 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): This is a political debate, and not an economic seminar in which people discuss inflation rates and money supply. We are talking about the future of Britain and of Europe. There are interesting questions about the rapidly changing situations. We are not discussing the Europeans against the anti-Europeans. We are all European. History and geography decided that. How do we want to see this rapidly changing continent develop? We are not discussing nationalism against internationalism, because nobody believes that one country can isolate itself from what happens in the world. We are discussing whether we should be free to respond to what is happening in other parts of the world or whether we are to be told by others how we ought to respond. We are not discussing the past versus the future, because the founders of the treaty of Rome have been wholly overtaken by the events in eastern Europe. Furthermore, this is not a party battle, as is evident from the variety of opinions expressed. We are discussing the guiding principles on which we should proceed.

The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) spoke as if the purity and clarity of the market were the beginning and the end, and that if one had a pure and clear market one had solved one's problems. Listening to him, I wondered how many other guiding principles we had had in our history. When Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror tried to get us into the Common Market, separated by 1,000 years, their ideas were either to uphold the Roman empire or to uphold the glory of Normandy. I suppose that later, when the crusades were conducted by Richard Coeur de Lion, it was the Christian versus the infidels. Then there were the mercantilists, who said that if one could get all the money one would have the world. They set up the board of trade, with Mr. Speaker on it. I do not think that a Speaker has been on it for 100 years. Then there were the imperialists, who said that it was all about the empire; then it was all about free trade; and then it was about the gold standard. One has to decide what one thinks life is all about before one can decide what structures one wants.

I do not believe that a pure and open market is what life is about. Nor do I believe that those who struggled hard to elect Members of Parliament to come here think that that is what it is all about either, or they would have taken shares in small companies, attended annual meetings, and hoped that they would have had some influence via the financial market.

Furthermore, we are discussing the constitution under which we are governed. The French had a revolution on the basis of "liberty, equality and fraternity". The Americans, a year or two later, had one based on "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". We are told that it is about the "free movement of capital and labour" and we must sacrifice everything else to that. I have heard of people going to the stake for their belief in liberty, but I

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have never heard of somebody going to the stake because he took a different view of the public sector borrowing requirement. That is not what life is about. That is not what motivates people, so let us cut some of that out of the debate and have a real discussion.

Since the Common Market was set up after the war, for a variety of reasons, there has been an inexorable drift towards greater central control. We debated the EEC in the House, and I participated in the debate from the Front Bench in 1971. I played some part in the referendum, which decided the matter publicly. The Prime Minister went along with British membership. She was a member of the Cabinet that signed the treaty of assession. In 1985 she signed the 1992 agreement and she has given assurances in Madrid, which, however one interprets them, show that it is at least the public posture of the Government to go in. I think that she will be driven into the ERM mighty quick, for one reason. The power of capital is so great that they will not accept a Prime Minister, even an elevated Prime Minister, who stands against what they demand.

I remember the Prime Minister once making a speech from the Front Bench in which she said that she would not pay our contribution. That was the boldest stance on Europe that I have ever heard anybody make, from either Front Bench, and within a week or two it had changed. In the latest Cabinet that she has appointed, the majority are in favour of joining the ERM, and perhaps even the economic and monetary union. With pressures, we shall see her change. We are told that the lady is not for turning, but perhaps she is for wriggling. As the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said, within a few months, we shall be in the ERM.

Some intend to go in for a full political union, but I have detected in the debate a sort of turning of the tide. I do not know how to describe it, but I think that the last federal enthusiasts have begun to get themselves out from under. I detected in the speech of the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, whose views are important, a certain healthy caution. I agree strongly with what my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said about the nationalisation of the Bank of England, and he sounded a note of caution about it. We are beginning to recognise that the changes in the world are not in the direction of bigger and better, and are turning against an idea that was popular when I was Minister of Technology 20 years ago. It was then that, if one merged everything in, the end result would be stronger. We are moving in the opposite direction.

The Commission and the organisation in Brussels are centralised, bureaucratic and secretive. I remember, during the time of my presidency of the Energy Council, suggesting that Ministers met in public. My right hon. and learned Friend was a Minister in the Department of Energy then. The last thing that they wanted was anyone to know what they said in the privacy of the Council of Ministers. They wanted to give things away in the Council of Ministers and then give press conferences to say how marvellous they had been upholding their national interests.

Nobody has yet mentioned that the Federal Republic of Germany is the one country that could leave the Common Market the day that German reunification occurs. The Federal Republic has always made it a condition that they would never sign a treaty that bound a united Germany, which it did not then have. The bargaining power of Germany is not the Bundesbank or the strength of the deutschmark; it is the power of Germany to dictate the future of Europe by deciding whether to stay in the EEC or move in another direction.

I strongly welcome the changes in eastern Europe. But does anybody think that the development of democracy and the desire for representative Government instead of the dictatorship of proletariat would be replaced by an enthusiasm for the dictatorship of Jacques Delors or of the Bundesbank? Does anybody think that the market place, with its special Brussels bureaucracy, will look better than Gosplan, which they are just getting rid of? Does anyone think that the United States would agree to be governed by 15 commissioners instead of a president whom the people elect? Does anyone think that the structure of the EEC has any future? Of course it has not. It is in retreat because it is out of date and meets neither our interests nor the interests of Europe.

The Prime Minister has set down funny conditions for going into the ERM, with which I do not agree. I do not agree with the Prime Minister on many things. She says that if the power of the market were supreme, she would go in, if only the other member states would give up their democratic safeguards and reservations. That would mean that the market would be in charge, instead of Delors. I do not believe that bankers should run this country, because I am a democrat and believe that people should be in power through election. The day that bankers are elected, I shall look on them with greater favour.

I do not agree with the assessment made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East of the policy review. I will try to read what was said, but I have left my specs somewhere.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Have mine.

Mr. Benn: I do not know whether they would help much, but I will try. I suppose that, now there is a charge for eye tests, we shall all be sharing specs soon. Yes, I can read well. The policy review says:

> "We believe that the European Monetary System, as at present constituted, suffers from too great an emphasis on deflationary measures as a means of achieving monetary targets and that it imposes obligations which are not symmetrical. We oppose moves towards a European Monetary Union which would further impede progress in this area."

That is followed by other references to the European exchange rate mechanism.

The problem that I have with my right hon. and learned Friend is this: we have had one Chancellor of the Exchequer resign and I do not want my right hon. and learned Friend to resign before he assumes that office. I think that the incoming Labour Government will find that they are in office before 1992. The Prime Minister will become the Countess of Dulwich living in Finchley or the Countess of Finchley living in Dulwich. There will, however, be a change of Government, and the incoming Labour Government will be faced with a massive deficit, high inflation, high unemployment, weak industry and a weak pound that is under pressure.

My right hon. and learned Friend is wrong in supposing that the ERM will offer full protection and that confidence will return. Instead, pressure will be institutionalised and legalised, and he and the other members of the next

Labour Government will have to live with it in the same way as the IMF made the previous Labour Government live with it, and that cost us the general election in 1979.

The instruments that we shall need will be wide-ranging, and I do not suppose that Conservative Members will agree with them. We shall need exchange rate control, exchange control, industrial policy, public investment and perhaps import controls. We shall have to use the Bank of England and interest rates, and that will be our right, if a Labour Government are elected. If the Conservative party does not like that, let it defeat us. No one can say that, because a deal has been done with Mr. Delors, a Labour Government must abide by it.

The only answers to Britain's problems lie in Britain. We cannot get Delors to give us a social charter. We shall have to fight for that ourselves. We cannot get the Prince of Wales to get us better buildings: we shall have to fight for decent architecture. We cannot rely on proportional representation to defeat the Prime Minister: we shall have to win a parliamentary majority. Until the Members of this place recognise that responsibility for change and the future of Britain lies with those who elect them, which is why we must speak the truth to them, we shall continue pursuing the chimera of economic and monetary union and a federal Europe, and we might on that exceed our time limit.

7.42 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): We have heard a most beguiling speech from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I thought I heard the right hon. Gentleman speaking with the same enthusiasm, nay passion, that we hear from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on similar topics when she has appeared on television without a script. We may find that the right hon. Gentleman has more in common with my right hon. Friend than he would like to think.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield that in Britain there is not the slightest desire for economic and monetary union with other countries in the European Community, apart from a few harmless eccentrics such as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). In general, Britain is entirely opposed to Mr. Delors's proposal. I suppose, however, that there is one compelling reason for at least going so far as to accept stage 1 of the proposal, and that is the threat of a Labour Government. Labour Governments have always needed external disciplines to control the domestic money supply. That benevolent function was provided by the gnomes of Zurich in the mid-1960s and by the IMF in the mid-1970s. It usually takes about two or three years for the bailiffs to be called in. At the end of the day they have had to do roughly what has been proposed by means of the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS.

I do not believe that the Labour party has a serious policy on the EMS. I am sorry that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has left the Chamber temporarily because I am about to refer to my attempts to intervene in his speech. I was unable to intervene because he has taken to not to allowing me to do so. He is not as amiable to me in the Chamber, unfortunately, as he is in the Tea Room. I wanted to ask him how he can reject stages 2 and 3 of the Delors plan, on the basis that they would give power ultimately to the Bundesbank, which would be outside Britain's economic policy, and yet accept stage 1. The ERM is effectively a deutschmark zone. It is because of the stability that is provided by the Bundesbank, which drags along all the other currencies in its wake, that the economic sovereignty of Britain would be prejudiced by the ERM.

Policy in the Labour party is usually made in unscripted interviews with the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who is then swiftly contradicted by the Leader of the Opposition. In this case, however, even that degree of policy making has not been adopted by the Labour party. It has produced a remarkable set of conditions for entry into the ERM, and I think that we should find that it would be impossible for them to be met.

It is extraordinary that the Opposition say that the essential element in their negotiations to join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS would be an agreement by all the other members to change the most essential feature of the arrangements. which is the extent to which the control of the ERM bears down upon inflation and monetary control within the Community. It is moonshine to believe that the other member states, especially Germany, will be ready to negotiate away the one redeeming feature of the system. I do not believe that the Opposition's policy is a serious one.

I welcome the adoption by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of a policy of competing currencies. As with so many of the successful policies of the Government, it was first foreshadowed in a No Turning Back Group pamphlet entitled "Europe Onwards from Bruges", which was published in April. I am sure that once the good sense of that pamphlet sinks in, it will be met with a great deal more support than it received initially.

I believe that it is dangerous for us to get mixed up once again with the world of rigged exchange rates. It has produced tremendous problems for us in the past three or four years. We shall be presented with many more problems if ultimately we enmesh ourselves in it permanently. The inflationary stimulus which we have suffered over the past three or four years derives from the G5 and G7 meetings at the Plaza and the Louvre, which were designed to attempt to massage downwards the value of the dollar.

Our temporary, unscripted and unannounced membership of the EMS in 1987 until the early part of 1988 was responsible for exacerbating and prolonging the inflation that we have suffered. A requirement of maintaining a certain value of the deutschmark was that we should intervene massively in the foreign exchange markets to hold down the value of the pound, thus boosting enormously broad money measures. It was necessary for us sharply to reduce interest rates, and that compounded the inflationary stimulus which was present. That was a catastrophic development which produced ultimately the political turmoil which we have suffered over the past few days. It is a pity that we have not learnt fully from the experience of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the late 1970s. The right hon. Gentleman learned that it is impossible simultaneously to pursue monetary and exchange rate targets, except in limited circumstances.

I believe that we have a choice. We can have either a stable exchange rate and volatility in our domestic economy or a flexible exchange rate and reasonable stability in our domestic economy. There is a distinct choice, and I think that the conditions that the Government have placed upon our entry into the exchange

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rate mechanism will be sufficient to determine that we shall never enter it. If we were to enter it, however, many of the difficulties that we have experienced in recent months would become permanent features of our political and economic system until the system itself broke down.

I believe that that will happen when the other countries in the Community abolish their exchange rate mechanisms. Those exchange controls have managed to reconcile the conflicting pressures which we, who have not had exchange controls over the past couple of years, have been unable to reconcile, but I am not in favour of the restoration of exchange controls. I consider that their abolition was the most significant act for which the Government have been responsible over the past 10 years, and it has been beneficial in the main.

I am astonished that Opposition Members are nostalgic for all the economic difficulties from which their Administrations have suffered. If anyone wants an object lesson in the troubles that those difficulties would bring in their wake, let him read the autobiography of Harold Wilson, as he then was, and the distinguished memoirs that have recently been published by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East. I know that autobiographies more properly should be shelved under fiction, but in the memoirs of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, as he now is—I have in mind pages 447-61 on the 1964-70 Labour Government—there are wonderful passages about the difficulties and complications that were imposed upon that Government because of their absurd fixation in keeping the pound in a fixed relationship with the dollar. Paradoxically, the attempt to maintain a stable exchange rate in a world that is anything but stable ultimately produces an instability the opposite of that which it is desired to achieve.

I am sorry that eminent gentlemen such as the Governor of the Bank of England should seek to promote the argument that if we do not join the EMS now, whatever the cost it might impose on the British economy, Britain, in some mysterious way, would lose influence in the Community, or within the world, or within the financial world generally. I have never heard such arrant nonsense in my life. As if Britain's importance depended in any way on grand meetings of bureaucrats, bankers and politicians. The real strength of a country depends on what its people produce and consume and their economic strength in relation to others.

The City's success would not in any way be compromised by our failure to be part of the EMS. After all, the City has gone from strength to strength in the past 40 or 50 years, particularly since Britain deregulated its financial markets, although we have only been a member of the European currency rigging mechanism for a small portion of that time.

That opinion ignores the important trend in recent years towards the increasing internationalisation of business and decision taking and the increasing internationalisation of capital. As markets are freed up and regulations are done away with around the world, capital is footloose and fancy free, and that is one reason why, above all, artificial mechanisms designed by politicians and bureaucrats to attempt to control what are, in effect, uncontrollable amounts, because the official reserves with which one tries to do that are far too small in relation to the amounts of money that are flowing around the world, are ultimately doomed to failure.

London will remain a favoured centre for finance and, notwithstanding our staying out of the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system, we shall prosper as a financial centre, and continue to prosper because of the inherent abilities and strengths of the London market.

I recommend that my right hon. and hon. Friends should continue with a policy which will ultimately preserve Britain's economic and financial sovereignty and political sovereignty. It is a mistake to believe that the argument ends here. As the right hon. Member for Chesterfield pointed out, this is the beginning of another chapter in the long saga of political control and integration in the EEC.

I could not support a policy whereby we exported the political control of our social policies to Brussels and our financial policies to Bonn or Frankfurt. Therefore, in supporting the policy of my right hon. Friends in general, I counsel them to be even more cautious——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but I must interrupt the hon. Gentleman because he has overrun his time.

7.52 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): With support like that, the Government hardly need opponents.

Two strange and conflicting claims have been made during the debate. One is that a consensus is emerging during the debate which demonstrates widespread support for membership and full participation in the EC. The other is that a consensus is emerging on the range of conditions which must precede any further steps in that direction. They cannot both be true and I fear that the latter rather than the former is true of those present, but that neither accurately reflects opinion in Britain.

What seems to be emerging is an ever-larger scaffolding of conditions upon which a wide variety of people can stand—the Prime Minister's conditions, which are clearly interpreted by the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) on the one hand, just as the Leader of the Opposition's conditions are interpreted by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), on the other hand, as making it quite clear that we shall not enter the EMS. That is the interpretation that they each place on the conditions advanced by their respective party leaders, each of which claims to be in favour of our entering the ERM. What a confusion is there here. Every time the debate continues, the scaffolding of conditions is further extended. In particular, every time the Prime Minister opens her mouth, still further conditions and variants on conditions pour forth.

On the Government Benches there is also confusion on the interesting subsidiary debate which was dramatically raised by the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), in his intervention on Tuesday, about the independence of the central bank. A number of Conservative Members share my interest in that idea and my belief that the lack of independence of Britain's central bank is a weakness in our tackling of inflation.

One of the merits of a European central banking system which enjoys some political independence is that it could provide an anti-inflationary mechanism which was not so subject to the short-term whims of politicians as elections approached. There is considerable merit in that. Nor is it a constitutional abnormality or enormity to have mechanisms which are in part for a time removed from immediate political influence. The judiciary has precisely that position. Many other aspects of the constitutions of other member countries provide some measure of temporary detachment from the political process, and for good reason.

The Government have added further to the confusion in their own ranks and elsewhere by producing the extraordinary paper that appeared in the Vote Office today, the title of which I do not disagree with at all, "An Evolutionary Approach to Economic and Monetary Union." That sounds like a fine and generous principle, but the proposal that is put forward is a recipe for the deutschmark to be the predominant and successful competing currency and for the Bundesbank to be Europe's central bank. That does not seem to make a great deal of sense if the objective is that we should be full participants in European monetary union.

I favour a European central banking system somewhat on the lines of that proposed by Delors in the belief that we will be full participants in it. Indeed, it should be based in London. That must be the most natural place for a European central bank since that is where banking expertise has been built up over the years. But it will not be if, by open competition, we allow the deutschmark to become the European currency and the Bundesbank to be, in effect, Europe's central bank.

The confusion is no less on the Labour Benches. One has but to read the comments of various Opposition Members who have spoken today, or even Members of the shadow Cabinet such as the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who has made no secret of his dislike for the EMS and his much greater dislike for European monetary union of any kind.

I understand that an interesting debate on the subject is going on in the Labour party, but that it has had to be adjourned uncompleted because so many people wished to speak. It will be a long time before we find out what we did not find out today, which is whether the Labour party has any policy on European monetary union other than hostility to it. We had a repeat of the definition of Labour's current policy on the exchange rate mechanism—not much supported by Opposition Back Benchers—but we had no clear statement of Labour's position on European monetary union.

That was the case when my party argued in this Chamber two and a half years ago that we should be working towards European monetary union. That is attended with as much hostility on the Labour Benches now as it was then, whatever may be said by the Front-Bench spokesman.

The key advantages that we must keep in our minds are surely the stable framework which can be provided for our exchange rate by membership of the ERM, the anti-inflation capacity of that mechanism, the removal of transaction costs which could be achieved by British business if we were participants in that mechanism, the role that London could have in a developing European central banking system and the need for Britain to be in the lead in a process which will take place whether we take part in it or not—let there be no doubt about that.

It does not follow from what I have said that I have to agree with every word written in the Delors report. It would be difficult to do so, because the Delors report went beyond the objective of monetary union into other areas. As Sam Brittan rather vividly put it, they were looking in a dark room for a black cat that was not there, as they searched for other dimensions of economic policy on which union could be achieved. That is why the Delors report went wrong in areas of fiscal harmonisation which are not technically necessary to monetary union, are not of practical advantage in securing it and which are likely greatly to increase the unpopularity of any other moves that we are trying to make in Europe.

Control at European level of national budgets has no reasonable basis in the argument for monetary union. As the Chancellor effectively argued before the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, it is not necessary to have control of national budgets in order to operate monetary union any more than it is necessary to have federal control in the United States of the budgets of the states of the Union. Nor is it necessary to have the control of local government budgets that the British Government insist upon.

I was surprised that the Chancellor used that argument, but he was right to do so because such control over the budgets of member countries is not necessary for monetary union. It is necessary only to ensure that large deficits cannot be financed by monetary means, which will not be possible once monetary union has been achieved. In the transitional stage of the EMS some limit must be placed on budgets but under European monetary union it will not be possible to finance large deficits by monetary means.

Lurking behind all this is the Prime Minister's prejudice, which is shared by other Conservative Members. Even the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who has so profoundly disagreed with the Prime Minister so many times, shares her hostility to any loss of sovereignty or any loss of power to make decisions, many of which are already being made elsewhere. The sovereignty that some Conservative Members are trying to safeguard and defend—it is admitted more openly by Labour Members, because they know what they are after and are prepared to admit it —is the ability to devalue the currency and to print more money. The Prime Minister has rightly criticised previous Governments for doing that, so why is she so desperate to safeguard it?

As with other subjects, I find it difficult to understand how the Prime Minister can turn her dislike of losing power into something that is more important than the objectives about which she is supposed to believe deeply. Hon. Members who have expressed doubts and tried to introduce fresh conditions want to protect the right of the British Government to devalue our currency and print more money. We could usefully accept curtailment of those freedoms in order to achieve stable currency, defeat inflation and provide a framework in which Britain can prosper.

8.1 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I am very much in agreement with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). I congratulate the Government on arranging this debate and on producing a document that we can consider.

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

The debate is thought-provoking if overdue. It is fortunate that it is on the Adjournment of the House, which is probably better than a substantive motion. It is, however, unfortunate that it did not take place before Madrid, as the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee pointed out, but at least it is happening before further discussions take place about European monetary union post-Delors part 1.

My credentials are that I am, and have been throughout my 15 years in the House, a committed European. Many people say they are committed Europeans, and the sentiments behind the statement are understood. Both parties have been laggards in Government and have not realised the full potential of our membership over the years. As the past week has progressed, and as this debate has progressed, I have judged the tenor and content of speeches by whether hon. Members are committed to achieving the aspirations that were set out when we joined the Common Market. These were to create for our people more prosperity, more opportunity, more trade, more stability and more security for the future. On the other hand, would they prefer Britain to be a fringe member? We can all read the coded messages in these speeches, which fall into one camp or the other.

I know where I stand, and I know where I stood when I became a Member of Parliament. When the European monetary system was established, I argued that we should become a full member. In 1978, with my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley), I tabled an early-day motion which said:

> "That this House believes that the creation of a European Monetary System could do much to increase the prosperity and political stability of Europe; and, recalling the failure of Great Britain to join the EEC in good time, and the problems that have resulted, urges Her Majesty's Government to make every effort to work out with our EEC partners an acceptable system of monetary co-operation"

That was 11 years ago, and I was encouraged to receive signatures of support from the chairman of the Conservative party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), the Government Chief Whip, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), the Secretary of State for Energy, my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham), the Secretary of State for Scotland, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), who is chairman of the Conservative party finance committee, many past and present Ministers and many Conservative Back Benchers. I hope that this will bolster the determination of four or more senior Cabinet Ministers to seek full membership of the EMS sooner rather than later. What was right then is even more right now. We have lost out by not being full members of the EMS in the past, and we should at the earliest opportunity become full members.

Much of the debate has revolved around conditionality. I have been concerned at how the goal posts seem to have been moved by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others, in an apparent attempt to put off the day when Britain becomes a full member of the EMS. I may be wrong, but I believe that the hope is that, following the removal of remaining exchange controls in France and Italy, such will be the pressure on the EMS that it will break apart. They will then be able to throw up their hands and say, "It was an untenable system and we should not have joined it." The system would be much more resilient if we were members of it now. How much more likely it would be to continue and to remain durable after the removal of exchange controls if Britain was playing its part now. Why are we not leaders within the system? Why are we not playing our co-operative part within the exchange mechanism to bring about that stability?

The EMS is not just a political argument within this place and Europe. It has economic and financial consequences for our constituents and for the businesses in the areas that we represent. We are paying significantly more in interest rates than we need to because we are not a member of the EMS and a full member of the ERM. In my judgment, that is currently costing us at least 2·5 per cent. more in interest rates. If we were members, such would be the confidence of the international financial community in the currency of Britain that we would not alone have to support our exchange rate by massively high rates of interest.

I sometimes feel that those who criticise and oppose the system do not understand its mechanics. They do not fully appreciate that the parameters within which currencies are allowed to move against each other have behind them a co-operative effort of central banks in Europe. There is not just one central bank trying to support its own currency in the foreign exchange markets—as the Bank of England has been doing over the past week at massive cost to our foreign reserves—but the Bundesbank, the French banks and other European banks combine to stabilise currencies within the ERM. If there is a deviation, the knowledge of that intervention is such as to inspire confidence and not make the fluctuations so great. It is a self-fulfilling mechanism, and the history and experience of other members of the ERM in the past 10 years is that it has proved to work. Their interest and inflation rates are significantly lower than ours.

The Prime Minister and others may say, "We have a massive trade deficit, which is why we must have high interest rates. Our interest rate policy may be affected by immediate membership."

However, we have incurred that massive trade deficit when we have not been members of the EMS. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), who made a courageous and forthright speech, I believe that we have much more to gain than to lose from subscribing to the best prudential practices of the central banks in Europe. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said, why are we so suspicious of joining a system which will make the management of our monetary aggregates and the exchange rate of our currency less susceptible to political opportunism? As an election comes closer, the temptation for Government manipulation becomes more likely. For all those reasons, we have much more to gain than to lose by becoming a member, not tomorrow, not today, but if possible yesterday.

We should toss aside this conditionality and take a bold step forward. If we act immediately and have courage and conviction in our actions, we can carry people with us. If we show that we are determined to make it work, we can make it work. If we dither and wait until every condition is met, we will never join.

Is Government policy really evolution towards European monetary union, or is it a never-never approach? I have the highest regard for and faith in the integrity of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury. I ask them to get on with the job and to take the message, which is evident from the tenor of the debate, that it is in the interests of the people of this country to join the exchange rate mechanism sooner rather than later. We want to see political courage exercised. If the Government do that, they will be vindicated by the result at the next general election and they will have made the most decisive contribution yet to full participation in the European Community, bringing about long overdue financial rewards in terms of the standard of living for all those whom we represent.

8.10 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) urged us to join the exchange rate mechanism now. He also remarked, appositely, that this is a debate on an Adjournment motion. I refer to that matter as Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation, which recommended a debate on the Delors report as long ago as 10 May 1989 because we knew that the decisions made at Madrid would be important. As we were charged by the House to recommend debates of such importance, we thought that we would get one, but the resolution of 30 October 1980, which binds the procedures of the Committee, and the Government, referred to "any proposal" for European legislation. The Government did not believe that the Delors report fell into that category. They said, "No, it was a recommendation for future legislation, which we can debate later." I believe that that is something of a get-out and a tautology, and so did the Committee.

In paragraph 16 of our full report on the Madrid summit—HC 15-xxxiii—which was published during the recess and which I commend to the House, we unanimously said:

> "The Committee considers that the House could reasonably have expected to have had an opportunity to express its view on the principles involved before a decision of such importance was taken by the European Council. It considers that the Government's failure to meet this expectation was contrary to the spirit of the 30 October 1980 Resolution. As a result, the House will, in practice, simply be left with exercising the subsidiary role of influencing the details of the relevant implementing proposals for Stage 1 of economic and monetary union. In the light of the exchange of correspondence between the Chairman of the Committee and the Leader of the House on the timing of debates in circumstances such as arise in this case, the Committee looks to the Government to ensure both that there is no repetition of this failure in similar circumstances in the future and that, in any event, the House is given an opportunity to consider any proposals for further steps in relation to economic and monetary union well before any decisions are taken as regards their nature and timing."

As the hon. Member for Chichester said, today's debate is not on a substantive motion. It is good sometimes to have an all-round debate on a matter such as this, but I hope as a parliamentarian that at some stage there is a substantive motion and that the opinion of the House is somehow defined, even if on a Division. If that does not happen, all our talk about scrutiny and the input of the House of Commons will be as naught. The debate should have been held before Madrid. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee said so, too. The Government said no. We look forward to future debates of this type.

I turn to some more personal views. It seems to me —this has been echoed in the debate—that the function of the ERM can be twofold. It may be a bridge towards advance to EMU. If it gets that far, can European parliamentary union be far behind? They are twin concepts which cannot be separated. It may be being used as a moat to prevent the ERM from advancing beyond that stage. I suspect that many of the conditions that the Government have laid down are to that end. I have no objection to these safeguards which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) outlined and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) referred. I disagree with what the Chancellor said. I do not think that there is a universal commitment in the House to the objective of economic and monetary union. However, as the Select Committee was told when meeting the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude), in legal terms we were probably committed from 1972 and the White Paper.

I was sorry that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) did not give way to me, especially as his remarks were made before 7 o'clock and he had the time to do so. He said that movement towards a united states of Europe was not possible and referred by analogy to the United States of America. The House had better come to terms with one major and important matter: the European Community is a unique constitutional creation. The evidence shows it to be federal in the taking of its powers but unitary in exercising them. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has pointed out, the states of the United States have their own important and unique financial powers, whereas I do not think that the European Community—because of its constitution and the institutions that form its core—would allow member states to exercise such powers.

Economic union, as distinct from monetary union, means unity of legislation, monetary policy and taxes. That is why Delors referred to it. It means that there is a unitary system of economic policy. The United States does not have that, nor does any federal system where the states have their own money-raising powers and are not significantly controlled centrally. Unless people, including senior spokesmen such as the right hon. Member for Devonport, come to grips with that, we will be misleading ourselves. Some people say, "I do not believe that the treaty of Rome leads in that direction," and of course they are right. It leads in the direction of a unitary state with unitary institutions.

The path to those unitary institutions is full of peril for the House. It is perilous in terms of what my hon. Friends wish to do for our nation. Clearly it is splitting the Conservative party. The idea has also diminished debate in this place. If the proposals from Madrid were clearer and did not pose that threat, we would have debated them before Madrid and before today.

8.18 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said that he was speaking in a personal capacity, but the negative, even hostile, attitude to the European Community, which he displayed with admirable consistency, is closer to the centre of gravity of most members of the Labour party than the views that we heard from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I will not pursue that negative role but will turn to the broader issues.

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

As the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said in a noteworthy contribution, this is a very important debate. It will be as important as any we have this side of the next general election. The debate is not only about the technicalities of exchange rate policy or even the broader issue of economic management. During the past seven days, debate has arisen about the attitudes of the Government and the Conservative party towards the European Community. The events of the past seven days and, in particular, the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) in the debate on Tuesday have put the issue of Europe firmly on the public and parliamentary agendas, and it is right that that should be so. Our attitude towards Europe is of overwhelming importance to the future of the country and of the people whom we represent.

It is strange that the Conservative party should be debating its attitude towards Europe. We have known for years that the Labour party is at sixes and sevens in its attitude, but, apart from a small, well-versed and effective minority of my colleagues, who seem to be having their dinner at the moment, the majority of the Conservative party has been convinced that we must belong to the European Community 100 per cent. so that it develops into a liberal, market-oriented society of nation states. For many years there was never any doubt about that, but doubts have been sown during the past 12 months, starting with the Prime Minister's Bruges speech.

It is a sad irony that the five principles enunciated by the Prime Minister in that speech were completely unexceptionable and absolutely right. They included active co-operation between independent sovereign states, the need for a practical Community which encourages enterprise but does not adopt protectionist policies and the need to maintain defence through the mechanism of NATO. Sadly, the Bruges speech sparked off again arguments against our membership among people—some in my party—who have never been convinced that it was right and saw an opportunity to reopen the debate. That is deeply regrettable, but it is the problem that we now face.

Some of us warned persistently of the dangers after Bruges. In the debate in December and the run-up to the European elections in June, we warned that the Conservative attitude to Europe has been laid open to question, although I have no doubts that the Cabinet and the Prime Minister are committed to Europe. My party ran an unsuccessful campaign for the elections to the European assembly which reached its nadir with the notorious advertisement paid for by our generous supporters:

"Stay at home on June 15th, and you'll live on a diet of Brussels."

That completely misread the views of the British people who, I believe, understand that for the foreseeable future—for the rest of this century, possibly the next 10, 20 or 50 years—there will be three centres of power in the world: north America, Japan and the Pacific developing countries, and western Europe. It is in our gift to adopt such a negative attitude and to be left behind in western Europe. I understand that some people regard that prospect with equanimity, but I do not, and nor do the British people.

The debate about our Europe has continued for decades. Most of our constituents would be bored stiff with the ins and outs of the ERM and the other technicalities that we are trying to grasp tonight, but they understand in their guts that Britain's future is in Europe. It is our duty to deliver that, but it is beginning to look as though we may fail. My party must recognise that that is what is at stake.

Some hon. Members have talked scathlingly about the business community. The business community on which we depend, virtually to a man and a woman, is clear about our commitment to Europe and the ERM. It has become confused during the past year. The Department of Trade and Industry ran an effective campaign about 1992 and the single market. At the same time, perhaps inadvertently, the Government created negative vibes about their attitude to Europe.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) asked what would happen in Germany. He seemed to imply that, because of changes in central Europe and the possibility of change in the two Germanies, we should lift up our skirts and move away from western Europe or join some extraordinary own-goal concept of a union from the Atlantic to the Urals. That is nonsense. All our European colleagues want Britain firmly in Europe to help them avoid the position to which my right hon. Friend alluded in his typically fey way. We must avoid such a position by playing our part in Europe.

The weakness in the way in which we conduct our affairs, which is as much a matter of style as of substance, is demonstrated by the social charter which, rightly, has been attacked several times during the debate. The sad fact is that many members of the European Community have misgivings about the social charter, including the Germans, the Irish, the Spanish and the Portuguese. If we allow ourselves to be marginalised we cannot take advantage of that or use our influence where it is so badly needed. That is the tragedy of the Government's style.

As for the substance, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) said so effectively, we must take a positive step towards the exchange rate mechanism. Tuesday's debate made that case incontrovertibly, as anyone with a balanced view would agree. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby said, we must join sooner rather than later. We should not set down conditions and invent new ones, but should join as soon as is practicable. We all understand that there are differences in exchange rates, but it is in our national, political and economic interest, and for the sake of the exchange rate and inflation to cease shilly-shallying. We must enter stage 1 of the ERM and make our voice heard. The debate must continue about whether we should enter stages 2 and 3. The paper provided by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has contributed to the debate. I am uneasy about the competitive currency system that he has offered, as it would not stand close examination.

In conclusion, I draw the attention of the House to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's call for unity in the European Community in August 1984 in a memorandum on the future of Europe to her colleagues in Europe. She began by declaring the need to

"heighten the consciousness among our citizens of what unites us."

That is what the Government must do. They must emphasise in Europe what unites us and not concentrate on what divides us.

8.29 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I have listened carefully to the debate and I have found it one of the most enjoyable experiences in the short time I have been here. The debate has been wide-ranging, and some of the finest minds in the House have addressed themselves to it.

I have sometimes asked myself what I can contribute to this debate. I have tried to take the argument back from the wider political, historical and economic issues raised by other speakers to what the subject means to my constituents. I link this with what the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), said this week when he admitted that we are once again on the downswing and that a "dull 1989" will be followed by a "difficult 1990". "Difficult" means that we are heading for a home-inspired recession. It also means the collapse of investment, very high interest rates for a long time to come and, in my area at least, mounting unemployment.

A crucial aspect of the debate is to consider whether we should have found ourselves in this position if we were in the exchange rate mechanism. I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) making a point that corresponds with my view that we would not have the high interest rates that are currently plaguing us if we had been in the ERM. People are not investing in us at present; They are speculating in us. In all the talk about sovereignty, I ask myself what sovereignty we have with the interest rates we currently face.

Our economic affairs seem to be conducted in the frenetic atmosphere of the City, dominated by City interests. The former Chancellor has a high reputation as a poker player and it seems to be those skills that are dominating the conduct of our economy. I hope that membership of the ERM—and I take a pragmatic approach—would allow us to concentrate on the real economy to a far greater extent. It is interesting that over the past few weeks, the term "real economy", which previously only the Opposition used—and were scoffed at for using—has started cropping up among Conservative Members as they realise that there is a difference between what occurs in the City and what happens in the country as a whole.

I want to concentrate on three areas in which I hope to illustrate how membership of ERM would have helped us. It may seem quite a jump from ERM to housing, but my first point concerns the basic need for housing. I remember meeting, to my surprise, Sir Nicholas Goodison, the former chairman of the stock exchange. He said that it is only when we stop investing so much in housing and invest more in industry that we shall start to get ourselves out of our present problems.

Over the past 10 years and especially in the frenzy of the past three or four years, increasingly more of the country's assets have been invested in housing. The former Chancellor has said that the British public has lost the habit of saving, but that is not true. The money has increasingly gone into people's houses.

I am grateful to the Library for working out how much people would be paying on a £100,000 mortgage, which is not exceptional in this part of the world, over 25 years at 14·5 per cent. For a mortgage of £100,000, they would pay £351,000. That is an incredible sum to go into a house that has been bought several times over, and the assets are usually realised only in the case of death. Is it sensible for so much of our money to go into houses? The Government's policy of high interest rates would have been moderated in the ERM and fewer of our resources would have had to go into sustaining our houses. If fewer resources had been used in that way, we might have had more money going into industry.

The second area, the workings of the financial markets, is my benchmark for testing ERM. The financial markets have a peculiarly frantic atmosphere which seems to be at the root of our problems of under-investment. Years ago, when I was innocent, I used to believe the claims of the stock exchange film about what the stock exchange did, such as investing in British industry. I expect that most hon. Members have seen the film, in which the stock exchange claimed that its word was its bond and that people went to their stockbrokers to put their money into British industry. How naive can one be! All that happens in the stock exchange is concerned with the generation of profit rather than investment. One enters a world of fantasy. The firm of Amstrad, for example, is now one quarter of its value of a year ago. It must be a strange market that can value companies so accurately.

Do our competitors work in such a frantic atmosphere? Are the West German and Japanese markets as fevered as ours? Much of our money goes into the housing market and the stock morket, but it is not invested in British industry. I am especially concerned about the operation of institutions such as the pension funds, which control vast sums of our—not their—money. The money does not seem to go into supporting British industry; it goes into causing growth in dividends, rather than a growth in wealth.

Will the ERM take some of the frantic, frenetic atmosphere out of our present obsession with the markets? It is strange that, whenever we have a crisis, the BBC and ITV park their television cameras in the City and ask what is happening there. It is assumed that what happens there has a connection with the people who work in my constituency. We must find mechanisms—the ERM may be one—that allow us to think in terms of investing in the long term, rather than finding, as happens at present, that every decent industrialist despises the City and sees the City not as a friend, but as the means by which the decent industrialist who is investing long term will be the leverage for takeovers. We must aim for long-term interests to overpower short-term interests.

The third area is regional policy. Under this Government we have had a collapse of regional policy. In so far as there has been such a policy, it has led to a choking up of the south-east and to consistent damage in the area I represent. If we were in the ERM, the Scottish economy would not have to close down when it has reached ice-coldness because of overheating in the south of England. Having considered housing, the business of investment and regional policy, I believe pragmatically that we should be better off within the exchange rate mechanism rather than outside it.

8.39 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for this opportunity to speak, because I believe that this has been one of the most interesting debates that I have

[Mr. Patrick Thompson]

had the opportunity to attend since I first entered Parliament in 1983. I agree with the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) that the discusson is very worth while and I congratulate him on the thoughtful way in which he approached the topic.

Time and again, hon. Members have transcended the usual party political divide and different views have been expressed even by hon. Members within the same political groupings. I agree with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and with my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) that this is a very important and interesting debate. Although I rarely agree with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, I agree with him that this debate is about vision and about the future of this country rather than simply about the technicalities of the exchange rate mechanism which, frankly, I do not think that I will ever really understand.

Like the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, I took part in the referendum campaign on Europe, but on the opposite side. In a way, we are re-running that debate because we are debating our attitudes and vision towards Europe. It is interesting to look back to the debate on the European monetary system which took place on 29 November 1978. My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) and the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) both referred to that debate, in which they both spoke. Their views have been completely consistent throughout, and they repeated today the attitudes that they took then.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, showed the divided and even schizophrenic approach to the subject that the Labour Front Bench showed in 1978. It was not clear whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman wanted to move towards the ERM faster than the Government, more slowly than the Government, with more enthusiasm than the Government or with less. The confusion on the Opposition Front Bench seems to be total.

It has been good to listen to this debate for another reason. So often we debate the European Community and European matters very late at night. It is only 8.42 pm and it is much better to be speaking now than at 1 am or 2 am. Anyone watching those late night debates would have the impression that a group of sincere Members were totally opposed to the European Community and were somehow fighting a continuing rearguard action against an unending series of complex legislation which appears fleetingly before the House only to disappear into statute, never to be seen or understood again.

Even if time permits me to say no more, I must state that we need more debates of this kind on the future of Europe in prime parliamentary time. Let us do this more often. After all, this is an important subject and the contributions this evening have only emphasised the truth of that.

Events are moving very fast in Europe. Business leaders and others in my constituency have told me that the direction that we take in Europe over the next few years is the most important political issue that we face. I agree with them. During my study of the voluminous papers before us for this debate, I came across some graphs showing inflation rates and other statistics for the various members of the European Community. No more than a cursory, inexpert glance at the graphs is needed to show how closely bound is our financial well-being with our partners in the European Community. That is all too plain from a simple glance at the diagrams and graphs.

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said today, we are debating means, not ends. It is right that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have welcomed the Treasury paper on the evolutionary approach to economic and monetary union. I do not have time to debate the details of that, but I welcome its initiative and the opportunity to debate it further. In debating the means, we must not lose sight of the spirit which lay behind the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

There has been a strong feeling in this debate against the Delors report—or at least against stages 2 and 3. It seems obvious to me, even though I am not an expert, that stages 2 and 3 of the Delors report are probably wrong. If that is so, as I suspect, it is vital that we seek in a positive and pro-European way to persuade our Community partners of the superiority of our view. That point has been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House today. We should not let events run out of control.

I take a particular interest in the engineering industry. Throughout Europe—not just in this country—there are continuing problems despite the economic successes and improvements by this Government, of low productivity and, perhaps even more importantly, of poor innovation. There is also the appalling threat of industrial action in that industry.

Those problems can and must be solved on a European scale. That means co-operation. Even those opposed to the whole idea of the Community must at least be in favour of European co-operation. The European Community countries spend as much on research as Japan, but because those efforts are duplicated and there is not adequte co-operation, we still fall behind Japan with regard to the results of that research and innovation.

The wider European political background far outweighs some of the finer technical points that we have been learning about tonight. Peace and reconciliation were the prime motivations of the creators of the Community. I have not forgotten reading a biography of Konrad Adenauer in my teens and being impressed by the historical background to the European Community. That has had a great effect on my attitudes in politics.

We must be sure that our true motive in putting forward alternative approaches to the Community or the European monetary union, in addition to the protection of our national sovereignty, is also a much needed enthusiasm for European civilisation and European culture and a desire for prosperity, stability, peace and a desire to influence the exciting events that will occur in western and eastern Europe in coming years.

8.48 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I very much agree with the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) that this has been a fascinating debate. I have heard most of it, and it has been one of the best on European matters. There has been a great deal of agreement across the Floor of the House that the House does not want to buy the Delors package. That has been the view from both the Government and Opposition Front

Benches, and it was echoed by the right hon. Members for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). That is a wide cross-section in the House.

The hon. Member for Norwich, North said that the debate was to an extent a re-run, of some of our debates on the Common Market. There are always echoes, but I believe that this debate has been different. It is moving the discussion on to new areas. It is not quite a re-run, because the Delors package was not part of the prospectus on which the British people voted in the referendum. The manifesto issued by the Government during the referendum stated clearly that there would be no loss of sovereignty. It said that no decision would be taken in Brussels without the agreement of a British Minister answerable to the House of Commons. The Delors package is completely different. All that went with the Single European Act, which introduced majority voting for the single market.

The Delors package contains three stages. Some hon. Members say that they are not too fussed about stage 1, and they can live with it. However, even the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) made it clear that he was totally opposed to stages 2 and 3 on political grounds because it would mean establishing a central bank that was not answerable to anyone. I have read the evidence that he gave to the Select Committee and which it has done a good job to publish.

Nowhere in the Delors report is there any mention of democracy or democratic accountability. The right hon. Member for Blaby was opposed to that because he said it would eventually mean a centralised, supranational super-state with a directly elected European Parliament and a pan-European Government, and virtually every hon. Member in the House is opposed to that.

I must inject a note of caution into the debate. We cannot rubbish the Delors report and say that it does not matter. It was not just Jacques Delors, the politician who put his name to it. He was the chairman, but the rest of the people on the Committee were primarily governors of the central banks, including the Governor of the Bank of England who put his signature to it. He said that the heads of state told the committee what they wanted and he assumed that the heads of state who agreed on economic and monetary union meant what they were saying. He said that the committee was instructed to recommend how it could be achieved. The Treasury document entitled "An Evolutionary Approach to Economic and Monetary Union" does not carry credibility. In typical British fashion it says that we shall have an evolutionary approach. This is a type of joke document. It complains about the Delors report and says that there are two approaches—that of the United Kingdom and that of Delors. The report will not be a runner: I think everybody agrees on that.

The Delors package is the real option. We must not kid ourselves about the Treasury document. The British whinge, complain, sometimes stamp their feet and wave their handbags, but then they give way and go in, talking about safeguards, but the ratchets get ratcheted up and we get led into something we do not want.

If we do not want Delors stages 2 and 3, I suggest that we do not have Delors stage 1. The Treasury and Civil Service Committee report makes that clear when it quotes Delors:

> "the decision to enter upon the first stage should be a decision to embark on the entire process".

The Governor of the Bank of England says that stage 1 is irrelevant and meaningless and that one would not accept stage 1 if one did not want stages 2 and 3. I say that, because I do not want stages 2 and 3, I do not want stage 1 either.

Some hon. Members talked about the advantages of the exchange rate mechanism. It seems that some people take the view that, because of the economic crisis and because the pound is in trouble, we ought to wave a wand. We should have a panacea and put the pound into a safe haven, a casualty ward where all the central bankers would look after it, feed it every day and make sure that it is OK. That does not make a lot of sense.

If countries have different rates of inflation and of economic productivity, the value of their currencies will differ. That is an economic fact of life. If a country such as Britain, with a higher rate of inflation, links its currency to that of a country with a lower rate of inflation, for example, Germany, after a time that will lead to a de facto devaluation of the mark and an upwards revaluation of the pound. That would make German goods cheaper than British goods and enable them to build up a surplus. That is what the Germans have been doing.

The European monetary system has not led to balanced trade, but the opposite. In the past, the strain has been taken by the exchange rate. What will happen if one cannot do that? The Treasury Select Committee asked that question, and the Treasury gave a clear answer:

> "when exchange rate adjustment is no longer possible other ways of adjusting to disturbances that affect the relative position of different countries would have to be employed. The best mechanism would be a market adjustment such as wage flexibility and labour mobility."

What that means in plain English is that workers' wages are lowered in deficit countries. Mobility of labour means that they will have to get up and move—to get on their bikes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) is not here now. Workers in his constituency might have to move to the south of England or to the golden triangle.

Regional policy could theoretically be the answer to the problem. The budgets of nation states are often around 40 per cent. of gross domestic product, but the EC budget is only around 1 per cent. and that is tiny. Most of the budget goes on agriculture and very little to the structural funds. The United Kingdom, in net terms, does not get a penny, but subsidises richer countries to the tune of nearly £1·9 billion this year. We subsidise them, rather than receiving any money for regional policies in Britain.

The regional fund would have to be on a heroic scale to have an effect. I cannot imagine people in Germany paying huge sums of money to Clydebank. In any case, they would be at the end of the queue. The Mediterranean countries would head the queue.

Some hon. Members have said that the social charter will compensate us. The Select Committee on Employment invited Mrs. Papandreou, the EEC Commissioner, to talk about the charter. It became clear that it is a political gesture to the trade union movement to keep it sweet and on board. The social charter will not happen. The Government need not get too worried or upset about it, and Labour Members should not get excited, thinking it is the solution to the problem. As the Commissioner explained to us, the charter is not legally binding.

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

At the next summit meeting, heads of state will be invited to agree to a solemn declaration. I do not know whether the Prime Minister will agree—she might. If they all agree to it, what legal effect will it have? None whatsoever.

The social charter mentions a minimum wage. I asked how much that wage was. There is no such thing. It would be different in each country and each region of a country. So much for that.

I heard Glyn Ford on the radio the other day saying that the workers at GCHQ would be able to join a trade union because they will have that right under the social charter. Not so: Mrs. Papandreou explained that each country's legislation would have precedence.

Whereas for the single internal market there was a White Paper, a treaty that provided a legal base and majority voting, for the social charter there has been no White Paper, no treaty and no majority voting; there must be unanimity. Even if it obtained a solemn declaration, the Commission would have to go away and draw up about a dozen draft directives, each with an uncertain fate. Unfortunately, the social charter simply will not happen.

8.58 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I am never entirely sure from which angle Labour Front Benchers will choose to talk about the European Community. Generally they bring such a wealth of differing experience to the subject that they go twice around the same circuit—except the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), who has shown a remarkable but depressing consistency over the years.

I see three kinds of objection to economic and monetary union. There are the technical objections, the fear about where it will all lead and, in some cases, even a questioning of Community membership. Some wish to use debates about the details of movement towards economic and monetary union as an opportunity to rehash the arguments about whether we should be in the Community at all. The British public, however, do not understand such doubts—they now believe, whether enthusiastically or pragmatically, that we are in the Community and should make the best of it and play our role to the full.

Anxiety is being induced by the way in which the path towards harmonisation, convergence and unity is being portrayed. Words such as "federalism" are being used, and we are being invited to worry about a potential loss of sovereignty. I do not have too much difficulty with those possibilities. I do not know when we might form democratic political organisations commensurate with economic and social events, but I do not wish to exclude them in advance—it will depend how we proceed. The idea, however, that there is a viable alternative in the form of full sovereignty in today's Parliament, constituting complete power over our affairs, is surely an illusion. Certain events could rock Britain, and could not be faced up to by Britain alone. Only by pooling or sharing sovereignty could we find the means to be equal to such events. We must then examine our democratic structures to ensure that they are capable of keeping us in charge —in a democratic way—of the institutions that we have joined and developed, to attain meaningful sovereignty in today's world.

The technical objections are, of course, much more difficult. The history of the EMS and ERM reveals disagreement between economists about how beneficial they have been. If technical argument about what such systems have achieved in the past is a possibility, there is certainly scope for argument about the way in which they will go in the future. There are many questions to be answered, and it would be foolish to imagine that there is any certainty about the results of joining or not joining, or about the impact of sterling on the ERM. We cannot forecast all the consequences, although on balance I feel that we would be better off in the system—for all the arguments deployed so eloquently by many of my hon. Friends.

Above all, I believe that a positive attitude is needed, not a negative or grudging one. I hope that we shall breathe a full-hearted commitment into stage 1 of economic and monetary union—and that means going into the ERM at the earliest possible moment, if we believe that it is right. We must demonstrate a constructive approach to economic and monetary union. If we cannot even get to first base, there will be deep suspicion about Britain's attitude to what might happen later.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) said on Tuesday, we must also show that we have the political strength and will to participate. It is vital for us to show that we are committed, and are actively looking for the right way forward. I am certainly not prepared to endorse every last dot and comma in the Delors report, but we must be realistic and accept that the report is there on the table. It is one of the first documents to be there, and it is of great symbolic significance. Although my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has today produced a paper "An Evolutionary Approach to Economic and Monetary Union", we shall have to be extremely ingenious to persuade our partners that that is necessarily better than what is already on the table. However, as long as we are positive and forward-looking, I hope that our arguments will be accepted in good faith by our partners in the Community.

Although there are positive reasons for wanting to be as constructive as we can be, we must also accept the downside risk. If we are not prepared to go along with the spirit of moving closer towards economic and monetary union, there is a danger that our partners will go ahead without us. Too often in the history of our relationships with Europe, we have been behind and had to catch up. We have then faced with terms which are not necessarily the most advantageous to us. It would be better for us to be on a par with our partners right from the beginning, exercising the maximum influence.

The other danger is that we must not ignore the momentous events occurring in central and eastern Europe. We desperately need to be in close partnership with our allies in the European Community so that we are in the best position to guard the future. We do not know exactly what will happen, but we cannot afford to be out of the influential council chambers of the European Community when these new opportunities of different relationships with the eastern European countries develop in the years ahead, as it now seems that they might.

While I understand that there will obviously be heart-searching among some of my hon. Friends about the fact that, however cautiously or boldly we move, we are willing a different role for this Parliament in relation to the institutions of the Community and the European

Parliament, it will not serve the interests of our people best if we are faint-hearted. I hope that we shall go forward with a spirit of determination to gain success and a willingness to compromise in order to do so.

9.6 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): In the brief time available to me, I shall forgo some of the more technical issues that have been raised in the debate and will try to give it a peculiarly Scottish perspective, which I hope will be useful.

Some of the speeches—I am thinking of those from hon. Members whom one can generally consider to be anti-European, to put it at its crudest—have been labouring under somewhat of an illusion. Indeed, that illusion could be found in the memorable speech by the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) last Tuesday. He said that he had a desire or commitment to see a Europe of nation states. In using those words, he evoked the words of the Prime Minister at Bruges. Underlying that phraseology—"a Europe of nation states"—is what I would term an Anglocentric illusion. It is the illusion that the United Kingdom is a nation state. On the contrary, as the very names "Great Britain" and "United Kingdom" tell us, Great Britain is not a nation state. It is an amalgam. It is an economic, monetary and political union of four nations with different historical traditions. The United Kingdom is a union of nations. It is a supranational state.

Indeed, apart from its excessively centralist character, with which, I am sure, we would all disagree, the United Kingdom is a model of the kind of supranational European economic and monetary—and, I believe, eventually political—union that those who support the notion of a nation state wish to deplore. There is thus an underlying inconsistency and incoherence to those who falsely defend the notion of the United Kingdom as a nation state and who posit that against the notion of a European supranational state.

The importance of the balance of payments deficit has already been mentioned. From time to time some Conservative Members like to pretend that in today's global financial environment the national balance of payments no longer matters. Mr. Samuel Brittan, the financial columnist already referred to tonight, said in support of that point of view that, today, no one, for example, worries about the putative imbalance in the balance of trade or the balance or payments between Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom.

That is fundamentally wrong. Of course there is no official accounting of the flow of trade and the balance of payments between different regions of the United Kingdom, but that does not mean that such imbalances do not occur. They occur and they matter. We are constantly concerned about the deep-seated regional imbalances which such figures, if available, would show within the United Kingdom.

If we get down to economic basics, we should remember that the balance of payments is a form of accounting that merely highlights a more general economic phenomenon —different geographical areas enjoy different rates of economic growth at different times. When those differences are merely temporary, there is no cause for alarm, but when they appear to be endemic and long-term, they are certainly a cause for concern, as the inevitable result is an ever-increasing gap in the average wealth and living standards of the people in those different regions. In the past 50 years we have seen that happen not only in the United Kingdom, but between the United Kingdom and its international competitors.

Two responses can be made to the general phenomenon of different rates of growth. One is to make adjustments in exchange rates and the other is to smooth out the results of the divergence in growth by following a policy of fiscal transfer. That means that fiscal policies are used to transfer wealth from the faster growing areas to the slower growing areas. The first response is the usual one used when economic imbalances occur between different currency areas and the latter response is characteristic when imbalances occur within an individual currency area.

Some of my hon. Friends hold completely different views from mine, but I suspect that, when faced with choosing between the two means of tackling regional problems, which are inevitably caused by different patterns of economic growth, it is obvious that—certainly as Socialists—that we should prefer, as we do in practice, a strategy of fiscal transfer. That strategy is more direct, efficient and equitable than any adjustment to the exchange rates.

Surely the case for such a strategy is so strong that no hon. Member, no matter his opinion, would today propose that we should return to having a separate Scottish currency area to tackle the regional problems that are obviously caused by the different rate of economic growth between Scotland and the south-east of England. The Chancellor was extolling the virtues of competitive currencies, but I note that he did not think to import that marvellous device into the United Kingdom, although that has been suggested by some of his Front-Bench colleagues in various pamphlets.

Were it not already the status quo I do not believe that anyone would defend—in any case it would not be right to do so—the existence of separate currency areas within the European Community. I have already outlined the superiority of the fiscal transfer strategy as opposed to adjustments to exchange rates as a means of evening out or narrowing regional imbalances. Therefore, when economic and monetary union is achieved, it is important that there is also a powerful social dimension. I am not talking just about a social charter which advocates basic employment and welfare rights, but about a full range of policies and instruments of fiscal transfer available to other federal governments. Therefore, regional and industrial policy, the development of the social fund and even a properly targeted common agricultural policy could be used.

It also follows that economic and monetary union with a strong social dimension must mean a continuing and obvious increase in the Community budget. A further consequence of that increase would be a gradual but inexorable gathering of power at the political centre of the Community, in the institutions of the European Parliament and the Commission. Hon. Members may not like that, but that is the truth. We Scots have learnt to live with this since 1707 and, after 300 years, it is not that bad.

Despite the Government's foot dragging, we have set out on an historic road which will enventually lead to a supranational Europe which I welcome and hope will have the strong powers necessary to enable it to pursue on a Community level the regional policies which enlightened member states already pursue on an individual level.

9.15 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): I respect and understand the views of those hon. Members who accept that stability in exchange rates is desirable, but believe that it is undesirable if bought at the cost of expensive intervention or inflation caused by reducing interest rates to let down the value of the currency. If those criticisms of the exercising of such policies here are valid, they are invalid criticisms of the record of the exchange rate mechanism during its existence.

The outstanding achievement of the ERM in the past few years has been increased stability between the currency of members and a significant lessening of inflation. It is true that it has achieved this with exchange controls in two major countries, but it is a great improvement on what preceded it.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) referred to the horrors of intervention. It is quite difficult to obtain figures on what intervention has cost in th ERM. However, the signs are that only the Belgians and French have spent large amounts of money on intervention, as the philosophy of the Bundesbank—that intervention on any substantial scale is a waste of money—appears to have taken the field.

Despite what the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said, there have been, and still are, large variations in interest rates between, for example, the mark and the lira. Despite what many hon. Members have said about the rigidity of the exchange rate mechanism, for many years there have been quite wide bands for some currencies, and those bands have been adjusted at least seven times during the mechanism's existence.

Therefore, I support those who say that we should enter the exchange rate mechanism and that the only question is that of timing. With the mark worth about 2·90 to the pound, and the franc about 9·90 to the pound, the time is right to enter the mechanism if we are right that inflation is on the way down. The crucial factor about entry is the market rate of the currency at the relevant time. That is much the most important factor to consider. I doubt whether we are right to resist joining until all the exchange control rules have been abandoned. It is better to join sooner rather than later.

I have been a bit disappointed by the debate on stages 2 and 3 of the Delors proposals and by the debate on the Government's proposals for an evolutionary approach to economic and monetary union. There will be a demand by business for more usable currencies throughout the Community, and the Government are right to look for greater freedom in the use of currencies in commerce. We have not done justice in this debate to these proposals and they should be considered much more in the future.

I accept that there are great constitutional difficulties in proceeding further with the Delors proposals for stages 2 and 3, but I am attracted, as a move in the direction of a more unified currency, by the proposals for a freer role for the Bank of England. The Federal Reserve and the Bundesbank have certainly been more successful in currency matters than most central banks, and I would welcome a change in the Bank of England in the same direction.

9.20 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): We have all agreed that this has been an excellent debate on an issue of crucial and fundamental importance to the future of this country. In what is usually described as a wide-ranging debate, we have heard from many people with an amazing variety of experience. I estimate that we heard four ex-Treasury Ministers and one former Foreign Office Minister—the changes seem to be rung as rapidly as figures on a cash register these days.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) made a relevant contribution to the raging debate on this issue, but the House may have found most interesting the words of another ex-Treasury Minister—the former Chief Secretary and right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who was an anti-marketeer before he became a Treasury Minister and subsequently Leader of the House. He then met an iceberg in the shape of the Single European Act, but it did not knock him off his perilous course—he pushed it through the House with a guillotine, no less. Now that he is back on the Back Benches, however, the old scepticism re-emerged.

Mr. Biffen: They call it resurrection.

Mr. Robertson: There was no iceberg in the story of the resurrection, but anything can be reborn—including the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) who made his maiden speech after having been parliamentary private secretary to the late lamented Chancellor. We welcome him back.

Three Select Committee Chairmen also made a wide-ranging set of contributions. I particularly welcome the fact that a Foreign Office Minister is to wind up the debate. As many hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), have said, the issue that we are debating has enormous foreign policy implications, and it is right that it should not be seen merely as a Treasury matter—or even a Treasury-Downing street matter, as most things appear these days.

It is unfortunate that the new Foreign Secretary is not with us this evening. That is not to say anything against the Minister of State, against whom I have plenty of other things to say, but the Foreign Secretary will have the vote—if a vote is ever held—in the Cabinet on the great issues that we are debating this evening. Just as the Prime Minister expressed her sympathy for the 48 who voted against Britain at the Commonwealth conference, so we have considerable sympathy for the 22 ranged against her in the Cabinet day by day.

The debacle in the last seven days which has so appalled the British people has highlighted the real tragedy of the Government in this important area. The whole continent of Europe is changing faster and more fundamentally now than for at least two generations. Communism is collapsing in the eastern bloc states. *[Interruption.]* Communism, not Socialism, is collapsing and after 40 years democracy is coming alive in Poland and in Hungary and is even stirring in the German Democratic Republic. Even the Soviet Union, after 70 years of totalitarianism, has seen elections, an embryonic Parliament and real debate. All those things are bursting through the soil.

The cold war seems to have ended and the eastern bloc does not appear in any way monolithic. The frozen post-war structure which has endured for 40 years is rapidly blowing away. We are seeing a bonfire of the certainties that have survived since the war. The European Community is beginning to look at fundamental issues such as whether to go for full-blown political and economic integration or whether to stop for a moment to look at developments to the east to see whether there are new structures that could be developed to encompass the exciting possibilities ahead.

During all those developments, what has the Cabinet been doing? It is bogged down in an acrimonious, suicidal squabble about the invention of ever more ingenious conditions in order further to renege on the commitments regularly given by Conservative Ministers to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. We are at a genuine crossroads in European history, but this constantly reshuffled bunch of Ministers are fighting like ferrets in a bag over who meant what in the last or the last but one commitment to the EMS.

While that is going on, other people and other nations have a vision and they are expressing it. For example, France, for its own reasons perhaps, wants to seize back some of the control that has been lost by its institutions to the German economic machine and has a vision about where Germany should be in the western nations. France is pursuing that objective but where in all that is the British vision? Where did we hear in the Chancellor's speech in the debate or in any of the speeches that we have heard recently about the vision which disagrees with that or a prospectus that would allow the British people to see where in the new reshaping of Europe we wish to be fitted in?

The debate on economic and monetary union goes to the heart of the matter. It is a matter of honour for Britain, but that honour has been betrayed by twists and turns of promises, declarations and commitments on European monetary union. They have been relentlessly rephrased, rejigged and ultimately reneged on. Crucially, it is a matter of the influence that Britain should have in the reshaping of the Community that will take place with us or without us. As hon. Members have said, it is a matter of keeping faith with the aspirations of the British people for a place in Europe's future and with the obligations that we have accepted as a nation in the Community of 12.

On the question of honour, how can the Government stand with any dignity among our European partners, having signed all the declarations itemised for us by the Chancellor? For example, the Stuttgart declaration of 22 June 1983 says in specific terms that the objective was:

> "Strengthening of the European Monetary System, which is helping to consolidate an area of monetary stability in Europe and to create a more stable international economic environment, as a key element in progress towards Economic and Monetary Union and the creation of a European Monetary Fund."

There it was in Stuttgart, as it was in the Single European Act, and as it was in Hanover in the communiqué which established the Delors committee report.

The former Chancellor, when asked about this by the Select Committee, replied:

> "This does not, in the opinion of the British Government, mean that the British Government is committed to monetary union."

Somebody read that afterwards. We do not know whether it was somebody in Downing street. Whether it was Sir Alan Walters we shall not know until he tells *The Sunday Times*. Somebody read it and went back, because it says at the bottom:

> "Note by witness. Further to this answer, the witness wishes to make it clear that the reference in the last sentence is to the monetary union set out in the Delors report.

The Delors report says:

> "This report has been prepared in response to the mandate of the European Council 'to study and propose concrete stages leading towards economic and monetary union'."

We have come full circle. The Government say that they are in favour of concrete steps towards economic and monetary union and have signed the Stuttgart declaration and the Single European Act. They subscribed to the Hanover communiqué, but now we are reduced to the dodging, weaving, bending and twisting that are the hallmark of Government policy.

Mrs. Theresa Gorman (Billericay): I agree that an enormous change is taking place in eastern Europe, and the communist bloc appears to be breaking up. As one of the basic concepts of the European Community was opposition to that bloc, is this not a good time to pause and have second thoughts about what we are doing in forming or going on with our own bloc?

Mr. Robertson: The Community has nothing to do with opposing the eastern bloc. The hon. Lady may be mixing it up with NATO, which was formed at roughly the same time but with a slightly different purpose. I subscribe to her conclusion, however, that this is the right time for the major debate on how to accommodate the aspirations of new democracies which may be developing in a part of the world that we had written off for democracy.

We have seen this situation developing, the deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the House has pointed out. He said:

> "At Madrid we said yes, we want the existing EMS to be strengthened. Yes, Britain should join and will join the ERM. We committed ourselves to stage one of the Delors report."

The right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), in his resignation speech which transfixed the House on Tuesday, made exactly the same point. Instead of confirmation from the Prime Minister, however, the Walden programme saw the "higgledy-piggledy" insult thrown at the ERM which she had previously endorsed, while Sir Alan Walters disappears into the American jungles with "half-baked" as his description of it.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): This is all very interesting, but will the hon. Gentleman tell us whether he supports the objectives of economic and monetary union and, if so, in what form?

Mr. Robertson: We shall be interested to see what the Minister says about this. After all, he is in the Government. I wonder where he was when my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was speaking earlier this afternoon. My right hon. and learned Friend dealt with the point specifically and told the House our views both on stage 1 of Delors and on stages 2 and 3.

Although Conservative Members would like to ignore or neglect the problems and traumas of the past week—I am sure that even the beneficiaries would like to forget some of the agony—we have to live in a situation in which condition has been added to condition, to the extent that 1992 no longer seems to be a date but rather the number of new conditions invented as preconditions for joining the ERM. Each time the Prime Minister is questioned and asked for her view, the goalposts move. Indeed, they move

[Mr. Robertson]

even more quickly than the number of different Foreign Secretaries. It is small wonder that Mr. Andrew Marr of *The Scotsman* commented on Monday that, when Conservative Members had watched the Walden programme, many sighed with relief, but many more just sighed.

Mr. Biffen: It seems that the hon. Gentleman is concerned about a lack of specificity in the conditions laid down by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Will he be specific and say at what level the exchange rate would have to be struck to make membership of the mechanism acceptable to the Opposition?

Mr. Robertson: It would be entirely inappropriate for me to say that. As a former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the right hon. Gentleman knows very well that it would inevitably be a matter for negotiation. It would be interesting to know whether the right hon. Gentleman would make a specific pledge or whether anyone on the Treasury Bench would care to venture a suggestion.

Mr. Major: We do not have to do that.

Mr. Robertson: Perhaps the floating rates of Sir Alan Walters will determine the result. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) described the Prime Minister's contribution to Mr. Walden's programme as excessive verbiage and in excess of the whittled down points which she put to the House after the Madrid summit. This week we have a new Foreign Secretary, after the debut of his predecessor at Question Time last Wednesday.

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend has experience.

Mr. Robertson: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was about to say something entirely different and rather more relevant.

What the new Foreign Secretary said in a "Panorama" programme was of considerable significance. When asked about the deputy Prime Minister's speech, which the Prime Minister had not seen in advance, he said:

> "The Government have a policy; let's stick to it."

That would be fine if there were a policy, but if there is indeed a policy, whose is it? There is the Prime Minister's policy as articulated on Saturday evening or there is her policy as broadcast at lunchtime on Sunday, and there may be a few more icebergs ready and willing to take holes out of the side of whatever new administration is running the ship in the next few weeks.

More crucial to the future of the United Kingdom is influence. What sort of influence will Britain have in the Community that we have been discussing with such profundity today when a commitment made by the Government seems to mean so little? What sort of influence can we have on our partners when we stand isolated on so many issues in the Community? We stand alone on the social charter, which all our partners in the Community, Left-wing or Right-wing, believe to be a crucial and essential precondition for the balanced development of the single European market. We even stand alone on matters as trivial as cancer warnings on cigarette packets. Cabinet Ministers are sent to Brussels to express views which are then described by the Prime Minister as not worth making a song and dance about. We stand alone on the Lingua programme for language teaching in schools. We stand alone, too, on pensioners' bus passes and the Framework research programme. All the time we are marginalising and failing to let Britain's voice be heard.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He wants regularly to have a dialogue with me, but time is limited.

In the *Daily Mail* on 18 May, Sir David English came out with one of the great truths in an editorial which appeared side by side with the Prime Minister's famous interview. He wrote:

> "In Europe's Council of Ministers, with its primitive form of proportional representation, shifting coalitions of member states are going to reign supreme. That is the power game in Europe. For our own sake and Britain's, it is one that she must learn and indeed master."

We are seeing in this debate on the ERM—and we shall see the same in the debate on what is to come under European monetary union—that that lesson has not been learnt from Sir David English and it is not likely to be learnt from any of the Prime Minister's Cabinet colleagues. The European elections, however, show that the British people know precisely which side of the argument they take.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East outlined in some detail and with considerable eloquence the Labour party's view on the exchange rate mechanism and the specific nature of the conditions. We have made our conditions plain. They are unambiguous and attainable. We stand by them as a basis for stage 1 of the Delors report. As my right hon. and learned Friend has said, they have been publicly welcomed for the constructive contribution that they represent—not to say the contrast that they provide with the contrary and fickle posturing of a Government who remain completely divided even at the highest level.

As the debate has shown, nobody pretends that going beyond stage 1 of the Delors report will be easy or uncomplicated. The many views that have emerged in the debate have illustrated that. The report was, after all, written by bankers and, in many ways, for bankers. There are essential principles which must underline the policy which takes us beyond the present debate. There are principles which must underlie the campaign and the negotiations which will take place. There are ground rules for any subsequent debate that must take place and they must be established before the intergovernmental conference is convened.

That is why the resolution of the European Parliament, passed last week with all the Labour party's conditions and policies contained within it and with the support and acclamation of Conservative Members of the European Parliament, is a good signpost to where the Government should be taking us in the future. If it is good enough for Conservative Members of the European Parliament, the residual few who manage to hold on to their seats—it should be good enough for the Government.

The debate has shown that there is wide interest in this matter both in Parliament and in the country, and this belated debate has shown how important it is for our future. I doubt whether the Government have the conviction to go beyond the Prime Minister's prejudices, and I doubt whether they have the nous or the imagination to take on the challenges which face us today in the great

European continent. The only way for the British people to have a future in the Community which will deliver what they want and demand is to elect a new Government at the earliest opportunity.

9.41 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): Some debates in the Chamber follow what seems to be a preordained course, but everyone who has spoken in the latter parts of this debate has paid tribute to the nature of the debate. It has been a rare and special occasion, one which the House of Commons has taken extremely seriously. There has been a degree of consensus among virtually everyone who has spoken which I had not foreseen at the outset, but which is a source of considerable pleasure to us.

Views have been expressed from members of most parties in the House and from most parts of most parties. Those who have contributed to the debate have shown considerable breadth and depth of experience and expertise.

One would expect the House to take the matter seriously because it goes to the heart of the reasons for the existence of the House. What has shone through the debate is the fact that Mr. Delors' grand design, the blueprint for a stampede into effective federalism, has not a friend in the House.

It was remarkable that the Labour party was desperate to find ways of disagreeing with the Government. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made a speech which was remarkably close to what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor had already said and, listening to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), I thought at one stage that he had hijacked my right hon. Friend's speech.

I suppose that it was inevitable that much of the debate focused on the exchange rate mechanism. I have only this to say about that. Our commitment is one made in good faith. It reaffirms the commitment made in Madrid and we will stick to it. Many of the conditions have to be fulfilled by others. We hope that they will be fulfilled sooner rather than later.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor said on Tuesday that the ERM was not a panacea, and nobody should expect it to be so. My hon. Friend the Member for Chicester (Mr. Nelson), who made a passionate and effective speech, came close to expressing the belief that it is a panacea. We should not fool ourselves that that is so. There could be nothing more disastrous than to take, for political reasons, what must be an economic decision. Above all, it would be absurd to take such a decision simply to demonstrate our commitment to the Community, a commitment which is amply demonstrated in any event. It is far too important an issue to be the subject of gesture politics.

Remarkably few suggestions have been made that we are dragging our feet about Europe. The right hon. Member for Devonport, in his quite notable speech, made a slightly ritualistic complaint about us being isolated from time to time, but he tempered his strictures by accepting that there will be times when we are right to resist, even if we are alone, and the House would expect no less of us.

A number of hon. Members spoke of the social charter. The right hon. Member for Devonport, in a fit of nostalgia, referred to it as the social contract. He rightly deplored the minimum wage provisions of the charter. We are not holding out ferociously against any social charter, but we insist that any charter we sign gives full weight to the unanimous conclusions of the Madrid council. There should be no EC action where national action will suffice. It should respect national traditions and voluntary practices, and it should give top priority to job creation. The present draft does not do so, and while it remains in that form we will not sign it. At present it is a document designed to make politicians feel better about themselves, not to bring benefits to our people.

On so many matters, far from being laggardly, Britain is ahead, driving the Community forward. We are not doing so alone. In alliance with the Commission and other member states, we want faster and better progress. For example, the single market is an aspiration that is 30 years old, but only now is it becoming a reality. Who has pressed for that?—the United Kingdom. It is only now, after years of urging by us, that it is beginning to take shape. Who is holding up progress? Whose foot is on the brake? The Germans are reluctant to expose their insurance companies to open competition. The French are trying to frustrate the Commission's drive to open up competition in telecommunications.

How can we have a single market when lorries are crossing frontiers empty because protectionist regulations prevent them from picking up return loads? Who is holding that up? It is France and Italy, while we support the Commission's proposals. Who are the keenest proponents of the people's Europe? Again, it is France and Italy. Which country is holding up progress on one of the measures that would benefit our citizens most directly, the liberalisation of air transport to make it easier and cheaper to travel to Europe? Yes, the French and Italians. These are not objectives that Britain is trying to foist on an unwilling Community. They have been agreed time and again unanimously by all 12 member states.

We do not claim to be alone in our virtue, but time and again we have started in the minority, with allies, and won over the majority. It is high time that more member states matched their deeds to their words.

Let us consider compliance with Community law and the implementation of measures that have already been agreed. On every count we are leading; we do what we have all agreed to do. Stage 1 of the Delors report has been agreed by all 12 of the member states, but it is being pursued more enthusiastically by ourselves than by others. Others are at last catching up on abolishing exchange controls. We shall strongly support the Commission's action to strengthen competition policy to reduce the distortion that unequal state subsidies bring. How can there be European integration and progress to economic and monetary union when the Italians alone give state subsidies of £16 billion a year, eight times the amount that we give? We are all agreed in principle that that must stop. The Commission deserves the full support of all 12 member states in its renewed drive to turn principle into practice.

Those measures are all essential components of further integration. The form of integration has already been agreed by all of us, but it has been heavily promoted by us. Far from wanting to hold it back, we want more speed, not less. We have no difficulty with the further integration involved in progress towards economic and monetary union. The objectives which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor set out at the opening of the debate are ones

[Mr. Francis Maude]

with which we agree and which we support. But we have concerns about the route by which those objectives are obtained. It is the clear view of the House tonight that it is not unreasonable to raise concerns about what is proposed in stages 2 and 3 of the Delors report.

We do not accept the proposals for yet further increases in regional and structural aid. There is no reason to suppose that achieving economic and monetary union through the operation of the market would damage less prosperous areas. We argue strongly in our paper that only by allowing less prosperous areas to benefit from their cost advantages can disparities be eradicated. Again, we do not accept that binding Community rules on national budget deficits are needed. It is possible to have further integration in practice while allowing national Governments and Parliaments to retain control over national budget deficits. Any proposal to the contrary would be resoundingly rejected by the House.

We do not accept that economic and monetary union requires a single monetary policy, a single currency and a single central bank. All these are in conflict with the principle of subsidiarity—to which much lip-service is paid—that things should only be done at Community level when they cannot be done at national level. All those proposals would centralise powers that are critically important in a way that is unnecessary and undesirable.

Mr. Worthington: I thought that I heard the Minister say that the free market would eventually bring about an equalisation of living conditions in different regions. Does he agree that, over the past 10 years, there has been an espousal of free market principles under this Government and a widening of the gap between north and south? When may we see a reversal?

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman could not be more wrong. I certainly did argue that. I believe that the facts sustain our argument. One need only look at the burgeoning of prosperity in the north-east and, indeed, in Glasgow, the hon. Gentleman's area. The free market has brought that about. The disparities were at their worst when subsidies were at their highest. I do not resile in any way from the proposition that the free market would bring about this eradication of disparities.

In any event, there could be no guarantee that a single, centrally run monetary policy would converge on the best anti-inflation record of member states, no matter what the treaty might say. It is more likely that inflation would tend to converge on the average inflation rate across the Community. Therefore, this centralist and regulatory prescription would be likely to have the reverse effect to that claimed for it. Inflation could well turn out higher than under our market-led, liberal proposals.

Although we are not alone in having these grave anxieties about those aspects of the Delors report, it would clearly be wrong for us simply to sit on the sidelines and snipe at it. As members of the Community, we have never done that, and we will not do it now. Our role in the Community has been central and hugely influential. We need only look at how some of the Community's problems are resolved. We can look at the vast budget imbalances—so skilfully negotiated by the last Labour Government—and the huge surpluses of the common agricultural policy. Both yielded only to the vigorous urging of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, arguing not from the sidelines or the margins but from our central position in the Community.

So it is with these proposals. We say that there is another route to economic and monetary union. It is one that works with the grain of the market, a solution that will, by evolution, build on what we already have. It is a solution that could easily be quicker than the prescriptive and centralist route of Delors. The precedent of the Werner report—with its timetable, blueprint and centralist and prescriptive approach—is not such as to give one confidence that the Delors approach will deliver quick results. A step-by-step approach is by no means a slow one. It could be a jog, it could be a sprint, but it will not be a leap in the dark.

We argue that our approach would deliver the objectives of economic and monetary union, on which we are all agreed. It could even deliver those objectives more quickly than the Delors report. Above all, and of great importance to this House, our approach would retain control of the fundamentals of economic policy with the British Government and the British Parliament.

Many of my hon. Friends have endorsed the approach we have offered in our paper published today. There has been some criticism, mainly from the Opposition, but most of it appears to have been based not on a reading of our paper, but on garbled reports of the Council meeting at Antibes. Some hon. Members referred to it as a scheme of competing currencies. It is not; it is a scheme for competing monetary policies.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was somewhat shy when asked about the views of the former economic adviser to the Labour party. I shall tell him what David Currie said:

> "there is a serious case yet to be made in favour of the idea of competing currencies. This idea need not be in conflict with the objective of exchange rate stability, so that it is not incompatible with the EMS. Competition between currencies need not mean exchange rate instability. Rather it may mean competition over responsible monetary policies, encouraging their spread within Europe."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman should listen to advice.

Mr. George Robertson: As the hon. Gentleman has quoted one piece of Professor Currie's article, would he care to complete it? There was a condition to his endorsement of the idea of competing currencies. He said:

> "provided that it is recast within the EMS framework. Currencies can compete one with the other within the type of fixed parity system towards which the EMS is evolving."

Does the hon. Gentleman endorse that as well?

Mr. Maude: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for making precisely the point that we made in our paper. Whatever views the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends may have about advisers, it might not be a bad idea for them to listen to one occasionally.

All of this could be achieved within the constraints of the existing treaty. How could it make sense for us to commit ourselves to further treaty reform when we have by no means exhausted the possibilities of the existing treaty? There is still much to do within the treaties we have already signed.

Some of my hon. Friends have argued that we speak from the sidelines and that we are marginally involved, but that is not correct. My right hon. Friends and I regularly attend Council meetings. We are not only involved centrally, but hugely influential within the European Community. We shall be arguing not from the sidelines, but from the centre and we shall continue to be extremely influential.

It should not be thought that the United Kingdom is alone in expressing scepticism about stages 2 and 3 of Delors. We are not alone in wanting to consider alternatives or in emphasising the need to avoid rushing into hasty decisions. The president of the Bundesbank has said that economic and monetary union needs neither a central bank nor a common currency. He went on to say that the basic issue in discussions of a European central bank was the transfer of monetary sovereignty away from the present national institutions and that this had been grasped by relatively few people, one of whom was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. In October this year, he said that economic and monetary union must be an evolutionary process.

His ideas represent only one of several strands of thought in Germany, but an important one. As is well known, Mr. Genscher favours rapid progress towards Delors stages 2 and 3. To add flavour to the debate, the German Economics Ministry has published a distinctly critical analysis of the Delors prescription. Those differences of opinion show a healthy public debate in Germany on this important issue. Similar differences have emerged in many other member states. Foreign Ministers often see political advantages in the rapid progress down the route of prescription. Finance Ministers, who must deal with the practical effects, take a more sober view. That is why the United Kingdom paper is so important. It sets out a comprehensive and consistent approach to economic and monetary union which takes account of political objectives and economic realities.

We shall argue the case for our approach very vigorously in the Community. It offers two substantial prizes. First, it offers the attainment of the objectives of economic and monetary union, at least as quickly as the Delors report. Secondly, and we believe equally important, it will retain national control of economic policies. In many cases we have argued our position vigorously, and we have persuaded and won over other member states.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents.)

GAS APPLIANCES

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 4093/1/89 and 8819/89 relating to gas appliances; and welcomes the Government's aim of breaking down barriers to trade in gas appliances as a step towards the completion of the Single Market.

NUTRITION LABELLING

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8673/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 24th July 1989 and 8446/89 on nutrition labelling of foodstuffs; and supports the Government's intention to negotiate satisfactory arrangements to harmonise food labelling and to ensure the standardised presentation of nutrition so that consumers can compare products more easily thus helping them to choose a balanced diet.—*[Mr. Lighbown.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Travellers' Site (Leicester)

10 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I wish to present a petition on behalf of Sally Brookebank of 27 Holden street, Leicester, Peggy Smith of 123 Loughborough road, Leicester, county councillor Margaret Berridge of Windsor avenue, Leicester and 60 other residents of Belgrave in Leicester who are very concerned about the fact that the city council has decided to impose a site for itinerants on the junction of Ross walk and Loughborough road. They believe very strongly that they should have been consulted by the city council before any site was chosen. The petition

Sheweth that they, being residents of Belgrave are opposed most strongly to the proposal of any site for travellers in the area of Ross Walk and Loughborough Road because there has been no prior consultation with residents.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for the Environment to intervene in this matter.

To lie upon the Table.

Health and Safety Commission and Executive

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lighthown.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I am very pleased to have the opportunity in such distinguished company to raise the issue of the powers, authority and work of the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive. I do so following a vast series of accidents, each one of which has occurred in an area outside the powers and supervision of the Health and Safety Commission, each one of which has led to an inquiry, has caused death and misery and many of which would have been avoided had the Government ensured that the commission and the executive had powers over those areas.

I will list some of the incidents and state which Department had responsibility. They include the Marchioness pleasure boat accident on the Thames, the Clapham train disaster, the King's Cross fire, the Lockerbie air disaster, the Kegworth air disaster and the Herald of Free Enterprise Zeebrugge ferry disaster, all of which were the responsibility of the Department of Transport and the Piper Alpha oil rig fire which was the responsibility of the Department of Energy. That litany of disasters was outside the responsibility of the one body in this country capable of ensuring, in so far as is humanly possible, that accidents are prevented instead of simply being investigated once they have occurred.

It is an oddity that in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 the Health and Safety Commission and the executive were created to look after health and safety, but the Government could require the contracting out of functions to specific Departments—in particular the Department of Transport and in the case of offshore oil, the Department of Energy.

It is remarkable that the Health and Safety Commission and executive have achieved so much success with the resources that they still have—resources which, unfortunately, are being reduced. There are not enough inspectors, of course, and I am not asking that their jurisdiction be increased while their numbers decrease. I pay tribute to Dr. John Cullen, the energetic and excellent chairman of the commission, for the work that he supervises and leads, and to his colleagues.

I ask the Government to say that we should stop farming out work that should properly be carried out by the commission and executive to Government Departments that are ill-equipped to deal with it. It is no coincidence that almost every disaster that has occurred, with massive loss of human life, has been outside the purview of the commission and executive, and no coincidence that the Departments of Transport and of Energy have been the ones that have had to set up investigations in almost every case.

Nor is that quite the end of it. We also have the horror of the Hillsborough football tragedy, where the local authority is responsible. In the county of Leicester—part of which I am proud to represent—we have seen the misery of the Donnington race track pop concert, where two youngsters were trodden underfoot and died. With the help of Mr. Fertleman, my researcher, I have gone into the details of that tragedy. Last week I saw Earl Ferrers, who did not know much about it, because it does not seem ever to have been brought to the attention of the Home Office in a way that would sink in. He had not seen the awful video taken by the police, showing a crowd of 100,000 youngsters on the race track listening to the music. As people were trodden underfoot, others lifted them up and passed them over their heads as they surged forward with the music. It is a miracle that only two people were killed.

When we asked who had been responsible for safety, it turned out not to have been the Health and Safety Commission or the Health and Safety Executive: the operation was licensed by the local authority, the police carried out their function and the ambulance and security people carried out theirs. The promoters did their best, but no one was in command. No single authority had the power to say to that group of performers, "Stop: there is a danger." No one had the chance to co-ordinate the people who were looking after those 100,000 youngsters.

The miracle is not, of course, that there were deaths, which, judging by the video, were an absolute inevitability. The wonder is that there were not more. How many more death will there have to be before the Government say, "We must stop the nonsense of leaving crowd safety to local authorities"? When will they stop allowing major events attended by 100,000 to be left to the whim, almost, of people who are not trained or co-ordinated, and who do not know how to handle crowds?

I inquired of the Minister, "What are you going to do?" His answer was, "Well, we have not seen the video." I obtained it from the chief constable of Leicester, and the Minister will have received it today: he will see on it a sight that I had never believed possible.

We have a sorry arrangement—or disarrangement—in this country. Instead of all safety co-ordination being in the hands of experts, it is spread out. Experts have their own areas of expertise but, of course, there will still be miseries. Indeed, there was a disaster in Leicestershire only today. There was an explosion and people were injured. There will always be problems, carelessness and risks and —alas—there will always be deaths. However, the Government should be minimising those risks by ensuring that prevention is carried out under proper supervision by those who are skilled, equipped and trained to do that job. That means making use of the organisation that was set up by the House in the 1974 Act. It was an all-party effort and a statute that everybody supported. To me it seems crazy that, when there is such a set-up, proper use is not made of it.

I ask the Minister to be good enough to consider whether he should say to the Department of Transport, "Stop setting up inquiries after tragedies." That is not good enough to deal with tragedies such as the Marchioness, the Clapham train crash and the King's Cross fire. Indeed, *Which?* magazine reported only today:

> "Large numbers of passengers could be trapped if London Underground is faced with another emergency like the King's Cross fire . . . Despite the disaster, some of the busiest stations still have plastic fittings which can give off black toxic smoke in a fire."

The consumer watchdog said that safety had improved since the tragedy two years ago this month in which 31 people died, but added that some of London Underground's improvements will take a considerable time. How long do we have to wait? How long do hundreds of thousands of people have to travel in unnecessary danger?

I should like to inquire of the Minister why there were no prosecutions after the Zeebrugge ferry disaster. Why did it have to be left to individuals to take action? How is it conceivable that there were no prosecutions when the ferry sailed with its back gate down? Who is supervising the Department of Transport? It is not doing its job. This is not a party political matter; it is about people's safety. I do not understand why action was not taken.

Why should crowd safety be left to local authorities? Why should not somebody co-ordinate? Why should that individual or body not be organised and equipped to do the job? Why must we always wait? Why should we wait until there is a crash or until something happens as was the case at Donnington? Why can action not be taken now before there is another complaint?

As chairman of the all-party industrial safety group, I remember people asking me, after the Marchioness pleasure boat sinking, "Why did it happen?" Of course, it was a terrible error and it might have happened anyway, but one reason is that nobody bothered to take the necessary steps until after dozens of youngsters died.

Therefore, I ask the Minister to carry out a census, survey or audit of the safety arrangements under his control. The Department of Employment is in charge of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive. Therefore, it is his responsibility. There is no reason why the Departments of Transport and of Energy should not hand back to the Department of Employment the functions that they should never have been given in the first place. However, the Government are not prepared to take that action. Their responsibility is a heavy one, because there will be another disaster. We do not know where or when, but we do know why—because we are waiting for disasters to happen before we take action to prevent them. Therefore, I ask the Minister to give a positive response to my real plea, which is made on behalf of the relatives of the people who have died in these tragedies.

We know what happens with each individual inquiry, but what is the Minister going to do to prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future? In the spirit of co-operation that has always existed in the House on matters of health and safety, I ask the Minister to give a positive answer, some hope and at least an undertaking that he will consult, consider and take the steps within his power to strengthen the Health and Safety Commission and Executive to try to prevent such accidents occurring in the future.

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): I thank the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) for giving us the opportunity to discuss health and safety matters. I also compliment him on the way in which he opened the debate. Even if I cannot agree with every conclusion that he draws and accept every nuance of what he said, it is right that I should remind the House that he has a long-standing interest and passionate devotion to this cause. He introduced the subject this evening with his customary eloquence.

The Government are committed to seeing that workplaces enjoy the highest standards of health and safety that are reasonably practicable. That is why we met in full the Health and Safety Commission's requests for the resources it judges necessary to do its job. That point must be stressed as it is the main area in which I must disagree with the hon. and learned Gentleman, particularly on what he said about resourcing. If time permits, I shall return to that subject. It follows naturally that we also wish to ensure that work activities do not affect the health and safety of members of the public.

Health and safety is an area where a degree of common ground should, and I believe does, exist between all parties, and the hon. and learned Gentleman was right to remind us of that. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 is an outstanding example of that common ground. The legislation was drawn up by a Conservative Goverment and put on the statute book by an incoming Labour Government.

Before responding to some of the interesting points which have been raised this evening, I would like to explain in broad terms how the Health and Safety Commission and its Executive operate. Both are, of course, statutory bodies, created by Parliament through the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Their powers and functions flow from that Act and related legislation.

The commission is appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and is responsible for advising Ministers on matters of policy relating to health and safety and for proposing new regulations to Ministers. The commission's area of responsibility is thus extremely wide. It is concerned not only with health and safety in the workplace, but with the protection of all those who may be affected by workplace activities. In some areas of health and safety, the commission is answerable to Ministers outside the Department of Employment. For example, the commission oversees nuclear safety and is answerable to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

One of the commission's major statutory objectives is the modernisation of earlier health and safety legislation to produce a new integrated system of regulations and approved codes under the 1974 Act. Recent important regulations include the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, which replaced more than 40 pieces of earlier outdated legislation. All were developed following in-depth consultation with interested parties, including both sides of industry.

The commission's major instrument is the Health and Safety Executive which, through its inspectorates, enforces health and safety law to protect both work people and the public. The executive advises the commission in its major task of laying down safety standards through regulations and practical guidance. It has been fully involved in Europe, helping to mould directives to ensure they reflect domestic legislation which meets the needs of modern industry, while at the same time protecting health and safety without detriment to competition.

Having set out the responsibilities of both the commission and the executive, I should like to describe how they exercise those responsibilities with specific reference to public safety. The executive is responsible for enforcing the 1974 Act. Section 3 of that Act is wide ranging in that it places a duty on an employer to conduct his undertaking in such a way as to protect, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of non-employees. Section 4 of the Act also places certain duties on persons in control of non-domestic premises towards members of the public. "Undertaking" covers an

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infinitely wide range of premises and activities such as factories, railways, airlines, fairgrounds, and sports stadiums, to name but a few. It is therefore inevitable that section 3 will cover activities for which there exists specific legislation which is the responsibility of other enforcing authorities and, therefore, other Government Departments.

For this reason, the commission has adopted the policy that, as a general principle, HSC and HSE will wish to avoid duplication with other enforcing authorities. But in deciding its approach to any hazardous area, HSE's main concern would be the health and safety of employees, the self-employed and the public. It aims to achieve this efficiently, effectively and economically, with fair and consistent policies responding to legitimate public concerns. That sometimes means an area being dealt with by HSE alone, sometimes by another authority or authorities, occasionally by a mixture of the two. When the general provisions of sections 3 or 4 of the Act overlap with other, more specific legislation enforced by other authorities, the executive seeks to agree demarcation lines with those authorities, in the light of health and safety expertise, economy, efficiency, effectiveness and suitability.

In many areas of overlap, agreement has been reached that the executive should not generally attempt to enforce the requirements of sections 3 and 4, because public safety will be adequately guaranteed by the enforcement of other legislation covering the risk in question. An example is the use of vehicles on the public highway, which is subject to the Road Traffic Acts and the Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations. There are similar agreements over general fire precautions, which are the responsibility of fire authorities, over consumer safety, over the structural safety of buildings and many other areas of potential risks to the public. In its demarcation discussions with other authorities, the executive seeks to avoid needless duplication of enforcement, while ensuring that no area of risk remains uncovered.

However, it should be remembered that the executive is not the sole enforcing authority under the Act. The commission can appoint agents and it works in conjunction with local authorities, which enforce the Act in a wide range of non-industrial premises, such as offices, shops and warehouses. The commission has made a number of agency agreements with other expert bodies to enable them to enforce the Act in place of the executive, where this fits well with those bodies' other responsibilities. Some agreements have been made, for example, with the Department of Energy in respect of the offshore industry and with the Department of Transport in respect of railways. In these areas, the commission retains its overall policy responsibility for advising Ministers.

Similarly, agreements can and have been made for the executive to enforce other legal requirements where the executive has the relevant expertise and the new duties are consistent with its basic responsibilities. For example, the executive enforces part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 and the associated Control of Pesticides Regulations, under an agency agreement with several Government Departments.

I turn to some of the specific points raised by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West tonight, in particular the existing arrangements between the commission and various other Government Departments. In the time available, I shall highlight a couple of them.

HSE inspects sports grounds to ensure that employers are complying with their duties in relation to their employees. However, they do not seek to enforce section 3 with respect to spectators because there is more specific legislation in existence—the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975. The Act is the responsibility of the Home Office and it sets out the safety controls at sports grounds. For that reason, the Home Office has been the lead Government Department in the investigation of the Hillsborough disaster. However, the HSE assisted the inquiry with technical issues concerning, for example, crash barriers and the means of entrance to, and exit from, the ground. However, the HSE has responsibility for sports grounds not covered by the 1975 Act.

Currently, the HSE has overall responsibility for the enforcement of the 1974 Act. However, many local authorities have taken powers under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 to license pop concerts and put crowd safety and control conditions into any licence which is issued. The executive works with the local authority issuing the licence, as do others such as the police.

In the Donnington tragedy of 1988, to which the hon. and learned Gentleman referred so well and in which two people died when the crowd surged forward and lost its footing on soft ground, the local authority were the licensing authority for the event and so undertook the investigation. The executive gave advice to the local authority about staging the 1989 festival, and I believe that it has responded that way again to a request about the 1990 festival.

The establishment of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive has demonstrated, I believe, that there are advantages in having a central body which covers a wide range of health and safety matters. But it does not necessarily follow that the coverage of such a body has to be universal. While there was general agreement when the HSC and HSE were set up as to which inspectorates should become part of the executive, it was more difficult to draw the line in relation to some industries. It is therefore understandable that from time to time questions should be asked about the suitability of current arrangements.

What I believe is important—this has been recognised by the commission—is the need to have the boundaries between commission responsibilities and those of other authorities clearly defined to avoid duplication and perhaps even more fundamentally to ensure that there are not areas which fall between various authorities. The commission keeps this matter under continuing review.

The hon. and learned Gentleman has criticised the sponsor Department having responsibility for the regulation of safety matters. I do not believe that such arrangements are in themselves detrimental to safety. Some industries—for example, marine and aviation transport—demand very specialist expertise which usually is only found in those working in the industry. The Departments are well placed to draw on the specialists from those industries. For other industries such as railway transport and offshore oil, the agency agreements allow the commission to exercise some general oversight of the policy pursued.

The hon. and learned Gentleman has also made out arguments for transferring some outside inspectorates back to the commission. We are aware of the arguments, and as with any question of how best to fulfil our responsibilities in any area of Government activity, we keep the matter under review.

Health and safety are vital. They concern us all, whether at work or as members of the public going about our normal business. I am pleased to note that through their commitment to health and safety and their professionalism the commission and executive have won the confidence and respect of both industry and the public. I am sure that that is common ground between us.

The Government have sustained health and safety by ensuring that the commission is properly funded and operates in an efficient and effective way. We have also gone out and put over the message that health and safety are vital. However, it must never be forgotten that the prime responsibility for health and safety lies with employers and that their responsibilities include the protection of the public.

I said that in the time available I would try to deal in more detail with the hon. and learned Gentleman's point about resources. They are vital, because without proper funds the commission and the executive could not discharge their obligations. Contrary to what has been claimed on several occasions, this Government's funding of the commission and the executive has been at least as good in real terms as that of the last Administration. At constant prices, the figure for 1978-79 was £100 million against £109 million for 1988-89. The executive has a 1 April 1990 target of 160 nuclear installations inspectors —up 30 per cent. in two years—and more than 800 factory and agricultural inspectors—up 9 per cent. in two years. In the public expenditure survey negotiations of the past two years, the commission has received in full the funds that it has bid for.

I hope that I have been able to reassure the hon. and learned Gentleman that we shall consider what he has said. He has an acknowledged expertise and interest in this area, but it must be stressed time and again that ultimately it is not merely a question of throwing money at the problem. There is more to it than that, but the situation must be kept under review.

Mr. Janner *rose*——

Mr. Nicholls: Unusually for a debate of this nature, I am glad to give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Janner: Will the Minister be good enough to undertake that he will discuss with fellow Ministers in the Departments of Transport and Energy the possibility that they should transfer the powers that they have in safety matters back to the Health and Safety Commission, in view of the awful disasters that have occurred in the areas of responsibility contracted out to them and of the fact that many people believe that at least some of those disasters could have been avoided had there been proper central control?

Mr. Nicholls: I should like to make two points in reply to the hon. and learned Gentleman. I hope that I have made it as clear as I possibly can that the common ground between us is the need to see legislation working effectively. The hon. and learned Gentleman was fair enough to say that accidents will happen, but we have to do everything in our power to minimise their number.

I do not accept the slightly too easy conclusion drawn by the hon. and learned Gentleman that if everything was dealt with centrally there would be no problem. The conclusion implicit in what the hon. and learned Gentleman said was that the matter was not properly centralised under the Commission. He repeated the word "transport". I will not quibble with the hon. and learned Gentleman about whether the word that he used was "many" or "most", but, it was central to his theme that the matter should be centralised. I am glad to see that the hon. and learned Gentleman accepts that summary. On the evidence that I have, I do not accept that that would be the answer. It is well known that the arguments are in the public domain. It is implicit in everything that I have said in the debate that we are listening and want to see the situation improving. I suspect that the solutions may not be as easy as the hon. and learned Gentleman would want, but I promise him that the matter is kept under constant, real and active review.

Question put and agree to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 3 November 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Road Safety

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

9.35 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Atkins): I am delighted to introduce a debate on a most important subject that is of considerable interest to many people, both in this House and in the country.

I wish to put on record my thanks—and, I suspect, those of hon. Members on both sides of the House—to my predecessor the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who did so much to achieve success in the broad area of road safety.

Last year more than 5,000 people were killed and more than 300,000 were injured in road accidents. In other words, in a single year 100 of the constituents of every Member of this House were killed or seriously injured in road accidents. They are the sort of people we meet every day in our constituency activities. We probably all know a family that has been devastated by the death of a child in a road accident. Many of us have teenage children—I have two young children—and so we understand only too well the concern felt by parents for children of that age. Two out of every three teenagers who die accidentally are killed on the roads.

That terrible loss of life is not the result of a natural catastrophe that is somehow beyond our control; it is a disaster of human making that we can and must tackle. Because of its importance, the Government have carried out a full inter-departmental review, of road safety policy. That review, which reported in 1987, analysed the problems, examined what was realistic and practicable, and provided us with a structured framework for reducing those road casualties by a third by the year 2000.

In making its analysis, the review carefully studied what could be learnt from the experiences of other countries. The broad pattern seen in the United Kingdom was mirrored in most developed countries. We had, and still have, the best overall road safety record in the European Community in terms of road deaths both per head of population and in relation to miles travelled. We have a particularly good record for car users, but rather less so for pedestrians and cyclists. As children make up a larger proportion of those groups, we have a relatively poor record on child safety. That part of the study, therefore, gave us a clear indication of where we should concentrate our efforts.

The review examined the effects of past measures that had contributed to the reduction in casualties over the previous 15 to 20 years. That was a complex process because of other changes in behaviour, travel mode and attitudes to one's own and other people's safety. Some actions by central and local government had clearly been particularly significant. They included infrastructure improvements such as the building of motorways, which are eight times safer than other roads—we are, after all, meeting a day after the 30th birthday of the building of the M1—urban bypasses, which are often three times safer than the roads they replace; town centre pedestrianisation; improvement in road lighting; the construction of safety barriers, and other low-cost, high-return safety engineering techniques. Changes in road traffic law, notably the introduction of compulsory seatbelt wearing and breath testing for alcohol, have also made a major contribution. Education and driver and rider training, although less tangible, also played a significant part.

In the light of the review, the Government decided to focus on three areas: The first was to raise the level of public awareness and response so that road safety was not seen simply as the Government's responsibility, but that everyone should play their part. The second was to target the most vulnerable road users—that is to say children, the elderly, pedestrians, cyclists and motor cyclists. The third was to use proven, cost-effective methods that could be forecast robustly and would cut casualties by calculable amounts, especially in the areas of vehicle and road engineering.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My hon. Friend may be aware that I represent a constituency which does not have any motorways but which, sadly, has had a number of young fatalities recently. Indeed, there are a number of them every year. He has not yet touched upon the contribution that the speed limit can make to road safety, and I wonder whether his Department would uniquely consider the Isle of Wight for a uniform speed limit, as already exists in the Channel Islands. I wrote to the county surveyor about that matter some time ago.

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who speaks uniquely for the Isle of Wight, and with every strength and on every possible occasion. This is yet another excuse to visit his delightful constituency, to see the province at first hand. I shall ensure that my office is aware of his concern and we shall have a look at the matter. This is a serious point which he has developed at some length with his county surveyor, whose response I shall be interested to see.

Based on the review's assessment of what such measures could achieve, we adopted the target of reducing road casualties by one third by the end of the century. This is a tough target which cannot be attained by the Government alone. It will need the combined and sustained efforts of everyone involved in road safety.

So, following the report, we consulted widely on how to achieve its aims. The first fruits of that exercise were set out in the report placed by my predecessor in the Library in July 1988. There was wide support for the proposed approach and a welcome commitment from the local authority associations—together with a work plan for the first few years of the target period. This summer we updated that with a further report and action plan which we circulated widely to all involved. It was warmly welcomed.

In Government priorities, four sectors are being addressed—the road, the vehicle, the driver and the vulnerable road user. I shall deal first with the road. We recently announced in the White Paper "Roads to Prosperity" our plans for a £12 billion road building

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programme over the next 10 years. The building of roads is often seen by the public and press solely in terms of increased mobility—the reduction of congestion and shortening of journey times. These, of course, are important objectives, but the aim is also to provide safer roads for vehicles and their occupants. Equally important, by moving traffic out of town centres, we can separate it from other road users such as pedestrians and cyclists and thereby improve their safety. All major road building developments are subject to a cost-benefit analysis. It is very important that this analysis gives full weight to casualty savings. We have looked at this carefully. The value to be placed on saving a fatality has been increased to £500,000 and work is in progress on revaluing serious injuries.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The Minister is making an important point. In the cost-benefit analysis. Have there been or are there likely to be any changes in the analysis of road building costs comparative to the costs of improving public transport or building railways, or improving railway services? That would reduce road usage, which would be a factor in improving road safety.

Mr. Atkins: We give a great deal of attention to casualties and how they are caused across the whole of transport provision. I could not give the hon. Gentleman an immediate answer on the technicalities of the calculation. If he would like to write to me—

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister should write to me.

Mr. Atkins: I should be delighted to write to the hon. Gentleman and give him the technical answers so that next time he intervenes he will know as much about it as I do. He makes a serious point about safety, which has been well taken. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), who handles aviation and shipping matters in the Department, as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), who looks after public transport, are giving these matters important consideration, because they are fundamental to all that we do.

Large-scale road building is not the only way that highway engineers can improve road safety. Local road safety schemes involving low cost remedial measures at problem sites can make a substantial contribution to reducing accidents. These can involve as little as the provision of new signs, road markings or lighting and can extend to resurfacing, junction improvements or the installation of traffic lights or roundabouts. Such schemes are extremely cost-effective. In the summer, we announced that we would be doubling our spending this year on such schemes on trunk roads to £10 million. We are anxious that local authorities should increase the number of schemes on local roads, where most accidents occur. Together we set up a joint task force last year to identify factors which constrain the rate at which schemes are implemented and to recommend ways in which performance can be increased. The task force reported in July, one of its recommendations being that a proportion of transport supplementary grant should be earmarked for schemes on all roads and not just those of more than local importance. Because of the value of these schemes, I have decided that we should give the matter very careful thought, in consultation with the local authority associations, and as long as I can be satisfied that the proposed changes would not give rise to any insurmountable problems in relation to the principles of the system, I am prepared to consider them in the next TSG round.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Minister has made an important announcement. Can he give any timescale involved in this? I am taking it that he is doing more than give a vague undertaking and is making a fairly firm pledge that this will happen and that TSG will be extended to cover roads of more than local significance.

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support, as in this matter his experience makes him realise the importance of what I have said. I cannot at this stage be specific. I am working as hard as I can to ensure that the change is incorporated as quickly as possible. In truth, the decision was taken only recently and we are still exploring the ramifications. I undertake to do this as quickly as I can.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): My hon. Friend will know that Dorset has only one trunk road, so the vast majority of road building falls upon the transport supplementary grant. Therefore, although the 50 per cent. coming from the Government is extremely welcome, the other 50 per cent. that must be provided locally is difficult to find. Has he given any consideration to increasing the number of trunk roads, particularly north-south, in Dorset?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is expecting a little much of me, in a debate such as this, to give him chapter and verse of the road structure of Dorset. His intervention gives me an ideal opportunity to come to Dorset to inspect the road structure at first hand, and I shall be delighted to do so. Perhaps my hon. Friend would care to pursue the matter with me after the debate and we can explore what we can do to assist and improve the road structure—I am sure that it is already very good, but everything is capable of being improved—within his constituency and within the county.

Site specific schemes are very effective in dealing with accident blackspots, but in a typical urban area, over half the accidents are scattered diffusely. These include a high proportion of pedestrian and cycle accidents, especially involving children. We therefore launched a major urban safety project for the development of area-wide traffic management systems for improving safety. These involved road engineering to discourage "rat-running" through residential areas, with road humps and selective road narrowing to reduce vehicle speeds. Five demonstration schemes have now been implemented around the country and the initial analysis has shown a reduction in casualties of between 15 and 30 per cent.

In addition to schemes designed specially to achieve casualty reduction, significant benefits can be obtained by ensuring that all road works affecting the highway, whatever their main objective, are designed with safety in mind. This can be done at the design stage and by subjecting all schemes to a safety check by staff not associated with the original design. Such a "safety audit" will shortly become standard practice on the Department's own schemes.

The second of our objectives is the vehicle. There are already large potential savings in casualties in improvement in vehicle design. The Transport and Road Research

Laboratory has been a world leader on design improvement that could reduce casualties. Our present task has two objectives. The first is to encourage manufacturers to start introducing some of these improvements without waiting for legislation. Like other hon. Members, as a Member with a constituency interest in a truck and bus manufacturer, I am only too well aware of the pressure on it, not only from the public generally but from me, for improvements. Customers today are demanding higher standards of safety. Older drivers, whose numbers are rapidly increasing, have made it clear that they attach as much weight to safety and comfort as to speed and high acceleration. The example of Volvo in successfully marketing the safety of its vehicles is one that others would do well to emulate.

Secondly, we are pressing for better vehicle safety standards within the European Community. Where vehicle construction standards need to be agreed, we know exactly which features would save most lives.

Mr. Corbyn: Like the hon. Gentleman, I welcome many of the improvements in bus design, and the Volvo has a high standard. Will the hon. Gentleman also turn his mind to the problem of access for less mobile people? Basic bus design is old fashioned, and it is possible to have much lower access to buses and lower floors, with a slightly different layout design. Less mobile people would then be able to use buses more safely and easily.

Mr. Atkins: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman congratulated a firm which makes buses in my constituency. His point is entirely fair and one that we make continually. My advisory committee on the disabled raises the matter with me regularly, and I reflect its anxieties to manufacturers whenever possible.

Where vehicle construction standards need to be agreed, we know exactly which features save the most lives and those should have priority. The Commission has a real contribution to make and we wish to work closely with it. This does not involve it in matters outside its proper competence which are best left to national Governments, such as how much alcohol people may lawfully drink or the speed at which they can travel on roads.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Will my hon. Friend discuss the use of anti-lock brakes within the framework of the Community? He will be aware of the contribution of anti-lock brakes on aircraft and that 15 per cent. of accidents on roads arise from skidding. Anti-lock brakes would make a major contribution to solving that problem. Will he consider that?

Mr. Atkins: I have anti-lock brakes on my car and I appreciate their importance in keeping me on a safe course in the event of an accident. My hon. Friend makes a good point, and I shall look at it most closely.

We could save 10,000 deaths or serious injuries to car occupants per year with the measures to which I referred earlier. They include better protection against the side of a car impacting against another car or obstacle, and a better design of steering wheel which will reduce facial injuries to drivers. I was pleased to support the launch of a new steering wheel on the new 200 series of Rover vehicles at the Motor fair a few weeks ago. The manufacturers and TRRL put a great deal of work into producing that world-leading design. Likewise, thousands of deadly injuries to pedestrians and motorcyclists could be avoided if cars were to be designed with a more "pedestrian-friendly" front.

A further category where substantial savings could be achieved is in protection for motorcyclists. Some motorcyclists have sometimes argued that they should have complete freedom to choose the motorcycle that they like without paying attention to safety features. My hon. Friends will not be surprised to learn that I am all for freedom but at present the freedom does not exist. Our research shows that substantial benefits can be obtained from better protection of motorcycle riders, not just to the legs, although that would be an important benefit, but against frontal impact, for example through the provision of airbags. Yet, at present no manufacturer offers such features on its normal production run of motorcycles, so motorcyclists are denied the choice of safety features, even if they want them.

I am also anxious further to improve bus safety, which we touched on a moment ago. We already have a good record. We were among the first in the world to have a stability test to prevent overturning. We have new measures in progress to reduce the risk of people being trapped in automatic doors on buses—something that has caused great anxiety especially among elderly people.

More remains to be done. We are particularly anxious to encourage greater safety among children. We want to ensure that the buses provided are safe and in particular are fitted with seatbelts. I am pressing manufacturers to include seatbelts on all seats and we are encouraging schools to request seatbelts when they charter coaches. Every parent should encourage his or her school to do that.

A further area where we are looking for improvements is on better access for disabled passengers, especially to enable easier boarding and alighting. Again we are encouraging manufacturers to bring forward improvements voluntarily, without waiting for legislation. But legislation may still be needed. This will require agreement within the European Community. As with many other matters which are not given the attention that they deserve, the United Kingdom is taking a leading role in pressing for early agreement on better bus standards, in keeping with the aim of harmonisation of standards within Europe to achieve a high level of safety.

The Government's third priority is to influence driver behaviour. The most direct way of doing that is through legislation, and a substantial body of road traffic law is designed to maintain and improve road safety. Earlier this year we published our response to the road traffic law review—the so-called North report. In the White Paper, "The Road User and the Law", we set out the Government's proposals to establish a closer link between the requirements of the law and the road safety and traffic benefits that it is designed to achieve. We aim to hit hard the bad driver and the drink-driver, and to ensure that those who drive badly or under the influence of drink are properly punished. The key measures include replacement of the present reckless driving offence by a new dangerous driving offence aimed more at the observable standard of driving and less at the drivers' state of mind; a new offence, with up to five years imprisonment, of causing death by careless driving while unfit through drink or drugs, and other measures against drink-drivers; a new extended driving test for drivers disqualified for the main bad

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driving offences; use of modern technology to detect speeding and traffic light offences; and a major experiment in rehabilitation for drink-driving offenders.

Meanwhile, we have already taken steps to extend the high-risk offenders scheme. Under the scheme, the worst drink-drive offenders—those disqualified at two and a half times or more over the limit or for refusing to provide a specimen—are required to satisfy the medical authorities that they do not have a drink problem and are otherwise fit to drive before their licences are returned.

The law alone will not stamp out drink-driving or prevent people from driving badly. We have to change people's attitudes. Drinking and driving is the largest single cause of road accident deaths in this country. Nearly 1,000 people are killed each year in accidents where the driver or rider has been drinking over the legal limit. At night nearly half the drivers killed have alcohol levels above the legal limit. That is why we are concentrating our publicity effort against drink-driving. I am pleased to report that this is meeting with some success. Research carried out for the Department of Transport into the effectiveness of its advertising, measuring changes in attitudes to drink-driving, shows that the number of people driving after drinking has almost halved over the past 10 years from 29 per cent. to 16 per cent. Recently published statistics show a 5 per cent. fall in the number of breath tests found positive after accidents. That evidence is supported by coroners' statistics.

The police have made an enormous contribution to combating the menace of the drink-driver. They have increased considerably the resources that they put into enforcing the law. The number of breath tests that they administer is now approaching half a million a year. Last year the police asked for their powers to breath test to be extended, as hon. Members know. Earlier this year the Home Office invited comments on whether there should be any change in police powers to require breath tests. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will be studying the outcome of that consultation exercise as one of his priorities, and hopes to make an announcement shortly.

Even where the driver is not under the influence of drink, research shows that over 90 per cent. of accidents involve human error. We simply do not know enough about human behaviour to understand such things as why people take risks, why they fail to see a pedestrian or why they misjudge distances and speeds. An increase in our knowledge of these matters could be of enormous benefit in reducing road accidents by enabling us to design roads and vehicles better to minimise the chance of error. We have therefore set up a programme of behavioural research to provide the building blocks from which we can hope to begin to find answers to those questions. It is long-term strategic research with potentially huge returns. Our road and vehicle safety research programme now exceeds £8 million a year and includes over £500,000 for long-term strategic research into driver behaviour.

Motor cyclists are vulnerable road users, in that they are eight times more likely than car drivers to be involved in an accident and 40 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured. More than 40 per cent. of motor-cyclist casualties are under 20 years of age. Those statistics have provided us with a six-point package of measures to make motor cycling safer.

First, next year all motor cyclists will have to undergo basic training by qualified instructors before they can take their motor cycles on to the roads. Secondly, they must then take the test for a full licence within one year, rather than the two years that are currently allowed. Thirdly, as from 2 October, the test is now more demanding, with the examiner following the candidate around the test course on a motor cycle. Fourthly, we are supporting a proposal by the European Commission to restrict newly qualified riders to lower-powered machines for the first two years after they have passed the test. Fifthly, car drivers will have to undergo the same basic training as other motor-cycle and moped riders before their provisional entitlement comes into effect. Finally, learner riders will not be able to carry pillion passengers.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Is the Minister aware that at present there are not enough examiners to carry that out?

Mr. Atkins: We are taking urgent steps to ensure that we obtain enough examiners. I cannot wave a magic wand and solve the problem overnight, but it is certainly a priority.

Pedestrians are among the road users at greatest risk, yet are the most difficult to protect. More than a third of all people killed on the roads—over 1,700 each year—are pedestrians, and a large proportion of those are children and elderly people.

One of the most important ways of protecting pedestrians is to slow down the traffic in residential areas. I have already described the urban safety project involving the use of speed-reducing techniques. We shall shortly be introducing regulations to make it easier and cheaper for local authorities to provide road humps, and we shall also be relaxing the regulations for pelican crossings. I shall be inviting views on the possibility of more widespread use of 20-mph speed limits in conjunction with area-wide "traffic-calming" schemes.

Many pedestrians are run over because they are not seen by car drivers. Last Wednesday I launched a conspicuity campaign on the theme "See and be seen", directed at persuading vulnerable road users—pedestrians, cyclists, motor cyclists and horse riders—to wear or carry something that can be seen easily by drivers. Pedestrians, however, must also be taught to look after themselves.

That brings me to the third identifiable group of vulnerable road users—children. Their vulnerability, and its tragic consequences, was highlighted in the BBC television programme "Watchdog" earlier this week. Education and training must be the key to improving our record on child safety. Good pre-school road safety training can help to avoid casualties among children as they grow older. We are about to launch a pilot "traffic club", in co-operation with the General Accident insurance company and local authorities.

Let me record the thanks of my Department—and, I think, those of road users generally—to companies such as General Accident and the many others that take such enormous trouble and put so much effort into supporting and encouraging such schemes, particularly those involving children.

Mr. Tony Banks: That's the commercial over.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman is extremely cynical, but I think that I understand what he is saying.

The pilot scheme will provide parents with road safety material suitable for their child's age. The project will cover some 500,000 children, who will receive an initial package on their third birthday and another every six months until they start school.

Once at school, children can be taught road safety as a subject in its own right. I welcome the initiative shown by some head teachers in introducing road safety into their school curricula, and I hope that more schools will follow. Together with the motor-cycle industry, we provide support for former motor-cycle ace Dave Taylor, who tours schools throughout Britain bringing home the road safety message to both pupils and teachers.

Mr. Banks: Have the Government considered putting road safety into the national curriculum? Ensuring that children are educated in road safety would then be a legal requirement, and would no longer be left to the more progressive and far-seeing teachers.

Mr. Atkins: As the hon. Gentleman will understand, that is a matter for the Department of Education and Science, and I am in regular contact with the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). We certainly intend to see what we can do to bring road safety into the formal structure of the curriculum. I am delighted that it is being given its present degree of priority, but the hon. Gentleman has made a fair point with which I have considerable sympathy.

It is possible, then, to make road safety part of the wider curriculum. Last month we launched a "Safe Journey to School" competition, aimed at pupils aged between eight and 12. Children, parents, teachers and school governors will work together to devise alternative, safer routes to school. In the process the children will become more aware of traffic hazards, and will develop skills and techniques to deal with them: thus the general awareness of the school community of traffic danger will be enhanced. An inter-active video will make children more aware of road hazards generally.

We are also developing teaching resources for use in the national curriculum. By using road safety statistics in mathematics or vehicle stopping distances in physics, children will gain a heightened awareness of road safety while studying core curriculum subjects. Regulations making compulsory the wearing of seat belts by children in the backs of cars came into force on 1 September and constituted a major step to improve child safety. More than 60 children are killed and more than 7,000 injured each year while travelling unrestrained in the rear of cars. Three quarters of those lives could be saved and two thirds of those injuries avoided if all wore restraints.

Cycling is another activity in respect of which we are concerned predominantly with child safety. The cycling proficiency team organised by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, aimed at teaching children aged nine or more to ride bicycles safely, is to be relaunched as "Cycleway". I am assured that it is not going to be scrapped, as some press reports have suggested. About 300,000 children pass the test each year—almost 50 per cent. of the age group—and I am sure that that initiative, which will involve teachers more closely, will result in more children being better prepared for our roads. ROSPA will continue to award certificates and badges to children who pass the test.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister will be pleased to learn that I passed my cycle test at school. Will he have discussions with the cycle dealers and their associations to ensure that when children in the appropriate age group buy a bicycle, or one is bought for them, they are given the maximum possible encouragement to undergo training and to take a test?

Mr. Atkins: I am fairly certain that that happens a good deal already, but if we can improve on the present position I shall be happy to do so. My own children, aged 13 and 10, both own cycles, and have been told in no uncertain terms that they must take the test. I hope that other parents will tell their children the same, particularly with Christmas coming up and the possibility, indeed probability, of more children being given bikes. I should add that, as my children already own bicycles, they will not feature among the presents that they will receive this Christmas. I hope that they will not read this!

The County Road Safety Officers Association, with the help of my Department and of General Accident, has provided a highway code for young road users which provides sensible advice on safe cycling. We are currently working on the production of a public information film to encourage the wearing of cycle helmets, particularly by children. I shall continuing to give high priority to improving child safety, and to developing the necessary measures with the help of all concerned.

Last but not least among the most vulnerable road users are the elderly. Almost 30 per cent. of all pedestrians killed on the roads are over the age of 60. The new proposals for traffic calming will be of particular benefit to older people—both pedestrians and motorists—as will other measures announced in our pedestrian safety package last spring.

Many interesting and important ideas were aired at a seminar that I addressed last Tuesday on the subject of the older driver, arranged by the Automobile Association. I look forward with keen interest to receiving the report and proposals aimed at improving the safety of older motorists on which the AA and the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention are now working.

What is clear from all these activities and initiatives to which I have referred is the important role which everybody, both as individuals and through the institutions of which we are part, can play in improving road safety.

A moment ago I mentioned vehicle manufacturers. They have done much to design safer cars and make available safety features, such as anti-locking brakes, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jacks) referred so cogently. But the impression given by vehicle advertising is that there is only one manufacturer who sees safety as a primary selling point. It seems to me that all too often the central feature of the promotion of a new car is its acceleration, or the extent to which it is capable of exceeding the legal speed limit. I do not think that it is enough to say, "That is what people want". Indeed, I note some countries have agreed a code of practice with their industries to avoid purveying such a message. Advertising forms attitudes as well as responding to them.

[Mr. Atkins]

There is also a role for insurance companies. If, as in the United States and Sweden, they published accident and casualty rates of different makes and models of cars, the consumer would be able to make an informed choice. Of course there are other factors. No doubt sports cars have a worse record than family saloons because they are driven by different types of people, but that is no reason why someone who is in the market for a family saloon should not have information on the relative safety records of different models.

I very much welcome the voluntary agreement of the motor insurance industry to bring to an end policies which provide protection against the consequences of disqualification from driving for alcohol or drug-related offences. Similarly I welcome the clear signal given by Pearl Insurance in withdrawing cover from drivers involved in accidents when their blood alcohol level is above the statutory limit. I hope that others will give equally clear signals to the drinking driver.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): My hon. Friend referred to excessive speeds. Would he dare to think the unthinkable and explain to the House why motor vehicles are produced all over the world that are capable of being driven at 120 mph? Is it perhaps for use in people's driveways, or is there some other area that has escaped my notice where such speeds can be attained in this country?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend has asked a very good question. It is one for the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders as much as for me. I used to drive a little old sports car quite quickly. I have since realised the folly of my ways, but I think that acceleration forms as much a part of it as the high speed at the top of the range. However, my hon. Friend has made a fair point which he should continue to address both in public and in private to those who are in a position to answer.

There have been other notable initiatives. Autoglass has provided splendid prizes for the "Safe Journey to School" competition and 3M has given its support to the conspicuity campaign. Britax has helped us to publicise the child seat belt law and Kwik-Fit has run an award winning campaign promoting the use of child restraints. There must be many other private companies with an interest in road safety. I hope that they can be persuaded to take an initiative in support of the national effort to cut casualties. After all, enlightened self-interest is a great motivator for improvement.

I welcome, too, the splendid support for the campaign against drinking and driving given by the drinks industry. The brewers, publicans and soft drinks manufacturers have not only reinforced our message that drinking and driving do not mix but also can take credit for making it socially acceptable to decline to drink alcohol. They have introduced and promoted a range of alcohol-free and low-alcohol beers, wines and ciders which make it possible for a driver to feel socially at ease while avoiding alcohol. This is particularly important to young men, who are the main target of our publicity against drink-driving.

Finally, there is a group with perhaps the most important role and responsibilities in road safety—the local authorities. Without question, even with all the support and goodwill of the private sector, achieving the target of reducing road casualties by one third will depend on the commitment and co-operation of local government. Seventy five per cent. of all casualties occur on local roads. Bus and train users are as vulnerable as—indeed, more so than—car users as they cross roads at each end of their trips to reach their destinations. Only local highway authorities can implement safety schemes on these roads. The local authority road safety officers are on the front line of education and training, providing education material to schools and promoting road safety projects.

From my experience on a local authority, I can say that the status of road safety officers is not always what it ought to be. Too often they are stuck in offices at the back end of the building, and the committee to which they respond comprises members of the authority who perhaps are not in the forefront of day-to-day council activity. That must change. The road safety officer must be one of the most important people among council officers. The road safety sub-committee must become a committee in its own right and must have a say in all matters relating to transport.

The local authority associations have recommended that each authority should set a local casualty reduction target and produce a road safety strategy for meeting that target. They have produced guidance to their members on how to go about this in their "Road Safety Code of Good Practice". This is an excellent document which I recommend hon. Members to read, if they have the time, and which I wholeheartedly welcome.

I am currently engaged in a round of regional meetings with local councillors and their chief executives and have been struck by their interest and commitment. To provide the missing link between the national targets and these local targets we agreed to set regional casualty reduction targets and to monitor progress towards achieving them at the next and subsequent regional consultative meetings.

In a wide-ranging speech, for which I make no apology, I have outlined at some length the Government's approach to tackling the scourge of road casualties. There are two aspects which are of the highest importance. First, there is the hard-nosed process of identifying where our record is poorest, concentrating on proven casualty reduction measures, analysing what is achievable in numerical terms, setting targets and monitoring what has been achieved.

Secondly, there is the need to change attitudes throughout society, to bring home to people the scale of the human disaster that is going on around us, to make them recognise that this is not someone else's problem but that of the whole of society.

Every individual road user must be made aware of his or her duty of care to others and to himself or herself. Parents must instil in their children the fact that the roads are the most dangerous place where they are ever likely to be. Teachers in the classroom, doctors in their surgeries, Members of Parliament in their constituencies, the press and television all have a responsibility to advise and educate. Vehicle manufacturers can make their products safer and can market safety in their advertising. Every private company in this country can improve road safety by ensuring safer driving by their employees. Some can contribute directly by developing and marketing new safety products. Others can sponsor road safety projects both locally and nationally.

I can assure the House that the Government are committed to playing their full part in the war against this senseless loss of human life; but that war can be won only by the concerted effort of every company, every institution and every individual in this country. Without that, 3 million people will die or be injured on Britain's roads over the next decade.

10.17 am

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): In recent years under this Government transport safety has become a major focus of public concern—not, regrettably, because of their attention to road safety, which we acknowledge, but because of the unprecedented series of transport disasters: in the air, at sea, on the railways and on London Underground. While these tragic events serve to concentrate the mind on specific safety issues and on what we believe to be the Government's neglect of the public sector, it is the relentless toll on our roads that must rightly occupy our thoughts today.

For every minute that we are debating the matter this morning, one person will be injured in a road accident. Furthermore, as the Minister has acknowledged, the victims of road accidents are, disproportionately, the most vulnerable members of our society—children and the elderly. The Opposition are acutely aware of the fact that we have some of the worst safety statistics in Europe when it comes to children on our roads. We acknowledge that attempts are being made to reduce the number of accidents in Britain and we wholeheartedly welcome the Government's target to reduce accidents by one third by the year 2,000. I am happy to join the Minister in paying tribute to the former Minister, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), for his work.

However, as the Minister has reminded us, during 1988 over 5,000 road users died and over 300,000 were injured in road traffic accidents. In addition to the enormous emotional cost of this tragic loss of life, the social cost is in excess of £4 billion. The accident figures could be dramatically reduced if a variety of measures were put into practice.

Road safety is an equity issue. At present, cyclists and pedestrians run a disproportionately high risk of being killed or seriously injured as compared with people who travel in cars or on buses. Pedestrian injuries are increasing. Last year, nearly two fifths of all people killed on the roads were pedestrians and cyclists. Furthermore, as the Black report showed, children from economically deprived backgrounds are most at risk from road accidents. Surely it is ironic that the most inherently safe and environmentally benign modes of transport—walking and cycling—produce the most casualties.

The Government have responded to the particularly pressing problem of child accidents on the road with a programme of education which the Minister has outlined today. While we commend the launch of the major pilot on pre-school traffic clubs, we believe that there is a case for a general duty to be placed on schools to teach road safety. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and I hope that road safety will be introduced into the national curriculum and that the national curriculum will not interrupt the programmes that some schools have already started.

However, there is a fear that those good measures will be lost in the wider measures of Government policy. Educated children would not only be aware of their own safety needs, but would recognise the huge deficiencies in Government transport planning which directly impinge on safety. The reductions in Government financial assistance to public transport are a scandal. High prices and poor standards of service and safety resulting from the cuts in subsidy force people to make more journeys by private car. Indeed, the Minister's own advisers predict dramatic increases in private car use in the next 20 years.

What real hope can there be for achieving the Government's targets on road safety when they have no coherent policy for public transport? Only yesterday, British Rail and London Regional Transport announced average price increases of 9 and 10 per cent. Perhaps the Minister will tell us whether he expects any increase in road accidents as a consequence of those price rises. In London, when fares were increased by 100 per cent. following the Law Lords' ruling on the GLC's Fares Fair policy, accidents increased in London by 3,000 per annum. An expert study carried out by Professor Allsop of University college concluded that there was a linear relationship. Thus, we expect an increase in road accidents as a consequence of yesterday's fare increases. Not only will those increases deter people from using public transport by price; they will also result in a poorer service. As the Minister knows, the Government's decision to cut public money in revenue support led the operators to seek increases 50 per cent. higher than those announced yesterday. Clearly, they believed that increases of twice the rate of inflation were required to finance the improvement and investment programmes they seek to undertake without Government support.

Does the Minister honestly believe that the state of public transport in Britain, particularly in London, will not continue to force people onto the roads and into private cars? That is not the only area of Government policy which is at odds with their commitment to road safety. Where is their real commitment to traffic-calming measures and accident investigation and prevention? The Minister has said much about experiments and future good intentions, but we want to see them in practice. Not nearly enough is being done. Experts from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of London Authorities and the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety have all pointed to the vital importance of local measures in the urban environment that can save lives. Sadly, the Government's laudable aim of reducing accidents by one third by the year 2000 is unlikely to be reached because their general philosophy in transport is profit first. It also appears that there is a certain amount of inertia in the Government in implementing new legislation.

The Minister referred to the White Paper "The Road User and the Law" which could make many useful contributions to road safety, but will anything on it be included in the Queen's Speech? It would be highly regrettable if it were not and I hope that the Minister will assure us that that vital piece of legislation will be included in the coming Session.

The Opposition welcome some of the proposals for changes in road and traffic law set out in the White Paper, particularly the proposal to replace the reckless driving offence with offences that relate more closely to actual standards of driving. We also favour proposals for retesting, retraining and rehabilitating offenders, and we believe that the Government should reconsider their omission of drunk-driver offenders from the retesting proposals. We were surprised by and did not understand the exclusion of drunk-driver offenders from the retesting proposals.

[Ms. Joan Ruddock]

We are firmly committed to reducing the number of drink-driving offences. While we appreciate the success that has been referred to this morning in the fall in the number of fatal accidents involving drivers over the limit, we believe that a comprehensive package of measures should be introduced further to reduce those figures. More has to be done to devise appropriate sentencing and treatment programmes for high-risk offenders. In line with the EC, the Opposition believe that the current legal level of alcohol consumption for drivers is too high and should be reduced to 50 mg per 100 ml of blood. It is commonly believed by those who have researched these matters that the test used in 1967 to set the present limit is now inappropriate.

We believe that, along with the reduction in acceptable levels of alcohol, an agreed system of random breath tests should be introduced. At the moment, the chances of drunk driving being detected are too low, ranging from one in 250 trips in one locality to one in 4,000 trips in other parts of the country. The police are making up the rules as they go along. There is no consistency and no justice. Therefore, it is time that a new system is put in place. However, we are absolutely clear that such tests would be acceptable and civil liberties would be protected only if rigorous standard guidelines were set out for the police so that in no way could they be used to victimise certain groups in society.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): The hon. Lady talks about the police making up the rules as they go along. What evidence has she to substantiate that?

Ms. Ruddock: The evidence is in the statistics that demonstrate that there is no consistency in the numbers of people being stopped randomly, which vary enormously and depend on the rules adopted by individual constabularies. I am afraid that there is also evidence that there is disproportionate stopping of young black people in many parts of London. If we really want to tackle the problems, we must legitimise random testing and that means that we must legislate.

There are many ways in which random breath testing could be better implemented. Many groups would need to be consulted before a firm course of action could be taken, but we are convinced by research abroad that it can make an important contribution to the reduction to the numbers of drivers over the limit. We look forward to the promised report from the Home Secretary. Other legislation could also be implemented if the Minister is really serious about trying to meet his targets by the year 2000.

The Minister mentioned improvements in vehicle safety standards. We agree that they could play a part in reducing casualties. Pedestrian-friendly car fronts, side impact protection in cars and front under run guards on heavy goods vehicles would significantly improve a person's chance of survival when involved in an accident. However, we require more than the Minister's fine words. If motorists are to be forced to do what we know could be significant in saving people's lives, action is required.

I ask the Minister to give his attention to second-hand vehicles. Perhaps he could refer to that subject when he sums up. The maintenance and repair of vehicles is important for the prevention of accidents. We are concerned about the continuing illegal practice of clocking so that cars record a lower mileage. We are also concerned about the rebuilding and selling of cars that have been destroyed in accidents.

Mr. Atkins: I am interested in this idea and it is one that has been bandied about, but I am aware of the problems involved. Would the hon. Lady like to develop her theme —I do not want to put her on the rack—and say how she thinks that recorded mileage can be checked without the introduction of a substantial bureaucratic operation which will make life more difficult for those who buy and sell cars?

Ms. Ruddock: I am delighted to respond to the Minister's invitation as it gives me an opportunity to advertise the Labour party's transport document. The Minister has obviously not had the time, or perhaps the inclination, to read it.

The document says that the Labour party will ensure that all motorists inform the driver and vehicle licensing centre of the mileage of their car when relicensing it or when a car is destroyed or acquired. Motorists would have access to the DVLC records in Swansea and that would be the first step towards establishing it as a consumer protection body, and towards protecting the interests of motorists.

Mr. Atkins: Perhaps I fell into that, but I do not object to having done so, as it allows us to pursue the debate. How would the hon. Lady control what people put down as the mileage on the form? Most people in Britain are law abiding, and they would put down the right amount, but the people she is trying to catch would not put down the correct amount.

Ms. Ruddock: Clocking is not usually done by individuals who own and drive cars. The offence is committed by second-hand car dealers. If we can assume that people who legally own and drive the cars are, as the Minister says, honest, and if they inform the centre as we propose, that will give a continuous record and is likely to expose illegal operations when the car gets into the hands of crooks.

Mr. Corbyn: I should like to help my hon. Friend as I have had unfortunate experiences of second-hand car dealers altering the recorded mileage. It is a fairly common practice among lower-level second-hand car dealers. I am talking not about the big dealers but about the type with wire netting compounds.

One way to prevent that abuse would be for the car mileometer and speedometer to be in a sealed unit stamped with the same number as is stamped on the car body. It would then be impossible to change it without fiddling the body number on the unit. If one bought a second-hand car one would have to check that the body number corresponded with the number on the sealed mileometer unit. That would not be foolproof, because some people are smart, but it would certainly help.

Mr. Atkins *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We cannot have an intervention on an intervention.

Ms. Ruddock: It may be helpful if I continue, but I appreciate the intervention of my hon. Friend as it was most helpful. If the Minister wishes, we would be delighted to carry on correspondence with him to pursue the issue.

To return to improving pedestrian safety—I acknowledge the contribution that the Government have made, but I believe that it is piecemeal. Much of the emphasis has been on making pedestrians more mindful of cars. The Minister reiterated that this morning. Scare tactics have been used to alert children to the perils of the roads. The slogan

"One false step and you're dead",

which was issued in a Department of Transport press release, suggests to me that the car is supreme in the hierarchy of road users. Pedestrians are treated as second-class citizens, who must watch their every step. Their needs are not given priority, despite the fact that in central London, for example, 40 per cent. of all trips are made on foot.

Britain's figures for pedestrian safety give cause for alarm. In general, the number of reported pedestrian casualties has fallen over the years throughout most of Europe. Only Spain, Portugal and Greece have a worse fatality rate than the United Kingdom. After motor cycling, walking has the highest casualty rate per kilometre travelled. Sadly, we predict that pedestrian accidents will not decrease at the rate the Government desire, because motor vehicles are involved in pedestrian accidents. Clearly the Government have no policy to discourage car usage. On the contrary, the Minister again boasted of the huge road-building programme that he wishes to institute.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Does the hon. Lady know what percentage of accidents, in which pedestrians are killed, are the fault of the pedestrian, rather than the driver of the vehicle involved? It seems to me, as a driver, that many pedestrians wander around the roads as though cars were made of marshmallow. I suspect that accidents are often their fault. Perhaps an educational programme directed at children might improve pedestrians' road behaviour. The emphasis ought to be placed there, rather than on the driver.

Ms. Ruddock: It is unclear where the emphasis ought to to be placed, but I suggest that, by putting the onus on the pedestrian, the car user is allowed to believe that it is the pedestrian who must take care. Clearly there is equal responsibility between pedestrian and driver.

From my observations of the work of the Department of Transport and from its press releases, I consider that, by putting the emphasis on the pedestrian, the Department has, to some extent, let the driver off the hook. Perhaps the Minister is planning to do something about that. He said that he had just launched a new scheme. Is it intended that the scheme will improve the behaviour of drivers?

In urban areas, far too many drivers think that the pedestrian should get out of the way. There is important evidence to show that people are being knocked down on pedestrian crossings where they should have priority. There is a great deal of evidence that that priority is not observed by drivers, and accidents and fatalities occur.

Mr. Tony Banks: The statistics show that one third of all pedestrians who are injured in motor accidents, suffer injuries when they are on the pavement. It is a bit much to ask a pedestrian to keep out of the way of a motor vehicle when he is on the pavement. Pedestrians are safer on the pavement, but clearly they are for pedestrians and not for motorists.

Ms. Ruddock: As always, my hon. Friend has made a useful comment.

Mr. Maples: Presumably, as one third of pedestrians are injured on the pavement, the other two thirds are injured on the road, where they should not be.

Ms. Ruddock: I was pointing out that pedestrians have the right to cross the road at a crossing. The hon. Gentleman says that they have no right to be on the road, but I remind him that most pavements are intersected by roads. One cannot have continuous pavements. Pedestrians have to keep crossing the road, even if they are not mad enough to walk into the road in the path of a car.

The rising volume and speed of traffic over many years has caused parents to impose increasing restrictions on their children's unaccompanied travel. That creates a burden on parents who must accompany their children on trips.

As I have said, young and old are made vulnerable by the fact that we have road intersections at which people must contend with drivers who are often inconsiderate to the needs of pedestrians. One in seven pedestrian casualties occurs on pedestrian crossings where people are supposed to have priority. We believe that serious and sometimes dramatic measures must be taken if any attempts, other than cosmetic ones, are to be made in the future especially given the rising traffic density.

A reduction in speed limits must be enforced in some urban areas and more traffic-calming measures must be implemented in residential streets. Experiments and experience in Scandinavia and the Netherlands suggest that measures taken to reduce through-traffic and the speeds of vehicles, while improving facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, can be successful in reducing road traffic accidents. They claim a success rate of over 50 per cent. in previously traditional urban layouts. We applaud such measures.

The Government's response to such traffic calming has been lukewarm. However, we are delighted that the Minister has suggested that there will be an increase in the Government's enthusiasm for introducing such measures. Ninety-five per cent. of pedestrian casualties occur in urban and residential areas. In those areas the balance between the needs of vehicles and pedestrians must be addressed more equitably. Evidence that cars do not slow down in front of schools is particularly worrying. In residential areas, traffic calming and the enforcement of speed limits can be used to reduce noise and air pollution, increase safety and play a part in creating a more environmentally friendly community.

Another area requiring more Government attention and support is that of accident investigation and prevention. As the Minister said, it is a low-cost way of saving lives. It is a systematic procedure for identifying sites where high accident rates occur, and implementation of low-cost measures can follow. Local authorities are clearly aware of the enormous benefits of accident investigation and prevention schemes and they have been urging the Government to change the way in which those schemes are financed. Quite simply, not enough money is being made available to them at the moment. I hope that what the Minister said this morning will overcome those problems.

I shall be in a position to test him out. My local authority of Lewisham has identified vital traffic measures within the borough, covering road safety, traffic calming and measures relating to pedestrian safety. The total cost involved would be about £750,000. Within that figure it

[Ms. Ruddock]

made a bid for £50,000 for the AIP schemes—it got £25,000. Overall it has just £50,000 to meet needs costed at £750,000. Who sets those spending limits? It is certainly not the people of Lewisham who are fed up with frightening road traffic conditions and who are afraid for their children and old people. The limits on capital spending and accident prevention are set by the Government.

More resources that are better targeted are urgently needed and I was glad to hear what the Minister said about the transport supplementary schemes. Again, we are disappointed that he cannot give us a time scale. We shall be monitoring closely his response and the speed with which he is able to make those changes.

As we all acknowledge, local authorities have a vital role to play in securing a safer environment. Road safety has always been high on the agenda. I intended to recommend to the Minister the local authority association's code of good practice for road safety. However, I am delighted to know that he has read the document and is supporting it so thoroughly.

I urge upon the Minister—although it may not be necessary—the need to ensure that none of our good practice is lost in the wake of changing legislation in 1992. I refer particularly to areas that worry us both, such as motor cycle helmets, for which we have excellent safety standards which are not met in the EC. Where we do have good national mandatory safety standards, we must ensure that our good practice is not reduced to a lower level by EC regulations.

The Government have issued a challenge to themselves —that of reducing accidents by a third by the year 2000. We applaud that target and welcome everything the Minister has said that could help positively to achieve it. However, because of the overall direction of Government transport policy, we feel regrettably, that it is unlikely that their targets will be met. We shall continue to urge the Government to give a much greater priority to public transport finance and to support for transport systems that provide the safest mode of carrying people in Britain. We will also continue to urge the Government to give local authorities the backing that they deserve and seek, because it is within local democracy that some of the best ideas and plans have been laid for improving road safety.

10.47 am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I warmly welcome this further opportunity to discuss the important subject of road safety. All of us welcome the constructive way in which the debate was opened by my hon. Friend the Minister and by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock).

It has been rightly said that because road accidents do not occur all at the same time and place in one single, dramatic pile-up of deaths and injuries, they constitute an "invisible massacre". The startling suggestion made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that a high proportion of accidents occur to pedestrians on pavements—is a frightening statistic. It is salutary for us all to remember that the overwhelming majority of transport-related deaths and injuries occur on our roads. Indeed, road accidents make up 40 per cent. of all accidental deaths. As individuals we run a one in 10 chance of being killed or seriously injured in a road accident.

Hon. Members will know that I have a long-standing interest in alcohol misuse, particularly in regard to drinking and driving. Having taken part in so many debates and discussions over the years, I must confess to a sense of déjà vu. It is 13 years since the publication of the Blennerhassett report which recommended additional breath-testing powers for the police and an extended and improved procedure for managing the high-risk offender.

I am proud of the fact that as far back as 1974 the then National Council on Alcoholism, of which I was the chairman, recommended changes in dealing with high-risk offenders. During the Second Reading debate on the Transport Bill of 1981 I recall expressing disappointment that the Government had not included such changes in their Bill. However, I was assured by the then Minister of State that administrative powers under existing legislation enabled such procedures to be implemented. I am pleased that since then the Department of Transport has developed such procedures and that the interdepartmental ministerial group on alcohol misuse has recommended that these should be strengthened further.

I acknowledge therefore that progress has been made in the 1980s. In Britain, as in most other developed countries, there has been a slow but steady reduction in the number of deaths and injuries caused by road accidents. Consistent with that has been a gradual decline in the proportion of fatal accidents in which the driver was in excess of the legal limit for alcohol—a decline from 33 per cent. in 1978 to 23 per cent. in 1987. While that improvement is welcome, it should be recognised that it provides no justification for complacency. I applaud the Government's target to reduce accidents by the year 2000, but the general public want a faster reduction and the necessary legislation to implement changes as quickly as possible. For there are still thousands of unneccessary and avoidable injuries and deaths each year, and alcohol remains their single main cause.

There has been a welcome change in public attitudes. The convicted driver is no longer regarded as an unlucky victim of over-zealous policing but as a potential killer whom it is the duty of the police to stop. Much of that change of attitude should be credited to the campaign against drinking and driving and to the media, who have succeeded in bringing home as never before the message that the drinking driver is a threat not only to himself but to everyone in his vicinity.

There was, however, an inexcusable aberration by the then Secretary of State for Transport, who sanctioned the "Stay Low" Christmas campaign, which was so disastrous. The firm rejection of that dangerous notion, and a firm reaffirmation of the message, "Don't drink and drive" is a fine legacy bequeathed to the Minister by his predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley).

The Government have clearly discerned and responded to the shift in public attitudes and have begun to strengthen their campaign publicity accordingly, but there is still some way to go, particularly in regard to legislation. On that so far there has been much talk but little action. It is time for Government rhetoric to be superseded by effective action and for the Government to catch up with public opinion.

There is no room for complacency, because well over 300 of the 1,500 drink-related deaths annually are innocent victims of someone else's drinking and driving. By being in the wrong place at the wrong time, an innocent person is killed every day on our roads by another's drinking and driving. If those 300 people were, by some impossible set of circumstances, to be killed in Whitehall this morning, the Minister would be rushing to the scene and plans would be laid to rush in legislation to prevent a similar massacre in the future. However, as matters stand, innocent people are massacred in silence, and there are no headlines, messages of sympathy or offers to raise national distress funds. The Institute of Alcohol Studies has rightly said:

> "No wonder the families of the victims feel anger for there are few other crimes in which the victims receive less consideration than their assailants."

I was therefore much encouraged by the proposal in the White Paper "The Road User and the Law" to introduce a new offence of causing death by careless driving while over the limit. This reform is much overdue. It has been warmly welcomed by hon. Members and by the country. What is now required is an assurance that the reforms recommended by the North committee will be implemented. I know that there is some anxiety among the road safety community that the Bill may not be included in the Government's programme for the forthcoming Session. May I say quite gently but firmly that such a failure would be a cause of considerable disappointment and anger among many hon. Members and beyond? My hon. Friend the Minister, who is sensitive to opinion in the House, will be aware of this anxiety and of the necessity to put it to rest at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Atkins *rose*——

Sir Bernard Braine: Has the Minister any advance information that he can give us?

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend is vastly more experienced than almost any hon. Member in these matters. He will know full well that neither I nor any other Minister can predict what will be in the Queen's Speech. I am sure that the fact that my right hon. Friend has raised this matter will mean that it will be drawn to the attention of those august people who decide these matters.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's courteous intervention. I have been a Minister and know perfectly well that he is unable to say anything at this stage. The mere fact that he rose to his feet only momentarily suggested to me that he had some advance information. I say to him, with the utmost friendliness, that I hope that I shall not be castigating the Government for any omission following publication of the Queen's Speech later this month.

I hope, too, that my hon. Friend the Minister will take the opportunity provided by this debate to give the House an assurance that the Government are giving the most serious consideration to two measures which were not included in the White Paper, but which many of us regard as the most important of all—random breath testing and a reduction in the legal limit for driving. The arguments for random breath testing have been rehearsed many times in the media and elsewhere over recent years, and we are all familiar with them. The main considerations seem to be entirely clear. First, the representative bodies of the police service have asked for additional powers to administer breath tests to increase the deterrent value of breath testing. I speak as someone who has held an advisory capacity to senior police officers for many years.

Secondly, almost all expert opinion is convinced that random testing would save hundreds of lives and prevent thousands of injuries each year and regards it as probably the most effective counter-measure still available to reduce the number of drinking drivers on our roads.

Thirdly, we know that the public overwhelmingly support the introduction of random testing. Opinion surveys show consistently that random testing is supported by 80 per cent. or more of the population, while experience in other countries shows that it becomes even more popular after its introduction and as its benefits become evident. We know that the majority of submissions in response to consultation on police breath testing powers, which were called for by my right hon. Friend the former Home Secretary, were in favour of the police being given additional powers.

It is true that in debates on this issue there often appears to be some confusion between "unfettered discretion", which would allow the police to stop and test any driver at any time, and the more limited power of random testing, which would allow the police to test drivers without "reasonable suspicion" only at specially designed roadside checkpoints.

It is abundantly clear to me that the consensus has formed around and in support of random testing mainly because the checkpoint system can more easily be governed by a code of practice designed to prevent police powers bearing down unfairly on individuals or groups. That is a crucial point because the police want to carry public opinion with them, but they are having an increasingly difficult job. When I was a youngster, a police officer being killed or wounded by the public was unthinkable. I can remember only one case of a police constable being murdered in the 1930s, the case of police constable Gutteridge who was shot to death in Billericay —a constituency that I once represented. Since the war, and particularly over recent years, the police have come under increasing pressure. They are therefore most anxious to have clearly defined powers that will carry the public with them, and for that reason, and for no other, are effective.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): At the risk of widening the subject of the debate slightly, does my right hon. Friend agree that this is probably not unrelated to the abolition of the death penalty for the murder of police officers?

Sir Bernard Braine: I have my own views on that subject, but, with respect to my hon. Friend, it would be wrong of me to comment on that in this debate. We are discussing the extremely serious issue of giving the police the necessary powers to deal with drinking and driving.

There is simply no point in clarifying and endorsing powers that are poorly designed for the purpose for which they are intended. In other words, existing police powers must be reconsidered. Even clarified and endorsed, the existing powers of the police permit them to carry out only a poor man's version of random testing, a procedure both more cumbersome to operate and less efficient than random testing proper, and therefore less likely to be carried out. What possible advantage could there be in taking such a step?

[Sir Bernard Braine]

The support for random testing is now so strong that it is difficult to understand why the Government are still dragging their feet. I do not expect my hon. Friend the Minister to answer this question now, but I must ask, of what are the Government afraid? It seems clear that their reservations are based solely on anxieties about the possibility of impaired relations between the police and the public. Such anxieties are entirely misplaced. I have already referred to the abundant evidence showing that the overwhelming majority of the public support the introduction of random testing. Indeed, the police would not have requested additional powers if they believed that there was any significant danger of alienating the travelling public. They are fully alive to the need to retain the confidence of the travelling public.

I do not wish to speak too long, but there is one other important point which has not yet been raised. I am saddened by the Government's negative and insular response to the European Commission's draft directive, which proposed a maximum permissible blood alcohol level of 50 mg from 1 January 1993. The Commission's view was endorsed by the European Parliament's committee on Transport. At this stage, I shall not enter into the argument about whether this is an appropriate matter for Community legislation, other than to point to the obvious fact that more and more people are travelling from one member country to another—the purpose of the Channel tunnel is to accelerate that movement—and it therefore makes sense to have a common policy in Europe, in the interests of safety.

What disappoints me is that the major part of the evidence on which the Commission based its directive was drawn—believe it or not—from the findings of my hon. Friends's own Transport and Road Research Laboratory. In my Second Reading speech on the Transport Bill in 1981, I emphasised those findings as they applied to young people. Impairment of driving ability among young people begins at the low level of 30 mg. I said:

> "At 50 mg., a young person is three times more prone to accident than before. At 80 mg., he is six times more prone."

I implored the Minister then and I do so again. I said to him:

> "For the sake of protecting the young people of this country .... I urge my right hon. Friend to look again at lowering the limit for all motorists."

I went on to say that I was glad that the then Minister had "wisely retained the power in schedule 8 to the Bill to vary the limit."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1981; Vol. 996, c. 881.] Why does not the Minister use this power? The major cause of death for a young person between the ages of 16 and 24 is a road accident with a raised blood alcohol level. The Minister could at a stroke reduce the incidence of such tragedies. It is a commonplace that the 80 mg legal limit is not in any sense a safe limit. There does not appear to be a safe limit anyway. Guidelines issued since the advent of the evidential breathalyser mean that drivers are not normally prosecuted until they exceed 40 microgrammes of alcohol in the breath, which in terms of the blood alcohol level is equivalent not to 80 mg but to over 90 mg. In other words, the introduction of the evidential breathalyser has led to a de facto raising of the legal limit. Thus there is a strong case for reducing the legal limit simply to account for that factor.

If the limit is to be reduced, it would seem sensible to reduce it to 50 mg, which the consensus of scientific opinion regards as the maximum blood alcohol level compatible with public safety on the roads. The former Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), rightly stated that even one drink can kill. A 50 mg limit would be far more consistent with the educational message contained in the anti-drink-driving campaign of the Department of Transport. Public opinion surveys show majority support in favour of a reduction.

I want to know, and I think the country wants to know, what is preventing the Government from attuning the law more closely to their message. I understand that 3,000 of the responses to the Home Office consultation favoured random testing while only 400 were opposed. Who were those 400? They must represent a very powerful vested interest if they can block the overwhelming majority's view. The House has a right to know who they were. Were they individuals, organisations or vested interests? How could they block the views of the overwhelming majority?

Certainly I welcome the steps that the Government have already taken, or announced their intention to take, to reduce the menace of the drinking driver. The whole House supports them. The progress that has been made in recent years provides a sound basis for the introduction of these additional measures which, if taken, will make a substantial contribution towards achieving the Government's goal of reducing road casualties by one third by the end of the century. Yet I am still impatient. I want to see much faster progress, as I think we all do. the opportunity now exists to reduce by an even greater amount the most preventable accident of all, that which is alcohol related. It will be a tragedy if the Government decline to take it.

11.6 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I am sure that we have all listened with great interest and respect to the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the Father of the House, because his are the kind of comments that come to us via our postbags week by week. I hope that consideration will be given to the valuable points that he made to the Minister. Without doubt, on whichever side of the House we sit, we wholly agree with virtually everything he said.

This has been an interesting debate. I congratulate the Minister and his Department on initiating it and I congratulate the Minister on many of his comments. I am sure that, wherever we live or wherever we represent—whether a large city constituency or a rural area—road safety and all the issues linked to it are important matters.

The problems inlude increased traffic on local roads, large lorries going through residential areas, difficulties in finding somewhere to park and the indiscriminate way in which cars and lorries park. I was interested in the exchange between the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) about parking on pavements. Despite laws under which motorists who park on pavements can be prosecuted, there is still too much of it.

Much comment has been made about children and young people. Parking on pavements is equally a problem for the elderly, the disabled and the blind. Like many hon. Members, I still see a great deal of parking on pavements. Another problem, which I see repeatedly, occurs when large lorries park at road junctions. A motorist trying to come out of a road has to make his way into the flow of traffic to see what other traffic is coming along. Something needs to be done.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the biggest problems faced by the elderly and the hard of hearing occurs at pelican crossings? The speed at which people are expected to cross the road is unreasonable, especially if they are elderly. For many people, the bleepers attached to those crossings are inaudible. Does the hon. Gentleman think that it might be better to have a flashing light—as opposed to just the image of a flashing person—on each pole?

Mr. Cox: The hon. Gentleman's three points are all valid, especially the first about the speed with which cars travel and the disregard that they often show for crossings. He also made an important point about people with defective hearing who, sadly, cannot hear the bleeping noise at crossings, and his suggestion about flashing lights is relevant. The great benefit of debates such as this is that the exchange of views between hon. Members of all parties brings up points that could be of benefit to the overall issue of road safety.

The double parking of cars, especially at night, is a problem in many parts of London, and probably in other areas as well. Double parking often takes place in the day, but the double parking of cars with no lights on in residential areas at night is the main problem. The Minister's Department must look at that problem in detail. Double parking is one of the many complaints relayed to us which involve road safety.

The Minister has made many comments about how his Department sees progress being made to improve road safety. Sadly, from my experience, the problems of road congestion is becoming worse, especially outside the rush hour periods—and one has to accept that there will be much congestion in our major cities and large towns in the rush hours. My hon. Friend the Member for Deptford, also touched on this point.

Many of us say that we must try to reduce the number of cars on our roads, but the announcement this week that rail and Tube fares will rise will drive many people who normally would be happy to use public transport to consider seriously whether they will continue to do so. I will quote briefly from a letter dated 23 October which I received from a constituent. He says:

> "I see in last week's Press that there is every likelihood that Public Transport fares may soon increase again, by more than the current rate of inflation. This will serve only to force more people to use their cars to get to work and back, thereby making the situation on the roads that much worse."

I am sure that all of us will hear such comments from our constituents this weekend.

Whatever criticisms we may make about Government policy overall, the subsidies for public transport, whatever help may be given, are wholly inadequate for existing needs. Let us consider the systems in other European countries. We hear a great deal about the French system of subsidising public transport; subsidies, whether at national, regional or local level, are enormous. The French have proved the benefits that can accrue to a country from the improved movement of people and goods. We need to consider such systems in far more detail.

I want to concentrate on one or two issues that have not been given the prominence they deserve in this debate. All of us are aware of the rat runs of vehicles being driven through residential areas and the problems that that causes. The Minister referred to the development of road humps and sleeping policemen. I find that the vast majority of residents would like to see such humps installed. There are requests for such humps throughout the borough of Wandsworth and, in fairness to the borough council, it is seeking to put road humps in rat run areas. One proplem is that it takes a long time for their installation to be approved and there is often a difference between the attitude of the police and that of the local authority on whether a particular road is suitable for the installation of road humps. Another problem is cost. I do not know whether the Minister has seen the figures, but I must tell him that I am amazed by the cost of the installation of road humps. It does not seem to be technically difficult development, but the delay in obtaining permission to install road humps and the cost of installing them should be looked at.

We should also consider street parking in greater detail. I know that swoop squads of traffic wardens drive around ticketing every vehicle they see illegally parked. I do not criticise that, but I do not believe that it gets to the root of illegal parking. We should seek a system whereby we have a community traffic warden—very much like a community policeman—who could cover a local area. Such a warden would not necessarily give a ticket to, or fine, every motorist badly parked at road junctions or double parked, but would try to build up a relationship within the community so that he could say to such a motorist, "Your parking is dangerous and is causing problems. If you do not stop, my job will be to give you tickets and you may find yourself facing court action because of your attitude." We should consider such a system because in our larger cities, as I am sure that the Minister is aware, the problem is worsening.

We have legislation for bus lanes, but it is often not enforced. We are told that bus lanes are intended to ensure the early movement of buses and taxis. Only a few yards from here, along Millbank, there is a bus lane with a notice saying that the bus lane is operation from 7 am until 7 pm. Yet at any time one can see car drivers and lorry drivers using that bus lane and holding up buses. We have the legislation for bus lanes. We have the right to ask the Minister and his Department when the rules that govern their use will be enforced. Those rules do not seem to be enforced in many other areas of London in which bus lanes are operating.

In my constituency this Tuesday, I was driving along the road at about 10 pm. I saw in the distance a light and I believed that a motor cyclist was approaching. It was not until I was about 10 yards away from the light that I realised that it was a van with defective lighting. Defective lighting is bad enough in the summer months, but in the winter, the police should rigorously enforce existing legislation on motor vehicles being driven with defective lighting. That is especially important to protect the elderly and young children. There are far too many vehicles with defective lighting.

The provision of cycle lanes has not been given sufficient attention this morning. More and more people are using bicycles, whether to go to work or for general travel, and whether they live in a local area or travel from outside it. There are very few cycle lanes in operation in Westminster, although one sees many cyclists. Many hon.

[Mr. Cox]

Members cycle to the Palace, I believe. I see the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) in his place; I gather than he is a keen cyclist.

Mr. Summerson *indicated assent.*

Mr. Cox: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that we are not paying sufficient attention to the protection of cyclists and that we should be developing cycle lanes.

Mr. Corbyn: I often cycle to this place. It is impossible to get here entirely on cycle routes from north London, which is where I live. The last part of the journey, which takes me down Whitehall, is very dangerous. The problem with cycle lanes is that although the lanes themselves are fine, and relatively safe, unless priority or safety measures are provided at junctions, they are of no value. A cycle lane along Whitehall would be of no use because the cyclist would be exposed to enormous danger on reaching Parliament square, and the same thing applies to almost every cycle lane.

Mr. Cox: I agree with my hon. Friend, who has highlighted the importance of giving more protection and consideration to cyclists, whose numbers are increasing. I take my hon. Friend's point that it is no good having cycle lanes without junction priority measures because cyclists are then exposed to even greater dangers. I am sure, however, that the Department of Transport and local authorities could examine the matter in detail and develop better strategies for the protection of cyclists.

The Minister is responsible for the road options now under consideration, and that ties in with the general issue of road safety. I see that the Minister is laughing, and I can well understand why: he is thinking, "Good gracious, not again." In any debate on road safety we should take the opportunity to voice our constituents' deep concern about the road assessment studies that the Minister and his officials are considering. Whichever assessment study the Minister and his Department eventually approve, it will no doubt bring many thousands of extra vehicles into residential areas. Our constituents are deeply concerned not only for their own safety but about the possible effects on their environment.

I beg the Minister and the Secretary of State to listen to what the people of London are saying about the road options. The Minister told me on Monday that a statement would be made in December. I could give him countless examples of letters that have come my way, but I shall quote only one from one of my constituents:

> "I fail to see how the capital's transport problems can be solved by building new roads which past experience has shown merely attracts new traffic, thereby changing the pattern of congestion not solving it. Surely it must be obvious that encouraging private vehicles can only worsen the problem which can best be solved by offering a true alternative through a radical, comprehensive programme of genuine investment in public transport."

That sums up the sentiments expressed in the many letters that London Members receive about road options, and I beg the Minister to pay the greatest possible attention to what the people of London are saying, before decisions are made by him.

I am sure that all hon. Members will find this an interesting debate. We all want people to be allowed to use cars and people now expect to have the right to do so. But the safety of the general public should continue to be our priority. Although much progress has been made, much remains to be done. As my hon. Friend the Member for Deptford said, we are not happy with the Government's attitude. My hon. Friend said that cuts in grants had deprived her local authority of the opportunity to make road safety provision, and I am sure that all of us could give similar examples. We may back the aims of the Minister and his Department but improvements will not be achieved on the cheap. They will entail not only the involvement and understanding of the general public but financial commitment by the Government. Unfortunately, many of us do not see evidence of complete commitment in the Government's policies on public transport and transport generally and especially on road safety.

11.25 am

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): Like the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), I have made representations to the Minister about the road assessment studies. I entirely endorse the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the importance of dealing with illegal parking and of the more widespread use of road humps.

Next weekend many of my hon. Friends will be attending Remembrance Sunday services, which will have particular significance this year as it is the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the second world war, during which 265,500 service men and women were killed in action. Since the war ended in 1945, 267,000 people have been killed on our roads. In other words, more of our people have been killed on our roads since the end of world war 2 than were killed during it.

During the past 11 months there have been four major transport tragedies, and hon. Members have been brought to the House to listen to statements about Clapham and Lockerbie. Four hundred people were killed in those disasters—the average number of people killed in one month on our roads.

What hon. Members say and do can have a substantial impact on those awful figures. Twenty years ago the number of people killed on our roads hovered at about 8,000 a year. Now it has been reduced to about 5,000 a year. There were two parliamentary reasons for that substantial decline—the first was the introduction of the breath test in 1967 and the second was the introduction of seat belts at the beginning of this decade. More work remains to be done on both those matters.

In his admirable speech opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Minister stated that there have been 25,000 unrestrained rear seat casualties in cars of which 4,000 involved death or serious injury. The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety believes that the most effective way of reducing casualties for car occupants is to make the wearing of seat belts compulsory for rear seat passengers. I hope that that will happen.

The next major step forward in relation to the two vital issues of seat belts and the breathalyser relates to random breath testing. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the Father of the House, has just made a powerful plea about that.

It is clear now that the police are solidly behind the extension of breath testing to include random testing. There can be no doubt that public opinion continues to swing in favour of random tests. The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, of which I am delighted to be a member, recently carried out a public opinion poll on that issue, undertaken by National Opinion Polls market research. Such testing was defined as:

> "giving the police the authority to set up special roadside checkpoints and to routinely breathalyse any driver passing through."

In that poll, 81 per cent. of the public were in favour of that step which would massively increase the deterrent power of breathalysing. Those in favour covered all sections of the community—male and female, young and old, rich and poor. I hope that the Government will soon take the final step along the road which has already saved so many thousands of lives over the past 20 years.

Speed is another problem. We can now curb speed on main roads through the introduction of speed cameras and on back roads and lesser roads through the wider use of road humps and other traffic-calming measures. A few weeks ago I spent some time driving in the United States of America. America has a more violent society than ours, but the Americans are infinitely better behaved on their roads than we are. The American general traffic speed limit is 55 mph and occasionally 65 mph. Those limits are largely enforced by radar. In the many hours that I spent driving in America, I did not see a car exceed 70 mph. That has had a dramatic impact on the number of road casualties in America since the limits were introduced about 20 years ago. The road accident fatality rate in the United States is about half the rate in this country. I believe that the legislation of speed cameras could be enormously helpful.

The North report recommends:

> "The fixed penalty system should be amended by legislation to allow a fixed penalty to be sent to an offender identified after inquiries flowing from an automatic speed detection check."

The Transport and Road Research Laboratory estimates that that step would reduce fatalities by at least 5 per cent. a year and PACTS believes that the figure could be a little higher because the high-speed accident would be most affected. The North report also recommends that the law should be changed to enable cameras to be used in traffic light offences. That would also produce a substantial reduction in the number of fatalities. It would certainly reduce the number of fatalities by about one a day—at least 365 a year. However, we need legislation and I hope that such legislation will not be delayed. I add my pleas for legislation to those that have been made already.

I want to commend the Minister on two points. He and I attended a conference on the older driver organised by the Automobile Association earlier this week. Every expert who spoke at the conference underlined the importance of visibility. I am delighted that the Minister has already announced an extension of lighting up time. However, I was not entirely clear from his statement whether that was intended to apply just to vehicles or whether street lights would be turned on for an extended period.

Mr. Atkins: Perhaps I can clarify this point. As my hon. Friend is a year older today than yesterday, I take this opportunity to wish him a happy birthday. The extension applies only to vehicles, not to street lights.

Sir Philip Goodhart: I hope that in the very near future my hon. Friend the Minister will come to the Dispatch Box and tell us that the extension will apply to street lights as well as to vehicles.

I was delighted by the Minister's announcement of a loosening of the restrictions on the introduction of road humps. They play a most important part in curbing speed in residential areas. The initial restrictions on their use were far too tight and I am glad that they are to be reduced. The Minister referred to the casualty rate among school children. I hope that road humps, almost as a matter of course, could be placed outside primary schools where they are on back roads, as they almost always are. I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister to his new duties and I hope that in the coming Session he will have a substantial legislative load to bring before the House.

11.38 am

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I am pleased to address the House in my new capacity as Liberal Democrat spokesman on local government and transport. Both local government and transport are particularly relevant to this debate and can be linked, as I hope to show.

Road safety touches us all and we should all be concerned about it. This debate has proved that. As my party's outgoing health spokesman, I have also had a keen interest in any reduction in the number of accidents on our roads. Obviously, such a reduction would reduce pressure on the National Health Service. In a parliamentary answer on 28 November, the then Minister said:

> "It is estimated that the cost of road accidents to the National Health Service due to hospital treatment in 1987 was £146 million."—*[Official Report*, 28 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. *164.]*

I am sure that we will see an increase in that estimate this year.

Road safety is not only about financial cost; it is about human cost—death, injury and destroyed lives. The present scale in this country is far too high a price to pay, whatever benefits there may be from the age of the motor car. It is the Government's declared and welcome intention to reduce road accidents by one third by the year 2000, but until there is a change of direction in overall transport policy, things will not greatly improve. Our island—I include Northern Ireland—is far too small to allow 50-odd million people to own or travel in cars. Our roads are already far too congested. Overcrowded roads produce stress and impatience in drivers and can lead to poor attitudes which manifest themselves in dangerous driving manoeuvres. Attitudes such as "this is my piece of road and I am sticking to it" and, "Get out of my way, I am in a hurry" end in disaster. Too often, innocent pedestrians, cyclists and passengers suffer as a result of pure selfishness or a need to feel a sense of power.

A young police constable to whom I spoke not too long ago, summed up another aspect of driving attitudes. In a discussion about whether people were less caring today, he said, "Of course they are. You have only to look at the way they drive to see that. There is not a thought for others. They are determined, no matter what the cost, to get to wherever they are going in the least possible time. People don't give a damn." That is a damning statement, and we should take it to heart and consider how we can change the current trend.

Crowded streets crammed with parked cars are a danger to all pedestrians. Without a clear view of oncoming traffic, crossing the road can be extremely hazardous for some groups, such as the young and the elderly. A hazard may be even worse when trees are planted at the edge of pavements. Tree-lined streets are pleasant from an environmental point of view, but they obstruct pedestrians' views. I am referring particularly to

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

small children who can appear from behind a tree right out of the blue. There was a tragic case in my constituency of Southport. The council debated whether to increase the speed limit from 30 to 40 mph on a tree-lined street. I and, to their credit, many other councillors said, "That can cause accidents. We must be careful about whether we increase the speed limit, because that is a tree-lined street." Within six months, a four-year-old boy came out from behind a tree and was killed. I wanted to say, "I told you so," but I did not, and the road safety people in Sefton recommended that trees be removed from the edge of the roadway in that area. That happened, and the environmentalists did not protest.

Pedestrians and drivers alike should be made aware of the unexpected dangers. I would not object to a few more signs, caution lights and other physical aids if they prove to be beneficial in making our roads safer.

To build bigger and better roads to ease congestion is not the answer. The debacle of the M25, with its traffic jams and high accident rate, is a testament to that. It is now called the biggest car park in the world. We will never be able to meet demand. The more roads we build, the more cars people will buy to fill the empty spaces, and any massive road-building programme will undoubtedly lead to an even poorer public transport system. The previous Secretary of State's ideas about tolls, super highways or fast lanes will not do, either. If tolls are set at such a price that it is worth collecting them, there will be stretches of motorways, blighting the landscape and without a car in sight.

Mr. Maples: I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument about never having enough roads to take care of potential demand in cities. However, the hon. Gentleman appears to be saying that that is his party's national policy. The hon. Gentleman will have to find some way of suppressing people's right to use their cars on those roads. How does he propose to do that?

Mr. Fearn: I do not intend to suppress any car user's right to use a road. Car users have that right, and I hope that it will continue. Some people may not purchase cars because the public transport system would supplement the road system. That does not interfere with the right of urban motorists who use their cars a great deal.

When road congestion worsens, roads fall into disrepair. Local authorities and rural communities do not have the cash to repair roads, and that is causing further accidents.

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that if we were to double the capacity of British Rail over the next 12 months, we would barely do more than take up the anticipated growth on the roads in that period? That is the scale of the problem. The hon. Gentleman seems to treat it as though it could be dealt with simply. We would have to continue doubling the capacity of British Rail every year to deal with the growth.

Mr. Fearn: I accept that. Therefore, the Government's problem is to find a public transport system and a road system for the whole country.

There are great difficulties with the toll system in Spain. I understand that some of the new road systems are a joy to travel on because there are so few cars on them. Many Spaniards boycott the roads because they are unable to pay the high tolls. I hope that that would never happen here.

I question whether a move to faster lanes would be wise. Although the relationship between the number of accidents and speed is unclear, we know that the severity of road accidents is related to the speed of impact. I accept that the speed of impact is not necessarily the speed of travel, but an analysis of the 1986 accident figures shows that fatality rates are higher on high-speed roads. That proves that it is not too far-fetched to conclude that speed is a significant factor in road accidents. In 1987, 54,352 serious accidents resulted in 64,293 serious casualties. Any move to increase speed limits cannot fail to produce far higher numbers.

Although I recognise that there is no simple formula for improving the accident rate on our roads, there is much that we can do to develop a much improved, safer and more efficient public transport system. As my party's spokesperson on this matter, I hope that I will have numerous opportunities to debate how that can be done. However, I do not hold out much hope for safer public transport. If the Government can allow one of their pet projects to be derailed—I refer to the Channel tunnel link—there is little hope for the rest of us. The delay in developing a London link will have a knock-on effect on roads in the south-east, making it even more difficult to travel on them.

Mr. Maples: That point ties in with what the hon. Gentleman was saying about improved public transport. My constituency and that of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) will be affected by the Channel tunnel link. The proposed public transport system would substantially relieve road congestion in Kent, yet opposition to it in our constituencies is almost overwhelming.

Mr. Fearn: The hon. Gentleman has made his own point about that.

Ms. Ruddock: I understand the rules of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and because there is a difficulty here, I shall address my remarks to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn). I do not wish to be associated with any suggestion that Labour Members disapprove of the Channel tunnel rail link, because it is a public transport infrastructure which we very much support. The disapproval that we have all voiced is that public money has not been provided to make the project environmentally sound.

Mr. Fearn: The hon. Lady has made her own point.

Improvements in the public transport system cannot be achieved quickly enough to ease the urgent road problems. The time for action is now. I welcome some of the Government's most recent initiatives, including doubling the spending on local road safety schemes, about which we heard a little from the Minister. However, I ask the Minister whether extra street lighting resources are to be provided for local authorities and for schemes to eliminate black holes on motorways. We all know as we travel home—some of us travel last thing at night along the M1 and the M6—how suddenly we are confronted with the black holes in the lighting system. I am sure that accidents would be reduced if we had lighting all along our motorways.

In Sefton, where I am a borough councillor, work is currently being carried out into local and regional comparisons of road safety accident figures. I am pleased to report a 50 per cent. reduction in the number of fatal accidents and a significant reduction in the number of serious accidents in 1988. I do not want to put too much stress on statistics because I know that they can be misleading and, in some instances, can lead to complacency. I hasten to add that Sefton borough council, which includes Southport, is in no way complacent. In April 1988 is launched a massive education programme in its infant and junior schools and undertook non-school-based road safety talks, film shows, exhibitions and displays, especially for elderly people. As part of its programme for the elderly, it issued a booklet with the aid of Age Concern, entitled "Keep Living". I have no doubt that the Minister has seen it, but if he has not I recommend that he does so. It can be obtained from the County Road Safety Officers' Association, Age Concern and local road safety officers. It reports cases of elderly people who had accidents, and deals with the reasons for those accidents. It is simple, and easy to read and understand. I hope that at some time all elderly people will read it.

Education is an important part of any campaign to improve road safety. I was, therefore, interested to read in last Sunday's edition of *The Observer* that the child cycling proficiency test was to be scrapped. The article stated that

> "a new road safety scheme designed to embrace modern teaching methods and to fit in with the national curriculum"

was due to be introduced next spring. The Minister has reassured me that the test is still with us and I welcome that. It is frightening for people to read such untrue articles in the press. The article was twisted and I am glad to know that the Minister is minded that the test should continue. If there is to be a new scheme, I can only hope that it will prove a better way of ensuring the safety of the many thousands of child cyclists who form part of the Department of Transport's statistics on fatal and serious accidents.

Our residential streets are no longer the safe back roads that they used to be. Children can no longer go out to play in our streets or ride on their bikes as a pleasant pastime. Cycling to and from school has become a major hazard. I note that the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents is campaigning for single-double summer time which it believes would benefit young children coming home from school.

Some children have taken to cycling on the pavements which proves hazardous, especially to disabled and elderly people. Local byelaws then come into play. They are vigorously enforced in some authorities, leaving the young children in no man's land. There is no doubt that cyclists are an especially vulnerable group on our roads. It is estimated that there are now 13·5 million cycles in this country. It is perhaps time that we encouraged the provision of more cycling paths for travel and for recreational cycling for children.

Education is an important factor in other areas also. Road safety instruction at infant and junior level is to be welcomed. However, perhaps we should be going much further. We need to wake up to the fact that we are a nation of car owners and will continue to be so. For more and more young people—some still at school—getting behind the wheel of a car will be their only method of transport in the future. I should like to see a programme that introduces some form of safety education into our senior schools. The emphasis in such a programme could be placed on safe driving habits, attitudes and proficiency.

We should also look at ways of making our driving test more in keeping with the real world. It seems ludicrous that five minutes after passing a test, the newly qualified driver is allowed on to motorways of which he or she has no experience. To drive on a multi-lane motorway at 70 mph is not something to be taken lightly.

The same law also allows people to take a driving test without a single lesson from a qualified driving instructor. The test itself is far too short for the examiner to observe any bad habits that may have been formed from driving with friends or other drivers such as relatives. That area of the law needs to be investigated with a view to making the driving test and the regulations surrounding it more stringent.

Over the years, a number of tragic events have led to the loss of many lives, to severe injuries and to hardship. Hon. Members have mourned with the rest of the nation and have called on the Government to act quickly to improve the safety standards for members of the public, yet every year we seem content to allow untold numbers of people to suffer from the most terrible consequences of road traffic accidents. As I said earlier, I know that there is no simple formula, but I hope that the Government are taking their responsibilities seriously. I hope that they will provide the resources necessary to enable us to reach the target for the reduction of accidents that the Government themselves have set.

11.57 am

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): As so many traffic movements are effected by road, it is vital that we work towards the greatest safety measures possible. As vice-chairman of the Conservative parliamentary transport committee, I welcome today's debate and apologise to the House for my croaky voice.

Clearly, the Government have given a high priority to road construction and maintenance. In North Yorkshire, the benefits will amount to almost £40 million-worth of road schemes in the 1990s. That is vital when we see the carnage on the A1. Only last month, the death toll on North Yorkshire's roads reached 100, against 86 for that period last year.

I should like to suggest four changes in policy that would save lives and be extremely cost-effective. First, there is a need for seat belts on buses and coaches, and my hon. Friend the Minister referred to that in his imaginative and wide-ranging speech. The lives of young people are put at risk when they are on school outings. There have been some appalling accidents where, I am confident, children would have been saved had they been wearing seat belts. The matter requires the urgent attention of the House; only a small measure would be needed, but it would have great effect.

Secondly, there is a need for adequate insurance cover. We all know of constituents who have suffered terrible injuries from cars whose drivers have not been insured. We should require every car to display a valid insurance disc on either the windscreen or the bumper so that, at a glance, the police and other motorists can see it. The Road Traffic Act 1988 requires the user of a vehicle to be insured. It should be a simple procedure to require evidence of that insurance to be prominently displayed. All car owners

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

must show a valid insurance certificate each time that they renew a vehicle licence, but there is no deterrent to someone later that day going to his broker and reclaiming the funds. A simple display disc, which would have to be redeemed to recover funds, would be a simple and effective solution.

My third area of concern is tyre safety, and I declare an interest as I am a consultant to the tyre executive committee of British Rubber Manufacturers Association. I am glad that the tread size is moving from 1 mm to 1·6 mm on 1 January 1992 at the latest. After all, my hon. Friend's official vehicle has its tyres changed before they reach that level, and we surely would not want a duality of standards. There should be two further developments. First, the tread depth should be measured across the whole tyre and not just across 75 per cent. of the width. It is a curious British anomaly. Will my hon. Friend re-examine European Community directive 89/459 and ensure the greatest road safety criteria? Will he also ensure that there is a concerted campaign to make the new law well known? My hon. Friend the Minister for Public transport said in an Adjournment debate on 26 May that the Government would give their support to that. I urge my hon. Friend to join with the newly created Tyre Industry Council and agree to fund half the costs of such a campaign. If the council contributed £500,000 and the Department matched that sum, there would be a very effective campaign and motorists would soon realise that there was a new law and that they must change their tyres.

Secondly, action must be taken on the sale of second-hand tyres. There is no law that states that second-hand tyres have to be safe. Second-hand goods are not covered by the general duty requirement of safety. A survey of tyres on sale to the public, recently carried out by trading standard officers in Yorkshire and Humberside, revealed a staggering 32 per cent. failure rate. Defects ranged from nails embedded in the tread to leaks from the valve base, side wall damage and severe weathering. Calls for strict controls to protect motorists and other road users have gone unheeded. I hope that that latest evidence will persuade the Government to impose tight controls that will give the road user the additional protection that is needed.

Motorists should exercise extreme caution when considering the purchase of such tyres because the apparent financial saving is not worth it if safety is reduced. It may come as a surprise to the House to learn that when a trader in tyres is found guilty, or pleads guilty, to supplying faulty tyres, the court does not order the seizure and destruction of those tyres, but ensures that they are returned to the negligent trader. Where do those faulty tyres go? I urge my hon. Friend to hold discussions with the Lord Chancellor so that that horrifying loophole can be closed.

The fourth, and perhaps the most important, issue is the standard of garages. The public puts enormous faith in garages to ensure the safety and maintenance of cars and other vehicles. Last year, trading standards officers received 100,000 complaints, the majority—57,000—relating to second-hand cars and 15,000 relating to service and repair. The public puts its confidence in garages that belong to the Motor Agents Association, a trade body with a membership of 13,600 garages that proudly display the association's logo as a sign of respectability. Many hon. Members will have seen it on doors and on invoices and other documentation. That confidence is, sadly, unwarranted. Despite the number of garages pleading guilty, or being found guilty, of vehicle-related offences, only two members a year had their membership of the MMA cancelled in 1986, 1987 and 1988, yet the association has some 10,000 complaints annually. It is a whitewash. It is hardly surprising that only 26 to 28 per cent. of the public consider motor traders to be legal, honest and decent. The vast majority know that they are quite the contrary.

We must have much tougher penalties. I realise that I am in danger of not being the guest of honour at the association's next annual banquet, but we must expose the problems. We need tougher penalties to combat the unroadworthy vehicles that are sold, the clocking of speedometers and the moving of vehicles without the speedometer being engaged, inadequate servicing and the problem of garages unfit to offer credit but still attempting to do so. Last year, my county, the North Yorkshire county council, prosecuted 15 dealers for 34 offences. I praise the vigilance of its officers, but the penalties amounted to a derisory £12,900 and will not be an adequate disincentive. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will discuss raising the penalties to deter such traders from dicing with death. I trust that he will ensure that the mileage can be recorded on the driver and vehicle licensing centre form when the annual licence is renewed. It is nonsense that the DVLC can hide behind red tape as a reason for not introducing this most useful safeguard.

As many garage applications for consumer credit licences are refused or revoked by the Office of Fair Trading, it is incredible that that august body, the Motor Agents Association, does not expel such companies from membership. I hope that the Government will have urgent discussions to end this anomaly and restore public confidence in the credit facilities offered by garages.

These four measures—coach safety belts, an insurance disc, better tyre regulations and more responsible garage trading—will ensure improved road safety and greater confidence of the motoring public and those who use our roads.

12.2 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I assure the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) that I shall always want to purchase, and will have the confidence to purchase, a second-hand car from him. I should have liked him to make another point about garages and garage forecourts. The inaccuracy of the tyre pressure gauges on many garage forecourts is frustrating. If tyre pressures are important to the safety of vehicles, garages should do more to ensure that the gauges are accurate. The hon. Gentleman should perhaps say something about that to those friends and organisations that he represents so ably.

I found the Minister's speech most constructive and well worth listening to. It was also unnerving because I always considered him to be one of the original Tory bootboys when he was first elected, along with the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). It shows that office has a way of imposing certain disciplines on the most unruly of hon. Members, making them appear both statesperson-like and highly responsible. It is worrying to see the way that office destroys thuggery and individualism. I am glad that there is no way in which office will taint me.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman is unlikely to hold office.

Mr. Banks: That point is regularly made to me by the leader of my party.

On this issue, the Opposition entirely support the Government. It is unusual for them to come up with something so constructive as measures to cut road accident casualties by the year 2000. The Government have our support in that objective, but their other activities and policies, particularly those that affect London, militate against them achieving it. One is the Government's policy on public transport.

The greater emphasis that is given to public transport, the greater the level of road safety because public transport is far safer than private transport. The Government are far from encouraging greater use of public transport. Only yesterday it was announced that London Underground fares are to be increased by 10 per cent. That is more than the rate of inflation. Every time that fares go up more people stop using public transport and start using their private vehicle, if they have one. If not, they make alternative arrangements. Greater use of private vehicles leads to an increase in the number of road accidents.

The University of London undertook a study which showed a correlation between fare increases and the number of road accidents. When fares increase, the number of accidents increases. The Government should put greater emphasis on public transport in London and Britain's other cities as a positive way of reducing the number of road accidents.

We have a better record on road accidents than much of Europe. In the light of the Government's new road building schemes and of predicted traffic increases, it is clear that the rate at which the volume of traffic increases will exceed the decline in the number of road accidents. The Minister must address that problem. If more and more urban motorways are built, there will be a greater possibility of accidents occurring. The forecast increase in traffic levels of between 80 and 140 per cent. by the year 2015, in the absence of other changes, will lead to a doubling of the number of road accidents. The Government are in a dilemma because they are pursuing the worthwhile objective of reducing road accident casualties by a third by the year 2000, while pursuing wide-ranging policies that militate against that objective.

I said that our record on road accidents is good compared with the rest of Europe, but our safety record for pedestrians and cyclists puts Britain among the least safe countries in Europe. Research carried out by the Metropolitan police, among other organisations, has shown that 60 to 70 per cent. of accidents among motorists, pedestrians and cyclists are the fault of the motorist. The number of pedestrians involved in accidents and how such accidents can be avoided have been mentioned. It is difficult for a pedestrian to avoid an accident if he is run down on the pavement. Indeed, a third of all accidents involving pedestrians happen on the pavement. It is unreasonable to say that pedestrians should be more wary of cars on the pavements. One does not normally expect to meet a car coming the other way when going about one's lawful activities on the pavement.

I noticed recently that the borough engineer of Kingston was injured by a car driving on to the pavement in September, shortly after he had opened a new road safety exhibition. That was an extremely unfortunate thing to happen, both to a borough engineer and to someone who had just done something so worthwhile. Perhaps he was following the example of dear old Mr. Huskisson, who achieved notoriety in a way that none of us would wish to do. If the Government are serious—and I accept that they are—about improving road safety, they must introduce safety measures to prevent vehicles riding on to the pavement of urban roads. We ask for more positive proposals.

The Government make a virtue of continually announcing the construction of more roads on the basis of increased vehicle speeds and increased manufacture and use of vehicles. That, in my view, is entirely wrong: the Government should be discriminating against the construction of new roads, especially in the inner cities. Of course we need to do something—indeed, we must do something—about road maintenance, for London's road system is now in an appalling state. Local authorities, with Government support, must act as soon as possible, and the Government themselves must do something about the trunk roads.

Mr. Atkins: I do not wish to interrupt the flow of the hon. Gentleman's speech, or to delay the debate. I would, however, be interested to hear his comments on the fact that many of his hon. Friends—as well as mine—come to see me to press the case for constituents who want more bypasses. How does the hon. Gentleman relate that to his suggestion that we should not build more roads—that, indeed, we should discriminate against the motor car?

Mr. Banks: Such discrimination should, I think, take place in the cities. I support the idea of improved motorway systems, although I should like the Government to push more and more heavy freight on to the railways, rivers and canals rather than encouraging its movement by lorry.

I was suggesting that the Minister should not become involved in major schemes to finance inner-city roads, although ringways and bypasses are certainly important. We should do as we would be done by. If I lived in a small town or village with numerous cars and heavy lorries thundering through every day, I should certainly be in favour of a bypass. Speaking as a London Member, however, I am not in favour of more urban motorways; I want to see fewer of them, along with more discrimination in favour of the pedestrian and of public transport.

I welcome what the Minister says about the financing of accident remedial measures through the transport supplementary grant. We were going to ask him to make a statement about that, but he anticipated our reasonable demands; all credit to him for that. I hope that the Government will not take long to consider measures which we all agree are highly desirable so that local authorities can get on with their implementation.

I know that many hon. Members wish to speak, and I wish that a few more of my hon. Friends were among them. I cannot wait to hear the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who always speaks good sense.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend will not be here then.

Mr. Banks: Unfortunately, I shall not, no, but I shall read my hon. Friend's speech in *Hansard* with great interest on Monday.

The matter of enforcement does not directly affect the Under-Secretary of State, but it certainly affects the Home Department. I am sure that there is much discussion between the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues in that Department about the need to get London's police to do more to enforce traffic measures—to deal with, for instance, bus and cycle lanes and parking restrictions. The police will say that they have not the necessary resources, but, in this place, if we will the ends, we must also will the means.

Opposition Members have said many times that, if the Government come up with proposals to increase the number of police and the resources available to them so that they can deal with traffic restrictions, bus priority measures and all the other enforcement measures that are necessary in London, they will certainly obtain our support. We can pass all the measures that we want to pass in the House, but unless we give the enforcement agencies the resources to back up those measures, we are wasting their time and ours. I am sure that neither the Minister nor I would want that to happen; nor, I believe, would any other hon. Member who has taken part in this morning's useful debate.

12.18 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said about the inner cities. The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) totally failed to draw a distinction between roads in the inner cities and roads in the country.

There is usually an unexpected bonus if one speaks in a Friday debate—the pleasure of seeing what my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) is wearing. Often it is an infallible guide to what was worn by a well-dressed Tory MP at country house lunch parties in the 1930s. Unfortunately, however, we do not have that pleasure today.

Mr. Corbyn: Or a shooting party.

Mr. Maples: I think that the hon. Gentleman is confusing my hon. Friend the Member for Watford with my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames). Both are infallible guides to their respective styles. I think that my description was right.

Mr. Corbyn: They also offered to be my clothing adviser in the age of television. I have been taking their advice, as the hon. Gentleman can see.

Mr. Maples: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman could do with some advice, but I do not think that I would choose either of them, if I were he.

There have, however, been a couple of bonuses today. The first has been to hear my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) at the Dispatch Box outlining the Government's policy on road safety. We look forward to his making regular appearances on the "Today" programme and seeing whether he can beat his predecessor's record. We shall also look forward to seeing whether he can pull a longer face over Christmas than his predecessor.

The second bonus was to hear about the Liberal Democrats' policy, and I am sorry that their spokesman, the hon. Member for Southport is no longer here because it seemed to me to be thoroughly confused. We are a nation of car owners, he said, which presumably means that he realises that people want to travel around the country in their cars, but he believes that we should not build any more roads for them. I do not know what they are supposed to do with their cars if we do not build more roads for them. He failed to draw a distinction between roads in the country and roads in the cities. He suggested that public transport could take all the strain. That may be true in the inner cities, but that is not true about the country. British Rail's capacity to take people where they want to go in the country is very limited.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West mentioned Mr. Huskisson. That made me think that he, with his deep prejudice against all forms of modern transport, might make a better Liberal Democrat spokesman on transport than their current spokesman. A point made by the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) and, if she had had time, I am sure that it would also have been made by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), so perhaps I can deliver it to my hon. Friend in quadrophonic sound, related to the representations that are being made about the South Circular study. I join the band of those who are opposed to more motorways, or anything approaching motorways, being driven through the middle of London.

The road accident statistics are awful. Many of the accidents occur in London. An interesting statistic is that 70 per cent. of all accidents occur on local urban roads, many of them in London and the south-east. The cost is estimated at £4 billion. We know who the vulnerable groups are. That problem affects those who represent urban constituencies rather more than others. The Government have made several good proposals about improving road safety and the accident record. I shall not dwell on them because they have already been addressed by many other speakers. In the inner cities, however, we should examine the whole question of congestion and rat running and whether, by reducing the amount of traffic on the roads we could reduce the amount of rat running and the number of accidents.

The CBI estimates that the congestion on our roads costs £15 billion, two thirds of which is incurred in London and the south-east. There is an enormous suppressed demand for road usage. The argument that roads create traffic in London is true, although I deny that it is true about movements between urban centres outside London. We cannot expect to solve the problem of commuter traffic on London's roads by building more roads. People are prepared to accept a certain speed of about 11 to 12 mph. More roads in London would generate more traffic, which would bring the speed down again to that level.

To improve the traffic flow we should improve the lighting, increase parking restrictions and introduce local schemes. However, we need to consider creatively the problem of commuter traffic on London's roads.

External costs are caused by congestion, a problem that is not taken into account. Delays caused by one driver impose costs on other drivers. Pollution and environmental consequences affect other people. Congestion also causes accidents, the subject of our debate. If traffic is moving at 10 mph, an additional car in that traffic for one minute imposes a two-minute delay on all the other cars. There is a geometric progression. Some 67 per cent. of

London's traffic is accounted for by cars. They carry 15 per cent. of the commuters, whereas buses represent 1 per cent. of the traffic and carry about 30 per cent. of the commuters.

We need to move away from using cars towards using public transport, which in the short term has to be buses because the improvement programmes planned for the Underground inevitably will take some time. The fact that public transport is safer should not be ignored. Obviously, we are all desperately and deeply shocked by disasters such as the King's Cross fire and the Clapham Junction accident. However, we kill far more people one by one on the roads than we do in public transport accidents.

In the Department of Transport document "Transport for London" published earlier this year, the Government agreed that there was no case for major new roads in central London. Their aims were to divert through traffic and create good orbital roads to tackle congestion. It would be a good idea to find a way of increasing traffic flow, improving bus speeds and perhaps raising some money to pay for improved public transport.

One way of doing that is road pricing, which is mentioned in the Department of Transport's document. The document says that there are practical difficulties. I am not sure whether that is right. It also says that there are theoretical difficulties, which is certainly true. It does not rule it out, but says that further research is needed. I used to think that road pricing was a bad idea, but we shall have to ration commuter space on London roads somehow. Either people sit in queues moving at 11 or 12 mph with all the external costs that that imposes on other people, or we impose some way of pricing roads to make people choose whether they want to use them, bearing some, if not all, of the economic costs of doing so.

I do not know whether my hon. Friend is aware of the pamphlet published by the Institute for Policy Research entitled "A Cleaner Faster London". I was interested that the hon. Member for Deptford did not mention it in her speech because it emanates from the new think tank that is supposed to be injecting a little perestroika into the Labour party under the chairmanship of Lady Blackstone. It contains some rather creative ideas. Perhaps the hon. Lady did not mention it because it proposes a market solution to a social problem. Perhaps perestroika has not gone quite that far. I recommend the pamphlet to my hon. Friend the Minister, although the hon. Lady does not seem to take it seriously enough to mention it in her speech.

Ms. Ruddock: I should like to say for the record that I attended the seminar on road pricing organised by that body before it reported. If the hon. Gentleman would care to read the Labour party policy document on transport, he would see that that was one of the ideas we were prepared to consider as we recognise that there has to be a solution to congestion.

Mr. Maples: I am interested that the hon. Lady should say that. I hear most of the Labour party's policy on transport from the lips of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who seems to be about as anti-car as possible in the circumstances. I certainly have not heard anything creative along the lines of the pamphlet which I recommend to my hon. Friends on the basis that, if other people produce good ideas, it is an excellent idea to steal them. There is nothing wrong with plagiarism in politics.

Mr. Atkins: If road pricing is to work, it has to hurt, so it has to be of such a nature and at such an expense that it dissuades people from coming into London or any other major city. In those circumstances, does my hon. Friend agree that there is a very real possibility—I issue the challenge to the Opposition as well—that those who are least well-off will suffer most?

Mr. Maples: One would have expected that point to be made in a pamphlet published by a Left-wing think tank, but the author of the study says that that is not so because anyone commuting in a car is reasonably well off and the costs that those people are imposing by creating congestion on the roads impacts poorer sections of the community such as pedestrians and those using buses. The study suggests that a charge of about £3 a day for bringing a car into central London would reduce traffic to such an extent that, instead of moving at an average speed of 11 mph, it would move at between 16 and 19 mph. The benefits would be enormous not only for those who decided to pay money and use the road; it would reduce the amount of traffic and the rat running which is a problem in so many urban constituencies, and it would enable buses to move faster and reduce the number of accidents.

Mr. Corbyn: I am not persuaded of the virtues of road pricing because it discriminates against poorer people. Commuter motoring in and out of most major cities is heavily subsidised by the Exchequer through company cars or expense account travelling, which is not very different. Commuter traffic moving in and out of London is heavily subsidised by the Exchequer through company cars and expense account travelling. Another way to tackle the problem would be to stop people who work in the City being given a free car to drive to work from Muswell Hill.

Mr. Maples: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, but one cannot deal with everything in a short speech. The Government have the right approach, as they are moving towards full taxation of company cars and benefits. Because of the enormous sums of money involved, the problem cannot be solved immediately, but we are slowly getting there.

In a pamphlet, Patricia Hewitt, who I believe has some connection with the Leader of the Opposition, says:

> "Road pricing is the most efficient, environmentally beneficial and fairest form of traffic restraint available."

I do not normally find myself in agreement with her, but that seems to be fairly good authority for the proposition that it is not unfair. The system has been used in a cruder form in Singapore, where there is a flat charge to get into the city centre. A trial of electronic pricing, by which one pays a variable amount of money, depending on whether one is using a busy road or a less busy one, was tried out in Hong Kong and will be introduced there. Holland will introduce a system in 1990 which uses a smart card, like the phonecard, and logs an element off it. That has a lot to be said for it.

People who choose to pay will travel quicker and buses will therefore go faster. The study also suggests that benefits of approximately £190 million would accrue. If that money was spent to improve public transport in London, initially largely on improvements to the bus service, as that is the form of transport that benefits most from traffic moving more quickly, the total value of the

[Mr. Maples]

benefits would increase to some £310 million. That is a significant sum: it is about the same as London Regional Transport's capital investment programme.

A road pricing system would help people who choose to pay to go quicker and would benefit buses and people who travelled on them. It would help to finance the improvements to public transport that need to be the correlative of the policy, and the external costs of delay by pollution, accidents and rat running would be reduced. The system would not be unfair because the poor would benefit as buses would move more quickly.

I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that the idea is worth further study by his Department as it would reduce accidents and traffic and would help to finance improvements to public transport.

12.32 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is a pleasure to speak after the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) because he too is against road-building schemes in London. That is now the majority view of hon. Members who represent London constituencies, irrespective of their party. The Minister was a councillor in Haringey at the same time as I was, and I hope that he will recognise the strong feeling in London that urban motorway building is not on. It does not solve London's traffic problems or increase people's mobility. I hope that the Minister will remember that when he makes a decision.

Road safety is very important. Last year, 5,000 people died and 63,000 suffered serious injury as a result of accidents on the roads. I hesitate to say that all those accidents and fatalities were avoidable, but a large proportion were avoidable, as they were due to defective vehicles, speeding, drunken driving and a range of other things. As most of those causes are due to human error, it should be possible to avoid a large number of accidents. I welcome the proposal to reduce that number by one third, although I hope that it will be more.

I represent an inner urban area where the incidence of car ownership is low. It is below the London average, which is below the national average. The community suffers from the large amount of traffic that goes through the constituency. We have the eternal problem of rat-running commuters. Every morning, I feel angry about the amount of pollution that the people I represent have to suffer, as car after car goes by with one person in it, holding up a bus carrying 60, 70 or 100 people. Cars are more dangerous than buses and they cause greater inconvenience.

We have to take a more sensible approach to public transport. I welcome the proposed safety measures to protect pedestrians. For too long in traffic planning measures, road traffic engineers have taken the view that their only responsibility is to get traffic moving as quickly as possible through an area. They have ignored the needs of the majority of the population. Everyone is a pedestrian at some point.

Most people are at some time passengers on public transport and a minority of people are private car users. However, much road safety planning encourages greater use of private cars. My hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Tooting (Mr. Cox) mentioned the horrifically high casualty figures for cyclists in London. There has been a rapid increase in the number ofcyclists in London—rightly so—as cycling is cheap and does not pollute the environment. However, it is dangerous.

The Greater London council adopted a good policy of trying to introduce 1,000 miles of cycle lanes, but that has not been achieved. I hope that the Minister will accept the demands for increasing the number of cycle lanes and cycle priority measures at junctions. There are several major junctions in London—Hyde Park corner, Marble Arch and Trafalgar square—where, with a bit of ingenuity, life could be made much safer for cyclists. However, very little has been done. If one thinks of the real cost of providing safe cycle lanes compared to the cost of major road junction improvements to benefit cars, one sees the benefits of it.

I hope that the Minister will recognise that the resources put into public transport are important, as is the mobility of transport in London. London is now a slow place in which to get around. The average speed of traffic in central London is about 11 mph on a good day, 8 mph on a bad day and zero mph on a very bad day. Things are getting worse because of the promotion of people driving in and out of London by private car and the slow journeys that buses have to make. Often a bus journey is curtailed because it is so far behind schedule that if it is not curtailed, the route behind it will be denuded of buses. We need bus priority measures rapidly and they must be enforced strongly.

I believe that in many cases the Metropolitan police opposed the introduction of certain bus lanes or bus priority measures and have not bothered to enforce them. If nothing is done about a car illegally parked in a bus lane it may make life more convenient for that individual driver or delivery vehicle but it will hold up at least 50 people on each following bus and that should be multiplied by the problems those people face as a result.

We must look at the Government's overall strategy. I endorse entirely all the road safety measures and the strongest possible action against drunken drivers and drivers of unsafe cars. Anyone would do that. Anyone who has seen the hurt and trauma of a family whose small child has been killed in a road accident knows that the hurt does not go away. It often remains with the parents for the rest of their lives. The strongest possible measures to improve road safety should be taken and I obviously support that.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West said, the Government are proposing to reduce casualties by a third in the next decade, but they are calmly presiding and vaguely planning for an 80 per cent. growth in the number of cars over the next 16 years and a 100 per cent. growth over the next 20 years. By the early part of the next century there will be double the number of road vehicles although it is impossible to double the number of road spaces. It is ridiculous even to think of doing so. There is a need for an overall transport strategy designed to increase the mobility of the mass of the population but not to increase the number of private cars.

I also oppose urban road building. Anyone who lived in or represented my constituency would do so, as it is to be torn apart by whatever east London assessment study is accepted by the Government. We should reject all those studies as they would all lead to a road building option that would destroy part of my constituency and bring more cars into it.

I agree with the opposition to urban road building because of all the safety arguments that have been put forward, but it is not sensible to say that there is a difference between urban and rural road building. If road capacity between urban centres is improved, when a person reaches his destination he will not park his car and get on a bus. If someone drives from London to Birmingham, he expects to drive into the centre of Birmingham and park his car. The Government's overall strategy must include improving rail and public transport. Governments over the past 25 or 30 years are to blame for the problem because of their short-sighted approach to rail investment and development. It is amazing to read in rail magazines the proposals for building new lines and reopening lines and stations that 20 years ago were declared redundant.

I hope that the Government will reconsider their transport policies and stop promoting private car ownership, stop the subsidy on business-owned cars and encourage better use of and more investment in public transport. I have often said that support from the public sector for transport is the lowest in western Europe, and it is envisaged that it will fall even lower. We must reverse that trend and invest more in public transport, which is a safer and environmentally far more sensible means of transport compared with cars. Is it a good idea to pollute our cities and countryside with more vehicles when it is possible to increase the use of railways, which are a far safer form of transport than any other available?

When road accidents occur, as tragically they often do in London, one rightly expects the emergency services to be on hand. One expects the police to direct the traffic and perform emergency first aid if necessary, the fire service to cut people out of the wreckage and prevent fires and the ambulance service rapidly to take the victims to hospital. Under the standards laid down for ambulance collection for emergency calls, the ORCon—Operational Research Consultants—standards, which were laid down some years ago, 50 per cent. of 999 calls had to be answered within seven minutes, and 95 per cent. within 14 minutes. The current figure is that only 84 per cent. are answered within 14 minutes. The trend appears to be downwards, and we are nowhere near meeting the ORCon standards. If an ambulance cannot quickly offer the best medical attention, there is a likelihood of further loss of life.

There are a number of reasons for the delays, such as road congestion in London. One can imagine the problems of trying to get a fire engine or ambulance rapidly through the centre of London, where traffic speeds can be as low as 11 mph. I recently had a discussion with the regional secretary of the Fire Brigades Union in London, who graphically explained that a half a mile an hour slower traffic movement in London can add two or three minutes to the journey of a fire engine across central London. Ambulances experience similar problems and that clearly can lead to loss of life.

We must recognise that the Government adopt differing attitudes to the emergency services. They have given considerable pay increases to the police force, and the establishment level of the Metropolitan police is yet again being increased at a cost of about £1 billion a year. The fire service has not had such increases in expenditure, and it is proposing to remove many pumps from stations and reduce the availability of fire engines throughout London.

Mr. Squire: We recognise that this is not the centre point of the debate, but I know that the hon. Gentleman would wish to be fair. Does he agree that a number of proposals in that same report call for an increase in the number of appliances, as well?

Mr. Corbyn: I accept that. It is true that there will be an increase in the number of appliances in some places. I think, however, that the hon. Gentleman will accept that overall there will be fewer pumps available across London than at present and that there are likely to be fewer fire stations and engines in the long run. Couple that with traffic congestion and the necessary safety provisions and we can begin to see a grim future.

Likewise, as I said, the ambulance service is having difficulty meeting the ORCon standards in responding to 999 calls. It is also having difficulty in recruiting staff, partly because of the enormous pressures faced by ambulance controllers. They need to decide immediately who has the greatest priority—a person with a heart attack or a road accident victim. They are under great psychological pressure. Understaffing leads to people working excessive hours, resulting in increased sickness rates. It is disgraceful that, even now, the Government are not prepared to increase the 6·5 per cent. pay offer to ambulance staff. They are allowing the pay differences between fire and ambulance staff to get even bigger and are threatening to bring in the Army to break the resolve of the ambulance workers, rather than solving the dispute as we would wish. I would hope that in a road safety debate the Minister would at least be prepared to recognise the value of the ambulance service as an aid in making roads safe, albeit after accidents have occurred, and a means of preserving life. I hope that he will do everything that he can to ensure that the ambulance workers are properly remunerated. Instead of hearing pious talk and seeing crocodile tears, ambulance workers should be given support and recognition for their efforts in providing a service of which we would all want to avail ourselves when necessary.

This debate is valuable because it has provided the opportunity to discuss overall policies as well as individual, more localised, road safety measures. I hope that the Government are prepared to look again at their overall transport policy. I hope that they will look towards public transport development rather than continue the obsession with the private car. That would be a major contribution towards road safety as would the traffic relieving and safety measures outlined by other hon. Members.

12.47 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I should like to echo some of the problems that have arisen during this interesting debate. There are many narrow streets in my constituency of Walthamstow, which was not designed with the motor car in mind. Many of those narrow streets are blocked by parked cars, leading to the danger of children running out between cars as well as frustrating drivers who cannot get through. Because the major roads are blocked, we, too, experience the unattractive phenomenon of rat-running. For example, Century road, which should be a quiet residential road, has 1,000 vehicles an hour going through it at peak times.

I welcome the new roads that the Government propose, but I do so selectively. They are obviously very much

[Mr. Hugo Summerson]

needed outside our towns and cities, but they would be a disaster in Greater London. I draw attention particularly to the proposition to build a new trunk road down the Lea valley. It is to be built across Walthamstow marshes, one of the few open spaces that my constituents have and an area which has been untouched for over 2,000 years. Now we have this horrific proposal to build a whacking great motorway across the middle of it. My constituents will not have it, and neither will I. We will fight against it.

These problems are mirrored across London to such an extent that many people are taking to their bicycles, as has been said during the debate. I echo what the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has said. When I come to the House on my bicycle up Whitehall, I stop if the traffic lights at the entrance to Parliament square are green, even though I have to ensure that I am not rammed up the backside by a bus coming into the bus stop there. I know that to cross those lights at green and to come straight on is suicidal, so I wait until the lights turn red and break the law by crossing the red light, going on about 10 yards and stopping. As soon as the light turns, one has to pedal like mad to get ahead before the maniacs behind come whizzing up to turn left into Bridge street. On occasions I have been sworn at merely because I am on a bicycle.

Mr. Corbyn: It is because the Member is a Tory.

Mr. Summerson: Someone swore at me the other day when I was dressed like the hon. Gentleman, so no one could have mistaken me for a Tory. I was sworn at because the man was driving a van and I was on a bicycle. I am afraid that many people's personalities change as soon as they get into their motor cars and they become incredibly dangerous. I do not know why, but that is what happens.

Far too many problems are caused by the sheer volume of traffic in London, which is caused by the excessive number of motor cars. We must consider that problem. I believe that use of the private car should be sharply curbed and that people living outside London should not be permitted to bring their cars into London. That would give more traffic to British Rail, which would mean that it should be able to provide more trains. British Rail would have more revenue, so it should provide a better service. Once in London, if people knew that there was a good public transport system with smoothly operated, comfortable and efficient buses giving good service to the passengers and coming along at regular intervals in sharply defined bus lanes in which unloading and loading were not permitted, they would use public transport far more. That would be greatly to the benefit of the capital and the people who live here.

I had the misfortune to drive up the M1 last Friday afternoon, which was an extremely foolish move on my part. I had to leave at 3.30 pm. Three hours later, at 6.30 pm, I had covered all of 52 miles. I thought that something was wrong, but when I pulled into a service station and chatted to some of the people there, they said that nothing was wrong and that everything was usual. One sees so many examples of the bad use of motorways. When you drive up to your constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you do not sit in the middle lane all the way with no vehicles in the inside lane. Many idiots sit in the middle lane, even though there is only one car every quarter of a mile in the inside lane. The result is that much of the motorway is grossly underused. We need more education of motorists in that respect and perhaps the police should be told to prosecute some of those people. Word would pretty soon get around that one does not have to be idle on a motorway and just sit there. People should use the inside lane and overtake if necessary. That may mean that people have to use their right finger from time to time to operate the indicator, but the benefits would be great and we should have far better use of the existing motorways.

Where is the courtesy in driving today? It has gone out of the window. Twenty years or so ago, the first car I bought was a mark VI Bentley of 1948 vintage. [HON. MEMBERS: "Your first car?"] I promise you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it was my first car. I paid the enormous sum of £60 for it. When I tell the House that at the time, I was an agricultural student earning £9 a week and having to pay £5 a week to the farm manager's wife for board and lodging, hon. Members will realise that it took a long time on £4 a week to save up 60 quid to buy the Bentley.

I bought it in the end and one of the finest things about it was the handbook, which I discovered in a neat slide underneath the dashboard. I opened it and saw that its first words were:

An owner would do well to instruct his driver as follows:

"For me, that advice was completely redundant. The handbook also instructed one to dip one's headlight",

thus

"extending safety and courtesy to passing traffic".

That phrase has stuck in my mind ever since. Today, all that has flown out of the window, and many of us turn into aggressive maniacs when we get into our cars. I believe that the answer to that lies in education.

My final word is on the subject of the internal combustion engine in our towns and cities. When Henry Ford invented the Model T, it was his idea that it would be used by farmers out in the countryside. He never intended cars to be used in towns and cities. All cars pollute most terribly. When I walked here this morning —I walked, Madam Deputy Speaker—I once more had occasion to realise that. I am an asthmatic and I found it most distressing. The number of people with asthma and similar conditions increases every year. The internal combustion engine is not suitable for our towns and cities. We need a new design of electric vehicle that is quiet and pollutant free. I should like to see the return of the trolley bus, because it was quiet and efficient and non-polluting. If we do all that and ban the internal combustion engine, our towns and cities will be healthier and safer places for everybody.

12.56 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): After listening to a debate for nearly three and a half hours, one often starts to hear all the arguments again. That has not happened this morning and it is to the credit of hon. Members on both sides of the House that we have covered a number of different issues. I endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) about his desire to reduce the impact of the motor car in our cities, although I am not clear whether he would bring in an exclusion clause for 1948 Bentleys. A similar message has emerged during several hon. Members' speeches.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister, as this must be the first full day's debate that he has had to handle. Like the rest of us, he is now required to sit here throughout. Having known my hon. Friend well for more than 20 years, I wish him great success in his new job. He is already finding that it carries a higher profile than his previous post, but I hope that along with the inevitable kicks there will be some passing moments of satisfaction.

I strongly endorse what the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), said about drink-driving. There has been a significant change in social attitudes to drink-driving, and, like smoking, it increasingly causes great offence. Drink-driving can also cause injury and loss of life and the connection between accidents and the consumption of drink is now so clear that my right hon. Friend's message should be listened to carefully, especially by the Government. He talked about the need to consider reducing the limit, and I judge that we should follow that course, because we must reflect, and sometimes lead, changes in social attitudes, and there is now little public sympathy for the person who thinks it clever to go out drunk in charge of a powerful vehicle and thus to threaten the life and limbs of innocent people.

I want to concentrate on the problem of excessive speed, and, in particular, excessive speed of heavy goods vehicles on motorways. Some hon. Members will be aware that all new coaches in this country, as they are brought into use, must be fitted with speed limiters—and a jolly good job too, say I. However, hon. Members may not recall that that step was decided upon only after a spectacularly ghastly accident on the M6 in 1985 in which 13 people were killed—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic will be aware of this because it occurred in his constituency.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, when she was at the Department of Transport, introduced the requirement for speed limiters on coaches. I was her Parliamentary Private Secretary at the time. As you are well aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is an exalted post of enormous power, but of scant recognition. The implementation of the requirement was followed through by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Bottomley) in his previous post at the Department of Transport.

From 1 April this year all new coaches must have speed limiters and progressively over the next two years all existing coaches will similarly be required to use them. The limiters restrict coaches to 70 mph, which most of us would consider to be an ample speed for a vehicle of considerable size.

In comparison, what requirement exists for lorries? There is no requirement for heavy goods vehicles to carry a speed limiter. However, none of us travelling on motorways or trunk roads can be unaware of the reality of driving beside, in front of or sometimes totally surrounded by heavy goods vehicles. We receive regular reports that, because coaches are limited to 70 mph, they are often overtaken in the inside lane by heavy goods vehicles which are allegedly restricted to 60 mph, but which in practice thunder along well in excess of that speed.

What is the justification for not trying to control the maximum pace at which juggernauts can interfere with our lives?

Mr. Key: Can my hon. Friend recall the last occasion on which he spotted a heavy goods vehicle driving on a single carriageway road at 40 mph?

Mr. Squire: Not without notice. Even after pausing for reflection, I have difficulty in recalling such an occasion. My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) lends some currency to the gist of my comments.

In the other place recently, Lord Brabazon stated that surveys conducted by the Department of Transport show that the number of HGVs exceeding the speed limit on motorways, which in 1983 had been calculated at 39 per cent., had dropped to 22 per cent. in 1987. That is a welcome reduction. However, even on the basis of that survey, we must realise that more than one in five heavy goods vehicles are using excessive speeds and, in doing so, endanger the public and sadly cause loss of limbs or death in accidents.

There is no technical reason why limiters should not be fitted to heavy goods vehicles. All HGV manufacturers offer some kind of speed limiter as an option. The German vehicle manufacturer MAN fits speed limiters automatically to all its vehicles. I do not put that foward as an advertisement. I am simply showing what good, forward-looking manufacturers are doing.

According to my latest information, of 60,000 new HGVs registered each year in this country, about 10,000 are voluntarily fitted with speed limiters. That is one in six. Of course, Britain has no jurisdiction over coaches and other vehicles from Community countries. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will note that remark and see whether we can achieve standardisation across the Community.

I have spoken so far only about comparative safety arguments. There are now environmental arguments why we should reduce speed. The fuel efficiency which drivers would achieve if they drove at a more reasonable pace would be in the interests of the country. If we could control the discharge of greenhouse gases, we would help in our battle against global warming.

In France, all new goods vehicles over 10 tonnes must be fitted with speed limiters. I hope that the Minister will pay good, sound and long attention to my suggestion. There are only two objections, and both are of only limited weight. One is that speed limiters would slow down the passage of freight. They would do so only marginally, but one could say that if we stick to the rules it would slow the passage of freight. If lorry drivers are breaking the law, speed limiters are a proper course of action. If it is considered possible to shift some freight only by lorries travelling at excessive speed, we should examine even more closely transferring freight to rail, and wake up British Rail's freight department to carry non-time-sensitive freight. If time is unimportant, British Rail's freight personnel do not seem to be interested. They should jolly well be interested and we could then make a small environmental gain.

The cost of fitting a speed limiter must be small, or one in six operators would not be voluntarily fitting them.

I explained the tragic circumstance in which speed limiters on coaches were introduced. Let us not face the possibility of a similar tragedy before we realise the need to control juggernauts before they destroy more lives.

[Mr. Squire]

1.7 pm

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): I listened with interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), and I shall return to one or two of his points in a moment.

One must bear in mind that heavy vehicles are far better designed than they used to be. They have many more mechanical aids which enable them to travel at speed. If my hon. Friend were to come to my part of the country, he would hear hauliers explain the great value of heavy vehicles being able to move at a sustained speed, but within the speed limit, to deliver goods that are produced or grown in Cornwall.

Several London Members have spoken. I am not a London Member, so I hesitate to cast more than a brief comment on some of the points they raised. Nearly every hon. Member who has spoken in this interesting debate seemed to recognise the need for a much better motorway network between our cities. It was not until the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) spoke that it was admitted by a London Member that, if there are more motorways, more vehicles will go to places such as London and that the drivers will expect to get their vehicles very close to their destinations. However unfortunate that may be, it is an important aspect of this matter and must be borne in mind.

The hon. Gentleman will understand that I do not agree with him on many issues, but I agreed with him when he said that we have to pay much more attention to the ways in which we can integrate the motorway system into our public transport network. As a Cornish Member, I find it interesting that far more was not made at the time of the suggestion that there be a rail link from Heathrow to Paddington and that there is not a single stop on that line where it passes either over or under the M4. Massive car parks could have been provided where people could park and then travel in. Similarly, it has always surprised me that there is no provision at the Brent Cross service area at the end of the M1 for people to drive over the north circular and into a massive car park from where they could travel by rail on the "Bedpan" line to either Farringdon or Blackfriars in a matter of either 10 or 12 minutes.

I know that rat-running must be hideous and recognise that it places enormous pressures on the remaining road links in London. My hon. Friend the Minister has obviously taken that point into account, but he must be much more ruthless about parking on such runs and realise that if we stop rat-running, which is extremely unpleasant for residents, an inordinately greater pressure is placed on the roads that we must keep open. If we are to take some of those routes for bicycle or bus lanes, our roads are constrained still further.

My first general point deals with the fact that all the statistics that are produced on road safety deal solely with injury to health. I do not deny for a moment that we should address ourselves strongly to this matter. Indeed, there has been agreement from hon. Members of all parties that we should reduce the number of deaths and injuries. I am struggling to remember in what context the expression, "the tip of an ill-concealed iceberg" was used, but it is apt in today's debate. The statistics relating to injuries and deaths hide the fact that a colossal number of accidents involve injury to property. Those accidents also involve a tremendous number of people who are shocked by what happens although not "injured". It is important that we remember that bad road safety involves injury to property as well as to persons.

I appreciate that my second point is to remind the House of the obvious, but when we learned to drive—looking around the Chamber I suspect that that was some years ago for most of us and indeed, rather more years in my case—the level of responsibility and skill then required by the driver was far less than it is now. I know that my hon. Friends will have been taken by the point made by the Minister when he addressed several of these issues. The behavioural study is certainly important.

I turn now to two areas relating to the level of responsibility to be displayed by the Government. In my first point, I shall unashamedly use constituency issues. We have no motorway in Cornwall and have certain stretches of unlinked dual carriageway. My right hon. Friend who is now the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry gave an undertaking when he was Secretary of State for Transport that the A30 into Cornwall would be dualled. As my hon. Friend knows, that is now proceeding. Although I hesitate to suggest that he might extend his tour and the commitments that he has entered into today, if he can find the time to come to Cornwall, we should love him to do so. The stretches of A30 that remain undualled are very dangerous. Indeed, the busiest part of that road is still undualled, which creates a great danger for drivers—especially those who are tired because of long holiday journeys and those who are caught behind heavy goods vehicles. I urge my hon. Friend to press for the extension of dual carriageways to be carried out piece on piece, not in bits here and bits there. It is dangerous if drivers are at one moment on a dual carriageway, then down to single track and back to dual carriageway.

My next point relates to the part of the A30 that runs through the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and also to the A303 in Somerset. In this day and age it is quite crazy to contemplate building single carriageway trunk roads with three tracks rather than dual carriageways. I hope that my hon. Friend will realise the sense of that.

Mr. Key: The Department of Transport is also considering building the A36 Bristol to Southampton Salisbury bypass link as a three-lane single carriageway, even though there has been a 37 per cent. increase in traffic on that road in two years.

Mr. Neale: I endorse my hon. Friend's remarks. It is crazy to build trunk roads as single track, even if they are three lanes. They should be dual carriageway. We have a similar problem with a bypass in my constituency. I understand that 75 per cent. of accidents occur in rural and local areas, where there are bottlenecks and traffic diverts around narrow lanes with which drivers are not familar. That can be extremely dangerous. We must adhere to the road improvement programme, and I was pleased to hear that additional expenditure on that is anticipated.

I wish to deal with some of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch about motorways. Speed, of itself, is not dangerous. I am not suggesting that the speed limit on motorways should be increased above 70 mph, but the grave differentials in speed on our motorways are dangerous. My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) said how infuriating it was to be behind someone driving slowly in the middle lane. There should be signs on the motorways saying, "Keep to the inside lane unless overtaking". I have a high regard for the Department's officials. They have provided a great deal of statistics under successive Governments to which, unfortunately, Ministers do not always listen. I suspect that they would suggest a trial on particular stretches of road. I am sure that that would help to educate drivers to keep to the inside lane.

We must consider whether there should be a minimum as well as a maximum speed limit. Unless there are signs saying that the maximum speed limit is lower than 70 mph, such as in areas of road works, it might be sensible also to impose a 50 or 55 mph minimum speed limit. I am sure that I do not need to tell my hon. Friend the Minister that traffic on motorways bunches around slower moving vehicles, especially those that dwell in the middle lane. That is dangerous, especially in bad weather. I urge him to look at that point. In addition, more traffic speed signs would have to be installed along the motorways to inform drivers. That would be an extremely welcome measure.

Mr. Squire: I am listening to my hon. Friend's proposal with great interest. He has not, perhaps wisely, suggested a minimum speed. Therefore, I wish to press him a little as to whether he has thoughts on that. Is he thinking of, say, 40 mph?

Mr. Neale: I did give a speed, but perhaps my hon. Friend was not here. I suggested between 50 and 55 mph as a minimum speed. However, as my hon. Friend said earlier, heavier vehicles may be unable to sustain such speeds. As a result, my hon. Friend the Minister will have to think seriously about segregating traffic. I hear that a new motorway, probably privately constructed, will be running between Birmingham and Manchester and it will not be too long before my hon. Friend the Minister will have to think about providing one motorway link for lorries and commercial vehicles and a separate one for cars. My hon. Friend will find that, unless the motorways are built extremely wide, with many lanes, the disparity between the speeds of vehicles will mean that he will not get the lane use that would otherwise be obtained with a lower disparity of speed between vehicles.

The hon. Member for Islington, North rightly pointed out the Department's projections for a doubling of traffic in the next 20 years. My hon. Friend the Minister will have to look at many different problems. I urge him to consider the imposition of a minimum speed limit on motorways, even if it is only on a trial basis at first.

1.21 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I am glad to have the opportunity to take part in this far-ranging debate. I compliment all the hon. Members who have taken part on the range of subjects that have been covered.

The enormity of the subject in these debates is a bit like reading those magazines on car mechanics, when every week a new part of the servicing that is required for one's vehicle is revealed and after 52 weeks one wonders how one's car keeps going. There are so many potential hazards on our roads. We must pay tribute to the fact that, generally speaking, our record on road accidents shows us to be a relative safe country. That is not to say that we cannot do better. In welcoming my hon. Friend and near parliamentary neighbour to his new post, I congratulate him on the scope and scale of his speech. When one has the chance to listen to a Minister talking extensively on an area of his responsibilities, one realises how wide is the Government thinking that has already gone in many of the subjects that we have discussed.

I shall try to put the debate into the context of transport policy. Our debate is about what I would call the consequences of mobility. One of the greatest developments, as our well-being has increased, has been people's ability to decide on their freedom of movement. The economic prosperity occasioned by the Government's policies has enabled more people to buy cars and use other forms of public transport to go on journeys. Underlying the debate and this development in transport must be the allowance of increased choice and of alternative systems of transport.

In public transport, we should not lose sight of the fact that the Government's policies have encouraged the development in our cities of light railway transport systems. We are seeing the renaissance of public transport, including trolley buses returning in certain towns. That is not to say that there is not a need for more public investment in local rail, underground and other forms of service. The Government cannot be criticised for inactivity in this sector.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows of the problems of travelling to Lancashire, and I shall focus on that county in a moment. First, I congratulate him on choosing today for this debate. When I woke up this morning to the "Today" programme, instead of hearing the usual bulletin for "Friends of the M6", I was greeted by the news that today was the most dangerous day for road accidents. I took care when I drove to the House. This is an appropriate day for a debate on transport safety.

I wish to put on record my praise for the work of the local authority, the county police services and local road safety groups in Lancashire, and to thank my hon. Friend's predecessor, my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) for supporting a road safety poster campaign in my constituency. His personal letter was a great boost to young people in my area, telling them that someone in the Government was bothered about their anxieties and interests. The new Minister, who is a compassionate, family man, must understand the need to acknowledge such local road safety initiatives.

More than 20 people are killed or injured on the roads of Lancashire every day. One police officer described that as the equivalent of a Hillsborough every week. Other hon. Members have tried to put road safety in context and we must never lose sight of the human element. We are not dealing with mere statistics. In 1988 there were 7,331 accidents in Lancashire compared with 7,088 in 1987 and 7,338 in 1986. I quote the figures for three years because I do not wish the House to think that the trend is sharply upwards, although, sad, to say, recent figures suggest that there is a rise in the number of accidents in Lancashire. Given the increased volume of traffic we must take some comfort from the fact that the statistics have remained at roughly the same level and have not increased dramatically.

The statistics on the cost of road accidents hammer home the enormity of the problem. The Department of Transport's own figures impute a cost of £97,217,000 to accidents in Lancashire. That alone would justify investment in schemes to reduce the number of accidents. Many victims of road accidents end up in hospitals which

[Mr. Michael Jack]

face ever-increasing pressures on their medical services. There would be an excellent rate of return on any investment aimed at reducing accidents.

Mr. Neale: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the main problems in proving the danger of a road is that the majority of road accidents are never reported to the police?

Mr. Jack: That is an important point. Although we know that 92 per cent. of accidents are the result of human error, that statistic relates only to those that are reported.

Any accident involves cost and trauma to the people involved. The average cost of an accident is just over £12,000. The overall cost of dealing with accidents and the suffering and trauma that they involve is double the annual budget of the Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde district health authority, which serves my constituency.

Of the accidents that occurred in 1988, a total of 1,133 involved pedestrians crossing the road. Several other hon. Members have drawn attention to that problem. Children's safety and the relationship between motor vehicles and pedestrians are of major importance. If 92 per cent. of road accidents are caused by human error, we need training to overcome that human frailty. Training should not stop at schoolchildren; it should take place in the workplace, the home and wherever else it is necessary.

I am told by Lancashire county council that the area has the highest rate of pedestrian deaths among children between the ages of six and nine per 100,000 of the population. That is higher than the rates in Sweden, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Greece, Norway, Denmark, France, Belgium and Germany. It is not a record to be proud of, and it highlights the need for hard work on road safety education in schools, and I welcome my hon. Friend's commitment to continuing his dialogue with his colleague in the Department of Education and Science to establish whether such education can be incorporated more fully in the school curriculum.

I hope that, when the debate is reported by the media, it will—if nothing else—alert parents to the need for responsibility on their part.

I am pleased to observe the efforts already being made to deal with the problem in Lancashire. Last year the local police visited more than 3,200 schools, addressing 210,000 school children on the subject of road safety, and they are continuing to develop interesting initiatives. Only this year it was announced that Lancashire would receive an additional seven police officers. We know, from every debate in the House, about the pressures on police manpower, and this excellent tale of education and advice is now under stress. I ask my hon. Friend in all sincerity to request the Home Office to consider the returns—in human terms—that can be obtained from ensuring that police resources enable that programme of education to continue.

I noted my hon. Friend's comments about bicycles. In the course of their school visits, the police examined 1,343 bicycles, and found that 335 were defective. It is up to mum and dad to check their children's cycles sometimes: simple acts of maintenance in the home can clearly prevent some accidents.

The Lancashire police have an interesting maxim, which they call the "three Es" approach: education, enforcement and engineering. I shall come to engineering in a moment; we have already discussed education. As for enforcement, my hon. Friend has proposed a wide range of measures to assist the police force, which I entirely support. Let me, however, underline the message that hon. Members have already delivered on the subject of the law.

I support wholeheartedly the recommendations of the North report, especially those that apply to crimes connected with drink-driving. When I was campaigning during the last election I met a man called Alec Monteith, and later learned in graphic terms of the tragedy that he had suffered: he had lost his wife, a nurse, in a desperate accident involving a drunk hit-and-run driver who had caused a multiple accident at 10 o'clock one night.

Alec Monteith has now come to terms with the loss of his wife, at least in a day-to-day contest—no one can bring back Jean Monteith. Nevertheless, being visited time after time by a constituent campaigning on behalf of those who oppose drink-driving, being shown the photographs of the accident—I do not criticise my constituent one jot for that—and being told of his frustration that the law could not bring an action at the time against the person who was later arrested for for the crime underlines to me in graphic detail why we must press ahead with the reform of the law.

As for the county council's engineering role, I was pleased to receive a copy of the local authority associations' road safety code of good practice. The preamble says:

> "There is a need for local authorities to play a lead role in helping to achieve the ambitious casualty reduction targets set by the Secretary of State for Transport."

Many people say that the Conservative party believes that there is no role for local government to play, but this is a well-defined role which local government acknowledges and which my hon. Friend has encouraged.

I was delighted to hear the Minister's announcement of the transport supplementary grant. However, I am worried that under the TSG arrangement the amount left for local authorities to spend on minor road works, many of which are aimed at improving road safety, is very small. Lancashire made a strong representation, following last year's good transport supplementary grant allocation, about headroom in its budget. As my hon. Friend has acknowledged the role of cost-benefit analysis within the TSG and road safety projects, will he look again at the possibility of saying to local authorities, "Please put forward a cost-benefit justification for particular levels of spending" so that excellent small projects, which may not be ones that the TSG could assist but which nevertheless are vital, stand a chance of being carried out?

Cosmetic work is sometimes carried out. A local councillor says, "I think that we could do with a bit of road widening" so that he can then say to his chums, "I have improved the traffic flow around that junction." That may be a good and worthy cause, but it is not so good and worthy a cause as saving lives. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider applying the same approach to cost benefit so as to increase the headroom and increase the amount of money that is made available for improving road safety.

I was interested to hear about the project that my hon. Friend's Department and the Transport and Road Research Laboratory have been sponsoring in Colne. A very interesting project, excluding the town centre, analysed the full traffic flow in that town. As a result of expenditure of £200,000, between 10 and 15 per cent. of accidents were eliminated. Therefore, 20 people a year avoided being injured. There has already been a saving of

£150,000 in accident costs in two years. That is a splendid rate of return. I wish that I could find an investment that gave me that rate of return in two years. I ask my hon. Friend to argue cogently—both to his Secretary of State and then to the Treasury—for more money to be spent on particularly effective local projects. My hon. Friend committed himself to that action in his speech. Local experience in Lancashire underlines that point.

I almost feel that my speech was written while I was stuck in the many and frustrating jams which I, and many others, had to endure on motorways this summer. I am delighted that the Government have committed themselves to a realistic increase in motorway capacity. We live in a crowded island. Many of our journeys take us to destinations that are less than 100 miles away. We have to accept the reality that roads play a vital part in the transport system. I realise that overnight there cannot be an instantaneous "fix" of new lanes on the M6 and the M1, but I am very frustrated by the lack of information that is given to motorists about delays on motorways.

Where on earth have the variable information signs gone? I see them standing, like dreadnought battleships about to be scuttled, on the side of motorways, inert and inactive. No information is provided that at the next junction there is a blockage, or that there has been a serious accident and I ought to slow down. Instead of that, there are the current dot matrix signs which do not give much information, and are mostly ignored by drivers who then run into major traffic jams. I ask my hon. Friend to use the variable information signs, particularly at weekends, so that people are encouraged to use vast tracts of unused roads.

As I travel from the north, wishing to avoid the motorway I have discovered the delights of the A51 and A34. Denuded of their normal commercial traffic they speed me to the south, but if only others knew of the unused resources of our roads we would have a much better balance in the available road capacity.

In addition to variable signs, will my hon. Friend please try to have an initiative on radio information between London and Lancashire? I used to pass three signs, but one has blown away. They display information about KHz and MHz which do not mean a lot to people with normal radios. I know that the BBC is investing in the radio data system, but most people will not be able to afford the £300 or £400 for the set and will certainly not throw away their present radios. It is time that we had a much better traffic information service on the radio so that when we drive along the motorways we know which radio area we are in and where to receive the signal. Information leaflets should be available at motorway service stations telling people where to tune for that information. The quality needs uprating enormously.

Given the possibility of a broadcasting Bill in the Queen's Speech, will my hon. Friend ask the Home Office to consider introducing a radio channel dedicated to the dispensation of up-to-date traffic information to help people avoid accidents and make better use of the motorways?

Will my hon. Friend look again at the regulations that the European Community and his Department have proposed concerning spray from heavy lorries? I am fed up with performing a wall-of-death act trying to pass a 38-tonne, 45 ft juggernaut at night. They do a vital job, but they do not realise the risk that I and thousands of other motorists take in trying to get past them. The road research laboratory needs to look again at that.

I am glad that my hon. Friend acknowledged the benefit of anti-lock braking systems. The time is right to examine the contruction and use regulations and consider whether those items could be made a requirement for cars. If Ford can provide them for its lower-cost models for £200, so should everyone else.

We have had a wide-ranging debate. I already feel that my drive home will be more relaxed because I have got off my chest some of the frustrations that I and many thousands of other motorists experience. We are all dedicated to improved safety. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister has taken such a comprehensive approach, and I hope that the debate has supplied him with greater and more persuasive arguments to get the resources that are needed to make those policies effective.

1.42 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): We have had a rewarding and interesting debate. One of the rewards of sitting here for four hours listening to everyone else is that I can use the time available to the best possible effect, although there will not be time for me to raise more than a couple of important issues which have not been covered so far.

My constituency, like those of my hon. Friends the Members for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) and for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale), has no motorways. However, it has two major roads, the A303 between London and the west of England, and the A36, the main trunk road between Bristol and Southampton. It also has the problem of Stonehenge on which, I am glad to say some progress has been made this week. It is a delight to see officers of the Department of Transport out there with theodolites, looking at ways past Stonehenge. I hope that the road will soon be dualled and that the villages of Winterborne Stoke and Chicklade will soon be bypassed.

It has been an interesting debate because there has been no lobbying. Perhaps it is because I do not often speak on transport issues, but I have not received a single piece of paper telling me what to say or do, so my speech is all my own work. I wish that we were allowed to make judgments more often from the Back Benches.

I thought that I might not be able to be here today because yesterday a story about my constituency broke in the national press. It appears that not only do we have problems caused by congestion and speeding vehicles but that we also have problems from aeroplanes. A number of my constituents have had their cars spoiled by anti-freeze leaking from low-flying jets flying from Boscombe Down in my constituency. That has taken a little while to sort out. I hope that they will get due compensation from the Ministry of Defence. I am sure that no one wanted to spray anti-freeze on my constituents' cars, but, unfortunately, that is what appears to have happened.

I have been interested in road safety for many years—since the day I did a deal with my mum when I wanted to borrow the family car, shortly after passing my driving test. She wisely said that I could borrow it when I had passed my advanced driving test. That was wise advice. I have passed it on to many people, and I have warned my children that I shall say the same to them when they have passed their driving test.

[Mr. Robert Key]

I have the honour to be the president of the Salisbury Plain branch of the Institute of Advanced Motorists. I commend it and the other branches for the important work that they do to take motorists beyond the basic driving test, which I regard as a test of competence to control a vehicle mechanically, and which is a far cry from safe, responsible driving. "Skill with responsibility" is the motto of the Institute of Advanced Motorists.

We should be grateful for the superb engineering standards of the Department of Transport and of the people to whom it sub-contracts work—often the county councils. When one drives abroad, one notices how tatty their best roads are. They are unfinished, they do not have proper culverts at the sides, the surface is poor and there are large joins between blocks of concrete.

The Department of Transport deserves praise for the good work it does. All the officials in the Department of Transport, from the Private Office which receives most of the fury of hon. Members, down to the regional offices —in my case at Bristol—deserve thanks for their unfailing courtesy to hon. Members who are often under great pressure from irate constituents.

The road building programme should be welcomed. It is not concerned solely with motorways. The Government deserve thanks for their bypass programme, which during the past 10 years has added tremendously to the quality of life in rural areas. One example is the village of Steeple Langford where the bypass was finished six months ahead of schedule because of the Department of Transport's new business sense. It induces contractors to finish ahead of time and penalises them if they are late. The bypass has made a tremendous difference to that village, and I trust that many other villages will benefit.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will shortly be able to announce the proposed preferred route for the Salisbury bypass. It will be of enormous benefit to one of the most ancient and historic cities in Britain.

We cannot continue to pour more cars and commercial traffic on to congested roads. It is not just a matter of spending more money on public transport. I wish it were that simple, but it is not.

We have to consider road pricing carefully. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) made a compelling case for that policy in London. It is interesting that there appears to be agreement among hon. Members on both sides of the House on that. It is an unpopular subject, and it is difficult, but we cannot ignore it any more. I have a horrible feeling that, if the Minister does not take up road pricing, it will soon be pinched by the Opposition. I encourage him to consider it again.

We cannot ignore the environmental impact of pouring more concrete on to the countryside. We must consider alternatives. We can improve rail links. That would take some traffic, particularly commercial traffic, off the roads.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to take up with British Rail and the Treasury the fact that, under Treasury rules, when British Rail considers investment appraisal it is forbidden to consider the cost-benefit analyses. Those are not available to British Rail and it is not allowed to make comparisons between the cost and benefit of an investment to British Rail and the cost to the community. That surely must change and I hope very much that it will. After all, with the transport supplementary grant, cost-benefit analysis is old hat, so why is it not used when we are looking at the whole transport system?

Although people in south-east England complain about the increase in rail fares, as one who lives outside the south-east, may I say that it is interesting to note that subsidies to commuters in that area are still running at a level twice as high as the entire Department of Trade and Industry regional aid budget. That is unacceptable.

What is it that makes an ordinary, civilised, decent person turn into a maniac and criminal when he or she gets into a little box on wheels? Time and again during the debate we have returned to the problem of driver behaviour. There has been a remarkable success story with regard to alcohol, and I congratulate the Department of Transport on its approach. Changing public attitudes and behaviour has worked well but more has to be done.

Speed is another problem. Again it is a question of driver behaviour and we have to decide when a speed limit is not a speed limit. On motorways it is commonly accepted that one "won't be done" unless one drives at more than 80 mph. In villages with a 30 mph limit, it is also commonly accepted that drivers can get away with 40 mph. That is not sensible.

I live close to the village of South Newton on the A36 where there was a crash only last night. There is a crash almost weekly because thundering great lorries and silly motorists pass through a narrow twisty village high street that happens to block the way between Southampton and Bristol. As a result of those accidents and a petition given to me by the villagers, I spent a morning in an unmarked police car as a guest of the local constabulary to see the problem from their point of view. It was an eye-opener. The private motorists who were driving through the village at 45 mph were deeply offended when they were stopped by the police and warned. One driver who was doing 47 mph is to be prosecuted.

There is no doubt that most lorry drivers are responsible professional drivers. The country's economy would grind to a halt if we did not have lorry drivers. However, the speed at which some large lorries travel is unacceptable. It is unreasonable that the lives of people in the villages should be made a misery. The professional lorry drivers have got the police sewn up. They have CB radios all the way from Southampton to Bristol and that means the police do not have a chance. It illustrates the importance of driver behaviour that when a lorry driver sees a police car he radios up and down the road so that everyone obeys the speed limit. That is wonderful, but they have other tricks. The police illustrated to me that even when they can catch a heavy goods vehicle speeding, it is almost impossible to get to it unless they are on a dual carriageway because there will be four, five, six or a dozen cars in between and so enforcement is difficult. The police cannot do it all even with radar guns.

I welcome the proposals for new technology and the Government's response, "The Road User and the Law." The introduction of fixed position cameras will be of great benefit in recording the date, time, speed, traffic conditions and weather conditions. I hope that the law will be changed to allow such evidence to be admissible in court.

Even that is not enough. It is clear that other sanctions are needed if we are to change driver behaviour. First there should be insurance sanctions. A section of the North report is devoted to that. Paragraph 2.8 on page 17 says:

> "Fear of losing a bonus may be more influential in inducing good driving conduct than fear of penalties imposed by courts after detection and conviction of an offence; indeed court-imposed financial penalties are often lower than those involved in loss of a no claims discount."

How true that is. Paragraph 2.17 on page 19 says that there is a perceived absence of moral principle in road law. The report says :

> "The conduct which gives rise to such offences may involve no more than carelessness, misjudgment, a lapse of concentration, a failure to be aware of or understand a relatively technical requirement—failings which are not in themselves usually regarded as morally reprehensible."

I am convinced that most people would agree that it is morally reprehensible to make such misjudgments. There is clearly much concern about misbehaviour and such attitudes on the roads.

Deterrence must be important, but I do not think that the law on it is right. Paragraph 2.33 of the North report says:

> "Punishment will have no deterrent effect unless the offender thinks he may be caught and have to suffer the punishment."

Those words must be true.

Warnings are at the nub of the argument, and clearly are essential. Paragraph 11.13 of the North report says:

> "We take the view that warnings represent an effective and efficient response to a whole range of less serious road traffic offences. We recommend that warnings be used as widely as possible."

Those words must also be true.

I welcome the extension of the role of Department of Transport inspectors to trained police officers, as recommended in the North report. That must help, because there are about only 200 Department of Transport inspectors throughout the country. We must allow more police officers to inspect defective vehicles. It is absurd that a police officer who discovers that the insurance or mechanics of a vehicle are defective cannot stop that vehicle in its tracks. It is allowed to proceed as long as the driver promises to have the necessary repairs carried out.

There is the further problem of signposting dangers ahead. Little notices beside the road saying "Police road check area" or "Police speed check area" are important, yet highway authorities are reluctant to erect such signs outside villages in rural areas. I have often tried for a number of villages to get such signs erected, but it is virtually impossible. I have written to the director of highways and planning of Wiltshire county council asking for signs to be erected outside certain villages. The police asked me to ask the authorities to erect such signs, yet still they will not do so.

I advocate the use of flashing signs showing the speed of vehicles and the French solution of flashing gantry-mounted signs showing the speed limit, but such ideas are seemingly not allowed in this country. I recall some good experiments such at that on the edge of Windsor great park, where signs flash messages saying that one is too close to the vehicle in front. I believe that we must be more imaginative.

Mr. Jack: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend about flashing signs. The most effective signposting on a motorway contraflow is on the M62. Signs flash when a motorist is travelling at more than the mandatory 50 mph limit, which has a remarkable effect on motorists.

Mr. Key: That system must be right for motorways, and it must be right for villages.

We must not put everything on the shoulders of the police because they cannot solve the problem alone. I ask the Minister to consider whether we need a fundamental initiative. We have had the successful neighbourhood watch scheme for busting crime. Commenting on the neighbourhood watch scheme in a publication this week, the Home Office says that such schemes

> "are a way for people in an area to get together to help stop crime and make their neighbourhood a safer place."

The most dangerous thing in villages in my area is speeding vehicles.

We have had farm watch, a successful programme of community action to prevent crime—primarily theft, but also other crime—on farms. I believe that we now need a national speed watch campaign. A number of local residents in Wilton and the parish councillors of South Newton have discussed that suggestion with me. We suggest that the details of vehicles perceived to be driving through a village unreasonably—either unreasonably fast or dangerously fast—should be taken by volunteers and passed by the parish council to the police. They should write to the owners if they can identify them. Most lorries have names emblazoned on their sides, so they can be identified. The parish council should write to the chairmen of the companies and to the regional transport commissioners, asking them again and again to check the tachographs of the lorries. After all, those commissioners have responsibility for checking the operation of heavy goods vehicles.

Some people would say that this is telling tales, that it is grassing, that it is un-British and that we do not do that sort of sneaky thing. But we are talking about crime. We are talking about ruining the quality of life of whole communities, about death and serious injuries on the roads. We must act on driver attitudes and behaviour, and, as the North report says, fear of detection is a crucial factor. It is socially unacceptable to speed inappropriately.

Every hon. Member can recall stories of dangerous driving in his or her constituency. I am amazed that the big companies that let their vehicles thunder through our villages are apparently also very concerned about the environment. I regret to say that some of the greatest offenders are our big supermarket chains, which have wonderful distribution systems and are serving the consumer in their shops. Those companies are frightfully green in the shops—they have green products and say that they are environmentally friendly and reacting to social need and change. How do the goods get into the shops? They do so via great juggernauts, creating havoc in the villages of south Wiltshire.

I hope that I can bring representatives of the South Newton parish council to discuss this project with my hon. Friend the Minister and find out whether we can take it forward, perhaps on a national basis. Perhaps the residents can be a pilot in the behavioural research project which my hon. Friend mentioned, and we can get more community action to support the police who are helping to support all of us.

There was something else missing from the North report. Although the Crown Prosecution Service submitted evidence and the Director of Public Prosecutions gave oral evidence, that evidence was not published. All the good news about which we have heard today becomes but pious hope if we do not carefully consider what happens when a prosecution is being considered in the courts.

[Mr. Key]

Two cases in my constituency in the past month or so have highlighted this for me. One involved an elderly gentleman who was walking along a street in a holiday town in Cornwall with his wife and friends. The pavement was narrow and the substantial overhang at the front of a coach went over it. The coach knocked my constituent down, broke his neck and he ended up with his head under a wheel. There were witnesses but there will be no prosecution of the coach driver.

Imagine my amazement when another constituent came to see me to say that while he had been driving in Dorset a car had come round a bend on the wrong side of the double white lines and there had been a head-on smash. There were witnesses in front of and behind the accident. Police on the scene took measurements, cars were written off, but no prosecution will ensue. What on earth is going on?

I tabled a parliamentary question for answer by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, which was answered yesterday. I asked whether he would "list the criteria used by the Crown Prosecution Service in deciding whether or not to prosecute in respect of traffic offences."

My right hon. and learned Friend said:

> "In deciding whether or not to prosecute of traffic offences . . . the Crown Prosecution Service has to satisfy the two criteria set out in the Code for Crown Prosecutors . . . These require that there is sufficient admissible, substantial and reliable evidence to afford a realistic prospect of conviction and that the public interest requires a prosecution in the circumstances."

I should have thought that both cases which I have described fitted those criteria perfectly.

I realised that that was not all. One of my constituents sent me a copy of a letter from the chief superintendent of the Devon and Cornwall constabulary, which stated:

> "The Branch Crown Prosecutor indicates that the public interest does not call for a prosecution in every case where it appears that there is a realistic prospect of conviction. He goes on to say that proceedings should not be instigated or pursued unless there is reliable evidence of a substantial degree of blame-worthiness."

He said that in the accident involving my constituent there was no evidence of a substantial degree of blameworthiness, but rather an honest error of judgment.

I spoke to my chief constable and asked what was meant by having to weigh up blameworthiness versus errors of judgment. It could mean that if I went out into the street and mowed down a lot of children, and if I could show that it was only an error of judgment, I should get off scot-free to do it again. Someone who makes such an error of judgment is likely to do so again. Both cases I have described involved professional drivers—one was a coach driver, the other a commercial traveller—yet neither is being prosecuted.

My chief constable tells me that the Crown Prosecution Service has said that to all chief constables and that careless driving prosecutions have diminished dramatically as a result. One is not allowed to consider the consequences, only the initiator and his state of mind at the time of the accident. People have been killed in Wiltshire, yet no action is taken against those who kill others when they are in a car.

I welcome the new offence of dangerous driving which is proposed in the North report. I hope that the state of the driver's mind will not be relevant in such cases, but that the consequences of the driver's actions will be. I accept that prosecution in the criminal courts is not concerned with revenge. I am not a lawyer, but I am sure that a lawyer would confirm that the civil courts are there to wreak revenge in financial terms through suing.

Deterrence is so important in road traffic offences that we should consider carefully the action of the Crown Prosecution Service in pursuing complaints by the police. Yet again, the police feel that it is not worthwhile to go to all the trouble of measuring up road accidents and carrying out their other tasks at the scene of accidents if the Crown Prosecution Service is going to say that the police should not proceed with the prosecution. This is a question of public confidence, and if we intend seriously to improve road safety there must be public confidence as well as public involvement. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider that point urgently.

2.6 pm

Ms. Ruddock: By leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker I shall speak briefly. I concur very much with what the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) has just said. The mother of one of my constituents was mown down in the street. She has suffered the same problems with the Crown Prosecution Service and feels deeply aggrieved.

This interesting debate has produced many ideas and suggestions and I look forward to the Minister's response. I hope especially that he will have time to respond on the issue of drink-driving offences and on what action should be taken. There are strong feelings in the House on the matter and, of course, on the other matters that the North report has drawn to our attention.

I was delighted to find that the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) joined us in our outright opposition to new road building in London. I cannot stress too much how strongly London Members feel about the proposals in the London assessment studies for new road building. We are joined, regardless of party, in seeking to persuade Ministers at the Department of Transport that those plans should not go ahead.

I was interested to hear the remarks of the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on speed limits. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) is not still with us. He was wrong when he said that speed was not a factor. There is substantial evidence to show that when speed limits are reduced, there is a corresponding decrease in accidents. Although much of that evidence comes from other countries, it is notable that when we reduced our motorway speed limits from 70 mph to 50 mph because of the oil crisis in 1973, there was a 33 per cent. decrease in the number of accidents. For those reasons, we very much agree with the sentiments of the hon. Member for Hornchurch and that is why we have said in our transport policy that we shall be prepared to consider reducing speed limits on major roads in certain cases. We should remember that someone who crashes at 50 mph is twice as likely to die as someone who crashes at 40 mph. The House cannot ignore the hard statistical facts.

Of other Tory Members' speeches, I commend in particular that of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) who made some interesting comments. He gave us much food for thought about the condition and safety of vehicles. His view accords with the Labour party's policy on the need to tackle the market in second-hand vehicles and the danger that they can present to the travelling and driving public. I hope that the Minister will respond to those remarks.

It will come as no surprise that there is unanimity on the Opposition Benches. We believe that there is a conflict between the general direction of Government transport policy and the Government's aim of reducing road casualties.

Mr. Atkins *indicated dissent.*

Ms. Ruddock: The Minister may shake his head, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that profit comes first in the Government's policy, and the profit-first principle is in direct conflict with the safety-first principle. The Government will have to reorientate many of their transport priorities and accept the ideas advanced by the Opposition. They cannot escape the fact that most people would be much safer travelling by public transport than they could ever be travelling in their private cars. We need better finance and support for public transport. We need to make a comparable cost-benefit analysis between decisions on railways and roads rather than adhering to the simple judgment that has already affected so many decisions about building new railways—the judgment that there must be an 8 per cent. return on investment.

We wish the Minister well in his endeavours to achieve the road safety targets that he has set before us. It is four years since the House last had the opportunity of a full debate on road safety. I hope that the Minister will get back to us on these matters before another four years have elapsed. If he leaves it that long, he may not have the opportunity. We look forward to finding out what effects his announcement will have in practice and we want to test his sincerity on the transport supplementary grant and on other measures that local authorities have been canvassing. The Minister has acknowledged that much more needs to be done. We join him in seeking improvements and ask for more support to be given to local authorities and to public transport where we believe the solution to road safety problems lies.

2.12 pm

Mr. Atkins: With the leave of the House, perhaps I may draw the debate to a close. This has been one of the best debates that I have attended in my 10 years in the House because of the constructive approach that all hon. Members, without exception, have adopted to a subject that concerns all of us.

There is no difference at all between us on the objective that we wish to attain, merely perhaps some discussion —and it is constructive discussion—about the way in which we should achieve it.

We have covered a wide variety of issues. When I opened the debate I sought to set an agenda and to inform the House, and through the House the country, of the Government's thinking on this most important question of road safety. Inevitably, I shall not be able to cover all the details in my speech but I undertake to ensure that, where possible, I shall write to hon. Members to deal with specific problems when I have had a chance to examine them more closely.

I agree with the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) that one of the most interesting speeches was that made by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory), albeit in croaking form. I have enjoyed hearing his views on transport matters on many occasions. He knows what he is talking about, as was clear for all to hear today. He raised several topics which I shall examine closely. Indeed, I am already examining some of them closely and I hope to comment on them further in due course. I was also delighted by the cameo speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson). We all enjoyed his speech. However, he made some serious points. My daughter is an asthmatic and she raises similar points with me, but in slightly less elegant terms than my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow. None the less, I note his points about cycling.

You, Madam Deputy Speaker, will not be surprised to learn that I was especially pleased by the contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack). He always makes a point of trying to pinch my thunder and quite rightly so. We are parliamentary neighbours and friends and he quite reasonably referred to Lancashire.

As I represent an area close to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde, I have every reason to support him. Also, the headquarters of the Lancashire constabulary is in my constituency. I spent last Friday with the Lancashire police and we discussed a wide variety of matters affecting road safety. I had an opportunity to try the skid pan, I spoke to the driving school instructors and went on patrol on the motorways. We discussed many matters relating to road safety and I am delighted to support the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde about the police, particularly in relation to my hon. Friend's message about the quality of information on our roads.

I drive on motorways almost as much as my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde. Indeed, since I have assumed my new responsibilities, I have perhaps travelled more. I cannot agree more with my hon. Friend about the quality of information given to motorists. It is one of my prime objectives to try to improve the quality of that information so that people understand what is going on. I firmly believe that the British people are very patient souls. They will wait in queues almost anywhere. However, they become cross when they do not know why they are waiting. We should be able to tell them more so that they understand and appreciate the reasons for the congestion whether that be for an accident, maintenance or for road improvements.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde rightly said, we have had problems on our motorways. I am aware of that because part of the junction involving the M6, M61 and M55 is in my constituency. To that extent, the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) about speed limiters on lorries are all the more pertinent to me. The accident to which he referred occurred in my constituency so I am aware of the grief and suffering which arose as a result of that accident although none of my constituents was involved. However, I am well aware of the fine work of the emergency services and the police in particular in dealing with that accident.

The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch about speed limiters is very important. At the moment there are speed limiters on coaches and buses because they are public service vehicles and the pressure for limiters is great because of the number of people they carry. Detailed discussions are being held within the EEC at the moment about limiters for lorries. It would be invidious of us to set our limits before they are complete, largely because there might be a difference in attitudes to

[Mr. Atkins]

speed which might lead to confusion. However, that does not mean that we are opposed to the idea of limiters on lorries in principle. I am considering that along with a wide variety of other issues which hon. Members from both sides of the House have put to me.

I am aware of the problem and hon. Members will know that one of the largest truck manufacturers—Leyland-DAF—is in my constituency. I know that it is interested in the subject of limiters and I will raise that subject with it, and also ensure that the discussions within the EEC are brought to a satisfactory conclusion as soon as possible.

Although congestion in London is not fundamental to our debate, it is very important. The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) and many of my hon. Friends including my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) have referred to the London assessment studies and the available options. They will understand that, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I came to this task, it was the very first issue on our desks—in my case, it was on my desk within an hour of my walking in the door. Therefore, I was made quite certain of the concerns and problems of hon. Members across the political spectrum.

It is my intention and that of my right hon. Friend to ensure that the uncertainty that surrounds the discussion of the London assessment studies is brought to an early conclusion. I have informed my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) that my right hon. Friend intends to make an announcement in the early part of December when the reports have been received and examined in detail. I emphasise that there has never been any consideration of motorways in the accepted sense of the word. I am sure that the expression is often used entirely inaccurately. The options that are being considered are in draft form from consultants, not from the Department of Transport. We intend to make a statement in early December and relieve Londoners' uncertainty and concern.

Mr. Maples Will my hon. Friend confirm that his Department will publish the consultants' report before coming to its own conclusions so that there is time for public debate and representations before the Secretary of State comes to his decision?

Mr. Cox: Will the Minister give an assurance that there will be adequate time for local communities to make their observations known? When the reports are published, will they be realistically priced so that local communities and individuals can buy them if they wish?

Mr. Atkins: I assure the House that we will do everything in our power to ensure that local authorities, local Members of Parliament and local residents have the chance to comment on the proposals. We intend to do that as quickly as we possibly can, bearing in mind the need to ensure that the information that comes to us is right.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said that I am a former London borough councillor. I am only too well aware of the difficulties involved with roads. When I joined what is now the London borough of Haringey council in 1968, the biggest problem was the Archway road. When I left in 1976, it was still the Archway road, and when I came to the Department of Transport it was yet again the Archway road. I recognise the pressure upon hon. Members and the concern being expressed in various parts of London.

As those who are expert in these matters will know, the transport supplementary grant is being examined at precisely this moment. I have already had a preliminary canter through it. We intend to invite local authorities to make submissions for road safety projects in the 1991-92 round. I hope that it will give them plenty of time to examine the possibilities.

One of the most important parts of this debate, which I emphasised in my opening remarks and which was addressed in his own distinguished way by the Father of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), is drink-driving. My right hon. Friend's views on these matters are forceful and have been held by him for many years. Obviously, there are differences of opinion between hon. Members about drink-driving. However, there is one matter on which we are all united, and that is that drink-driving is simply unacceptable. All the pressures of public opinion and the effects of the advertising through my Department under my predecessor demonstrate that the change of opinion on these matters is constantly increasing against those involved in such an unacceptable activity. As I said in my opening remarks, breath testing is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. He is treating the matter with some urgency. I hope that, as it affects my Department and others, he will be able to come to a conclusion in the near future.

On a personal basis, I have considerable sympathy with my right hon. Friend's points. The idea of random breath testing, guided by a senior police officer at certain check points, seems to have great merit. I stress that that remains my personal view, but it may yet become the view of more people.

On the subject of the alcohol level, at the moment I am not yet persuaded—I am open to giving the matter some consideration—that there is any enormous advantage in reducing the alcohol level. I say that openly for one main reason—we have spent a lot of time, with some degree of success, trying to get across to the public the level at the moment. The present level is set on a scientific basis and I confess that I do not have the time to go into that now. It was set after a considerable amount of research and was picked because it seemed to fit the requirements of safe driving. I recognise that there is some concern that it should be changed and, believing that it is worthy of consideration, I shall consider that matter. However, as it stands, the level must stay the same if only because it helps us in our continuing campaign against drink-driving. Well over half the convictions in this area involve a level well in excess of the present level. Therefore, while not completely agreeing with my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and colleagues, I recognise the concern and will keep the matter under constant review.

I am surprised that one particular matter did not arise during the debate and, although it did not, I shall address it because I have prepared myself so to do and it is worthy of being put on the record. I am referring to the publicity that has recently surrounded drivers accompanying learner drivers. Some of my hon. Friends and other hon. Members will recognise the case of Mrs. Vicki Stone, whose daughter and a friend were sadly killed in a dreadful accident. There is some discussion about this matter. I recognise the concern and have made urgent arrangements for my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) to bring in his constituent, Mrs. Stone, so that we can discuss the matter at some length.

Obviously, this subject is not capable of as easy a solution as some of us would like to think. We know from experience that learners who have had the opportunity to practise their skills as well as having lessons with a professional instructor, do better when taking their driving test and are likely to be better drivers. We do not want to limit that or to take away the opportunity for learners to gain valuable experience, but we must ensure proper supervision. I have therefore already indicated my willingness to look into this to see whether there is a case for a change in the regulations on accompanying drivers. I hope that the House will recognise that the Government and my Department have reacted swiftly to this cause for national concern to which we might be able to find a solution.

We have addressed a wide variety of areas in the debate. We have even discussed Liberal policy which, I suspect, will be discussed at even greater length in the days to come. It appears that the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) believes that there is no way in which we can impinge on the right of individuals to buy more cars, yet his party is not frightfully keen on building more roads to cope with them. That is a fundamental dichotomy that the Liberals will have to address because if they do not, we shall force them so to do. Nonetheless, the hon. Member for Southport made an interesting speech and I am grateful to him for being here because he, like me, represents a north-west constituency and knows of the difficulties involved in travelling back to one's constituency on a Friday afternoon.

This has been an important debate. I take the point raised by the hon. Member for Deptford that we have not debated this subject for some time and I hope that it will not be long before we discuss it again. Road safety is one of the most important matters facing us—Parliament and the British people. The constant number of deaths and injuries on our roads—albeit reducing year by year—is unacceptable.

I can say with some justification that Britain's record on road safety is better than many other countries in Europe, but as long as one person dies on our roads, our record is not good enough. It is my determination that we shall continue to press strongly in road safety, to improve and to reduce those dreadful statistics and to cut out the dreadful carnage on our roads. I hope that the debate has served to allow the Government to put their case and hon. Members to address the subject in their own way because, as a result, we shall gain.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 9th November, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Orders No. 14 (Exempted business) and No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)), Motions in the name of the Prime Minister relating to Shipping (Dangerous Goods) or in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Merchant Shipping may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall then put the Question already proposed from the Chair.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

AGRICULTURE

Ordered,

That Mr. Tim Boswell and Mr. David Curry be discharged from the Agriculture Committee and Mr. Alan Amos and Mr. Christopher Gill be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Royal British Legion Housing Association

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

2.30 pm

Sir Marcus Fox (Shipley): I am sorry to intrude upon the Minister's weekend activities by asking him to realise —as I am sure he will by the end of this short debate—that there is a deteriorating relationship between the Royal British Legion housing association and the Housing Corporation. It is quite unnecessary and it can be rectified virtually immediately. I hope that common sense will prevail, which is all that I ask.

I regret that the Housing Corporation has not lived up to the expectations that many of us had at its inception. There is a feeling that it has become bureaucratic and that some of its officers behave autocratically in their examination of certain housing associations, and I am not restricting that criticism to the Royal British Legion. It is a great shame, because, after all, those who serve housing associations are volunteers. They give of their time because they feel that they are fulfilling an important social need. Anything that gets in the way of the good relationship that should exist should be carefully examined.

The debate is dealing with a housing association that is attached to the Royal British Legion, hence its title. I wish to use the debate to highlight one area of concern. The management committee consists of a majority of people from the Royal British Legion, as we would expect. I must declare an interest because I am a consultant to the Royal British Legion—although, I hasten to add, unpaid—and so is the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), who would have been here to support me had that been possible.

The more that I know of the Royal British Legion, the more impressed I am by its wonderful work. If this House were packed, and it never is for an Adjournment debate, I should be surprised if there was any dissent from that statement. The Royal British Legion cares for those who gave so much not only in two world wars but in the other conflicts since then. I am thinking especially of the grievous problems in Northern Ireland and the suffering that has been caused. The timing of this debate could not be better because we are approaching Remembrance Day.

Some 25 years ago, in August 1964, the British Legion —as it was then—decided to take advantage of recently introduced legislation to form a housing association. The intention was to provide well-designed and well-built housing for ex-service men and women who had reached retirement age and needed to spend their remaining days in warden-assisted sheltered housing. Only two types of property are involved—single bedroom accommodation for a couple and bedsit accommodation. In other words, the accommodation is restricted to the sort of people who would need it.

I am sure that it will be generally accepted and appreciated that those who have served their country in the armed services have a special distinction and a disciplined approach to life's complexities. I am not sure that I can speak for both my hon. Friend the Whip and my hon. Friend the Minister, but two of us have served in the armed forces. I apologise if I have wrongly left out my hon. Friend the Minister, but he looks rather young to have been in the armed services. It is quite traumatic for service people to return to everyday civilian life where they have to make their own decisions and do not have that comradely feeling that there are others who care and who are in close contact. If that is the case when people come out of the Army after three years, think what it is like after a lifetime of service.

Therefore, the conditions created by the Royal British Legion housing association are ideal. These courts provide the perfect conditions for ex-soldiers, sailors and airmen and their spouses or widows. There are two of these homes in my constituency and I know how well they are appreciated. One has been particularly well sited because it is next door to another development for retired licensed victuallers, and they seem to have a bit in common.

It is of interest that the original rules laid out when the housing association was formed are:

> "The objects of the society shall be to carry on the industry, business or trade of providing housing and any associated amenities for ex-servicemen, their wives, widows and dependants and ex-service women, all of whom are of limited means."

On that foundation, it is not surprising that in the next 22 years, the housing association built 12,586 flats and houses. It is now the landlord, and an acceptable one, for some 19,000 ex-service men and women. It has for several years been the second largest voluntary housing association in the country. By 31 March, it had invested £212 million.

Among housing associations, the legion is unique in that each housing court has its own local dedicated band of workers, mainly ex-service personnel and members of the legion. These committees are in daily touch with the warden and residents and thus are able to ensure their proper welfare on a regular basis. Considerable sums have been raised by each of the local committees to provide communal furnishing and amenities for the tenants' benefit. This is an almost perfect way to manage such housing, because it relieves the national and local welfare services of much of the stress in establishing need. Because all the legion's benevolent and welfare services are available, this is a model association for others to emulate.

In accordance with the Housing Acts—it is important for the Minister to remember this—from its inception the Royal British Legion housing association has continued to hold 50 per cent. of its tenancies available to nomination by the local authorities concerned. In the majority of instances, local authorities have selected as their nominees those ex-service people on their waiting lists whom they considered to be in need of sheltered housing, recognising the comradely atmosphere of the legion's courts. The legion's philosophy is—at first gradually, and then increasingly fast—over the next two or three decades to seek tenants from outside the service community, to enable the developments to be filled. This is the right policy to meet the considerable costs of development.

In 1986, the Royal British Legion housing association was subjected to undue pressure by the Housing Corporation, which wished it to amend its rules. The clear message was that failure to comply would mean the dropping of funding for new projects. The association had already, in 1982, amended its rules to provide that where no suitable ex-service tenant was forthcoming, it would house a non-ex-service man or woman in housing need. Some 8 per cent. of its tenants are not ex-service people.

In 1986, because of the pressure from the Housing Corporation, the legion reluctantly adopted the following rule:

> "The object of the society shall be to carry on the industry, business or trade of providing housing by way of family housing, sheltered housing and higher care housing for persons in housing need and on appropriate terms giving consideration, where reasonable, to the ex-service community."

The effect was to open up all the association's tenancies to all civilian classifications and to relegate ex-service men and women to an afterthought.

In the circumstances, it is not surprising that the increase in finance, which it was suggested would be obtained when the rules were changed, has not materialised. The stance of the Housing Corporation is that because the association draws its development funds from public sources, its tenancy selection process must be completely open. That denies the fact that there are tens of thousands within the ex-service community who would qualify to end their days in housing such as the RBL makes available. To emphasise the size of catchment area, the RBL reminds us that the ex-service community, inclusive of immediate family, totals 20 million people, or one third of the population.

A majority of those on local authority housing lists are ex-service people. In view of its stance, it is strange that the Housing Corporation is in the habit of stating its desire to be of special service to categories of people who meet with difficulty in life, such as one-parent families, time-served offenders and immigrants from the ethnic minorities and those suffering disability. It seems strange that housing associations are being set up to deal with some of those categories while the RBL is denied the right to look after ex-service people, when that is its prime intention.

The RBL and I would be happy to accept that when ex-service people cease to be available to take up tenancies the community at large should benefit from its imaginative initiative. Places could be filled by other deprived people who need housing.

In future, the RBL, like most other housing associations, will have to finance its borrowing needs in the private sector. It has much still to offer as a wise, skilful and successful association, but it sees no future if it cannot serve those who served us in such a remarkable way. It wishes to return to the position that obtained prior to the 1986 amendment to the rules, and proposes a reversion to the 1982 rule which allowed it to concentrate all its efforts in the ex-service sector.

The RBL expects its request to be listened to carefully. It is anxious to play a leading role in resettling ex-service men and women and wishes to do so, even for those who came out of the forces with less than 21 years' service.

I hope that the Minister will give the Royal British Legion housing association hope and will recognise that it has fulfilled a worthwhile role and wishes to continue to do so.

2.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) for raising this subject because it gives me an opportunity to praise the work done by the Royal British Legion housing association and that of housing associations in general, with the help of public subsidy. He also mentioned the Housing Corporation, although not in glowing terms. The House will recognise that the Housing corporation plays a major part in promoting the work of the housing association movement and has a vital role in securing the best use of funds from Parliament. I congratulate my hon. Friend on the timing of this debate. It occurs during the annual poppy appeal. In the week leading up to Remembrance Day services across the land, the importance of the Royal British Legion's charitable work is very much in our minds.

We should bear in mind that the Royal British Legion housing association is constituted as a body separate from the Royal British Legion itself. The housing association is a registered charity in its own right; it is a registered friendly society; and, under yet another statutory provision, it is registered with the Housing Corporation.

My hon. Friend has illustrated the scale of the work done by the housing association, which is one of the largest in the country, with more than 12,500 dwellings. They are let mainly to elderly people, and to those who need various forms of personal care. A high proportion of the tenants are ex-service men or their dependants. The association's housing can be found all over the country, with several hundred separate schemes or courts, usually with a resident warden service.

My hon. Friend has the advantage of me, as his constituency contains two such schemes; mine contains only one—Ironside court, in the centre of Southampton —which I know to be very popular and extremely well run.

My hon. Friend referred, modestly to the organisation. He also referred to the role of the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees). The fact that two such distinguished Members of the House give of their time freely to the association is a futher indication of its importance, and of the high esteem in which it is held.

I hope that today's debate has given an idea not only of the scale, but of the quality of the service that is provided. As my hon. Friend has said, the association harnesses the generous voluntary help given by more than 3,000 unpaid helpers, who are organised through local "house committees". The result is a very high standard of service to tenants. My hon. Friend described it as an almost perfect way of managing this type of housing, and that, I believe, is also the verdict of the Housing Corporation, which has a statutory responsibility to monitor the performance of housing associations. It has, I know, been most impressed by this aspect of the association's service.

Let me say a little about the work of the Housing Corporation and how it relates to individual housing associations. My hon. Friend expressed reservations about the corporation's actions. Far be it from me to deny that there are elements of bureaucracy and autocracy within it, although, if the corporation contains unsatisfactory elements we should certainly know about them with a view to discussing them with its chairman. Dealings that I have had with it, however, suggest to me that the corporation is a very well-run organisation with a team of dedicated employees, and that it is doing a very important job. I hope that my hon. Friend's remarks refer to particular examples, and are unrepresentative of the true picture.

The function of the Housing Corporation is to supervise a massive capital programme to provide new subsidised housing. This year it is running a programme of over £800 million in public funds for investment in housing associations that are building new homes for rent, renovating older housing stock or helping people on low incomes to get on to the first rung of the home ownership ladder. That capital programme is set to rise substantially in future years, with more and more private finance being drawn in to help the public investment to go further.

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

Housing associations are now in the forefront of providing new homes for people who could not otherwise afford them, and the Housing Corporation has a responsibility to ensure that the best possible results—in terms of value for money and meeting genuine housing needs—are achieved from the increased investment.

The Housing Corporation is also responsible for paying public subsidy—known as housing association grant—towards the schemes carried out under the capital programme. The grant that the House votes towards such expenditure currently averages about 75 per cent. of the capital cost of a housing association scheme. That is a generous level of subsidy, and it helps to ensure that accommodation is accessible to those in housing need at rents within their reach.

The Royal British Legion housing association has had enormous financial support from public sources over the years. During the last five years I understand that some £20 million of new public investment has been channelled through the association. In terms of grant, to date well over £150 million in cash terms has been paid from voted funds towards the cost of housing schemes developed by the association. That is a measure of the importance of the work that the association does. It is also, of course, a reminder that housing associations—even though they are constituted as voluntary, and often charitable, bodies—are heavily dependent on taxpayer funding. There is therefore a weighty responsibility on those who administer the funding to ensure that it is achieving the objectives for which the money has been made available. That is the task of the Housing Corporation.

My hon. Friend questioned the role of the Housing Corporation in connection with the aims and objectives of the Royal British Legion housing association. He says that there was a change in the rules in 1986 and that he and other members of the association would prefer a return to the rules that prevailed in 1982. Any proposed rule changes would have to be discussed with the Housing Corporation. I hope that that will happen. I am prepared to discuss with my hon. Friend or other members of the Royal British Legion housing association any issues that arise from those discussions, but in the first instance the discussions should be with the Housing Corporation.

Even under the existing rules it should not be impossible to meet the objectives to which my hon. Friend referred. He says that the new rules treat ex-service men and women as an afterthought. I am not sure that that is the intention of the new rules. They emphasise that housing need has to be examined, as well as the background of those who will use the housing. It would be wrong for a housing association to concentrate exclusively on the background of the people whom it houses. It should also have to take into account their housing need.

My hon. Friend says that a large number of ex-service men and their dependants are in housing need, but he foresees the time when there may be sufficient places in Royal British Legion housing association accommodation to accommodate those who are not ex-service men. His point, however, is that at the moment the demands of ex-service men and their dependants are so great that it is unlikely that many non-ex-service men can be accommodated. My hon. Friend also pointed out that about 50 per cent. of the nominations normally rest with local authorities and that it is within their absolute discretion to allocate housing to ex-service men and their dependants or to others.

I hope that the objectives and purposes to which my hon. Friend referred can be achieved without a battle between the Housing Corporation and the association. The worst outcome would be for that largely voluntary organisation to find itself at loggerheads with the Housing Corporation. I shall do everything that I can to ensure that difficulties, if there are any, are soon resolved.

My hon. Friend referred to other specialist housing associations. Certain associations concentrate on particular cultural, occupational, ethnic or religious minority groups. Their housing need is significant, but it is not fair to suggest that all those associations offer housing just to the members of those groups. When they examine their allocations they have to take into account the overall housing need. Nevertheless, if it is a specialist housing association, almost all the accommodation will be allocated to members of that particular group.

I hope that I have been able to put the matter into context. I shall be happy to discuss it further with my hon. Friend, should he so wish. I thank him once again for raising the issue, and, once again, I pay tribute to the Royal British Legion housing association's fine work.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 6 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords]*

UNITED MEDICAL AND DENTAL SCHOOLS BILL *[Lords]*

Orders for consideration read.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Monday 13 November.

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Monday 13 November.

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the British Film Institute Southbank Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Redbridge London Borough Council Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present Session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Industrial Development

1. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial resources are available to the Welsh Development Agency during the current financial year for the purposes of industrial development; and what plans he has to increase this sum for the next financial year.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): The Welsh Development Agency has a total budget for 1989-90 of £130 million which will be deployed in promoting economic development in Wales. This represents an increase of over 50 per cent. on the budget for 1987-88. The agency's spending plans for 1990-91 will be announced following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Secretary of State aware that the WDA in Gwynedd has not been able to go ahead with some scheduled industrial site projects because of a lack of finance? At a meeting with me, the WDA attributed this to the effect of projects such as those involving Bosch and Toyota—welcome though they are in themselves—on the overall budget. Budgets for areas such as Gwynedd are sucked in to meet those requirements. Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the WDA has asked that additional resources be made available? Can he confirm that major additional resources will be made available to meet the needs of major projects? Will he ensure that the resources from capital sales are available to the WDA for such projects and that it can roll its budget over from one year to the next?

Mr. Walker: I am pleased to say that, partly because of sales and partly because of extra Government funds, there has been a substantial increase in the budget of 50 per cent. In Gwynedd, 23,000 sq ft of WDA floor space is vacant. The WDA plans to start work on an additional 50,000 sq ft of factory and workshop floor space in the current financial year. On average, one factory a month has been built in the past 10 years. Much has been done, but I recognise that there is much more to be done.

Mr. Raffan: Does my right hon. Friend agree that now that substantial private sector investment is creating business parks and providing factory space in south-east Clwyd—in Wrexham Maelor and in Alyn and Deeside—the WDA should concentrate its resources on factory development in north-east Clwyd, coastal Clwyd and Gwynedd, so that we can achieve a more balanced provision of WDA factory space in north Wales?

Mr. Walker: It is important that the WDA concentrates its substantially increased facilities and money in those areas where job creation has the highest priority.

Mr. Barry Jones: The WDA plays an important role abroad. In the interests of Welsh business, can the Secretary of State tell the House when he thinks that Britain should join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system? Is he hiding behind the Prime Minister's skirts, or is he shoulder to shoulder with the Leader of the House, the former Foreign Secretary?

Mr. Walker: I consider that careful judgment needs to be given to the exact timing.

Hospital Waiting Lists

2. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the current in-patient and out-patient hospital waiting lists in each of the Welsh area health authorites, by specialty.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): As the answer contains numerous figures I will with permission, Mr. Speaker, circulate the information in the *Official Report*.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is it not true that while the figures for mid-Glamorgan show a slight improvement, within those figures there is another tale, especially in the Cynon-Merthyr area? Is it not a fact that, over the past five years, the number of in-patients and out-patients waiting for hospital treatment has remained more or less the same? Is that the best that the Minister can do?

Mr. Grist: First, may I congratulate the hon. Lady on her electoral success and take leave to evince that I do not think that she will ever hide behind her convictions.

I think that the hon. Lady would like to join me in congratulating her health authority on the 30 per cent. reduction between March 1987 and March 1989 in the number of in-patients waiting more than one year for treatment.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Can my hon. Friend say anything about the proposed treatment centres intended to shorten waiting lists for certain forms of treatment?

Mr. Grist: Yes. My hon. Friend knows that Ysbyty Gwynedd will have one of the treatment centres. We debated them fully in the Welsh Grand Committee last week. The centres will speed up operations for people on waiting lists. Although I do not wish to overemphasise waiting lists, the centres will make a major contribution to shortening the waiting lists which we all deplore.

Mr. Livsey: Does the Minister agree that Powys health authority should be congratulated on its attempts to reduce waiting lists by means of its health education programme aimed at eliminating hydatid disease? Does he further agree that such a programme would be more effective if the Welsh Office fully funded a dog-worming scheme, as has been done in New Zealand where the disease has been practically eliminated? Was it not self-evident on Saturday, from the way in which the New Zealand team performed, that that had been effective?

Mr. Grist: I did not know that it was a case of a need for worming. The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point. He will be aware that the Welsh Office funded a worming programme which has now been handed over successfully to the Powys health authority, which has welcomed the programme.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister confirm that he has not given us three treatment centres to tackle waiting lists, but merely an extension of the time of three consultants and support staff? That hardly amounts to three centres. Will he further confirm that all health authorities in Wales are having to make cuts and savings in the middle of the current financial year because of the Government's economic failure? What does he intend to do about that? Will he make available a special allocation of funds to tackle the £130 million repairs backlog in Welsh hospitals? Will he now address the problem of waiting lists in Wales, which he has so far failed to tackle?

Mr. Grist: I can confirm that authorities are expected to raise 1·3 per cent. of their funding through cost improvements and income-generation schemes, as they have successfully done in the past. We anticipate that on top of the 7·3 per cent. increase in funding, that will be sufficient to meet their immediate requirements. On all the other matters that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, such as upkeep and the £130 million backlog, he might like to take into account that when his party was in office, health authorities did not even know the capital value of their stocks because they did not bother to record them. Of the enormous value of hospital stocks in Wales, £130 million is a small proportion. Every hon. Member knows of old hospitals in his constituency that are due to be changed, modernised or closed and replaced with new facilities. That is included in those figures.

Following is the information:

31 March 1989

Out-Patients Waiting List

Specialty	*Pembrokeshire*	*Clwyd*	*East Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*	*Wales*
General Medicine	180	510	357	674	523	908	9	792	328	4,281
Paediatrics	39	144	85	121	62	205	27	448	103	1,234
Chest Disease	14	14		68	15	78		94	17	300
Dermatology	465	760	724	2,304	226	3,174	41	2,354	2,016	12,064
Neurology		114	176	16	33	23	9	634	705	1,710

Out-Patients Waiting List

31 March 1989 Specialty	*Pembrokeshire*	*Clwyd*	*East Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*	*Wales*
Cardiology			1					462		463
Phys Med/Rehab										
STD										
Rheumatology		94	72	436		923	8	435	455	2,423
Geriatrics	2	30	14	24		32		50		152
Younger Disabled										
General Surgery	409	1,301	849	1,646	785	1,612	97	2,847	1,568	11,114
ENT	920	1,376	1,300	1,572	834	2,641	261	2,648	2,363	13,915
Trau and Orth	757	1,182	839	2,721	708	3,219	275	3,111	3,169	15,981
Ophthalmology	84	1,043	360	864	1,302	1,787	186	1,523	1,377	8,526
Radiotherapy		16						26	15	57
Urology		490		128		170		633	1,524	2,945
Plastic Surgery		206	39	208	26	26			169	674
Thoracic Surgery		2								2
Dental Surgery	32	517	109	902	224	204	37	304	519	2,848
Orthodontics	20	230	260	330	86	87	92	1,352	321	2,778
Neurosurgery		5			7			82	26	120
Gynaecology	196	826	605	1,307	424	1,614	28	1,233	1,152	7,385
Psych Children		47				46			34	127
Mental H'Cap										
Mental Illness		67	62	259	33	454	3	210	85	1,173
Adol Psych Units										
GP Medical										
GP Dental										
Others:—										
Pain Relief		50	6	6	13					75
Colposcopy	17									17
Obstetrics		171	32		59					262
Haematology		5		8		14			8	35
Sex. Dysfunction						6				6
Cardiac Surgery								56		56
Psycho Geriatric				22						22
Total	3,135	9,200	5,890	13,616	5,360	17,223	1,073	19,294	15,954	90,745

In-Patients Waiting List

31 March 1989 Specialty	*Pembrokeshire*	*Clwyd*	*East Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*	*Wales*
General Medicine		5						39	2	46
Paediatrics								135		135
Chest Disease										
Dermatology			9					5		14
Neurology								63	18	81
Cardiology								110		110
Physical Medical Rehabilitation						151				151
STD										
Rheumatology				28		10		2	60	100
Geriatrics			1	12			4			17
Younger Disabled										
General Surgery	1,457	1,118	940	1,762	843	1,742		1,299	1,264	10,425
ENT		1,215	479	914	735	2,124		737	1,057	7,261
Trauma and Orthopaedic	800	904	436	2,043	119	1,132		1,801	1,079	8,314
Ophthalmology		356	674	868	611	397		633	964	4,503
Radiotherapy								54	16	70
Urology		568		651		66		822	81	2,188
Plastic Surgery				2,049						2,049
Thoracic Surgery										
Dental Surgery		267		266	354	140		255	418	1,700
Orthodontics										
Neurosurgery								54	79	133
Gynaecology	232	706	229	938	272	862		470	706	4,415
Psych Children										
Mental Handicap										
Mental Illness						6			6	12
Adolescent Psych Units										
GP Medical							113			113
GP Dental			8							8

31 March 1989	*In-Patients Waiting List*									
Specialty	*Pembrokeshire*	*Clwyd*	*East Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*	*Wales*
Others										
Pain Relief										
Colposcopy										
Obstetrics										
Haematology										
Sexual Dysfunction										
Cardiac Surgery								119		119
Psycho Geriatric										
TOTAL	2,489	5,139	2,776	9,531	2,934	6,630	117	6,598	5,750	41,964

Eye Tests

3. **Mr. Coleman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has made a review of the numbers of people in Wales undergoing eye tests since the change in the regulations; and what the corresponding number was for the appropriate period prior to the change.

Mr. Grist: Most of the sight tests undertaken since 1 April 1989 have been private transactions and statistical information is not available centrally. The number of National Health Service sight tests from April to September 1988 for which payment was made to opticians was 329,925. It is considered too early to review the effect of the change in regulations, but the Government intend to commission a survey later this year on the volume of sight tests.

Mr. Coleman: Under the new lights here in the Chamber, can I not see a blush of shame on the Minister's face? Is he aware that ophthalmologists acting as consultants to opticians are worried that, as a result of the abolition of free eye tests, they are now unable properly to monitor people whom they suspect to be liable to suffer from glaucoma, even though the disease does not exist at present in the family? Will he impress upon his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health the need to take note of the matter and to restore free eye testing to ensure good eye health for everyone?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman and others describe the average charge of around £10 as rather too much of a deterrent to the ordinary person. It is worth remembering that about 20 million people are eligible for free sight tests, including, as the hon. Gentleman must know from the way in which he put the question, all those who are closely related to people who suffer from glaucoma disease.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Is my hon. Friend aware that some opticians are offering free sight tests? Does he agree that this is a matter best left to opticians as part of a comprehensive service? Does he further agree that as a result of the Government's changes, opticians are now offering a far better range of glasses and contact lenses at a far lower real cost?

Mr. Grist: That is absolutely true and bears out the rules of competition in the market place. As I said in my original answer, we are monitoring what is happening and we shall want to see what occurs. We have no desire, of course, to damage anybody's eyesight.

Mr. John P. Smith: On the important issue of eye tests, the Minister and other hon. Members would be forgiven for thinking that I am holding a jar of marmalade. In fact, it is drinking water drawn off by a constituent of mine in the community of Craig Penllyne. Does the Minister wish to comment on that?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does this have anything to do with eye tests?

Rail Electrification

4. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has had any discussions with British Rail regarding electrification of the Crewe to Holyhead line or the Western main line from Paddington to Swansea.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): My right hon. Friend discussed electrification when he met the chairman of British Rail on 12 December 1988.

Dr. Marek: I have been told that the Welsh Office favours electrification of the line from Paddington to south Wales, as opposed to electrification of the line from Crewe to Holyhead. If that is not the case, I should welcome the Minister's assurance to that effect and I should like him to say unequivocally that he will press British Rail—if in its wisdom it wishes to do it—for electrification of either line. One should not precede the other, for both are important to the industrial development of the Principality.

Mr. Roberts: I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. There is no justification for saying that the Welsh Office has pressed the case for one line as opposed to the other. I must warn the hon. Gentleman that the case for electrification is weak on both economic and financial grounds for both lines. There is a tendency to regard electrification as magical. We are really interested in improved journey times and I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that British Rail is considering improving the north Wales line so that the maximum speed could be 90 mph rather than 70 mph, as at present.

Mr. Sayeed: On the journey between Paddington and Swansea, the train passes through a number of English and Welsh constituencies. As my hon. Friend will know, the average size of an English constituency is 69,533 electors, whereas a Welsh constituency has an average of 57,753 electors. Will my hon. Friend tell us why a Welsh vote is worth 20 per cent. more than an English vote?

Mr. Roberts: I suppose that the simple answer is that we are. My hon. Friend will be aware of the different sizes of constituencies in England, Scotland and Wales, and of the three, Scotland is the most favoured.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Is the Minister aware that there are two important lines going through mid-Wales, one from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth and one from Shrewsbury through Llandrindod Wells to Swansea. Will the Minister have a word with the chairman of British Rail and try to persuade him to spend more money on those important routes?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman will concede that there have been considerable improvements to rail services in different parts of Wales, including mid-Wales. There is an improved frequency of services in north Wales, as a result of the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. There are extra trains and coaches on the south Wales line and improvements in mid-Wales as well.

Welsh Counties Committee

5. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the Welsh Counties Committee; and what matters were discussed.

7. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the representatives of district councils in Wales; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I met representatives of the Welsh Counties Committee and the Council of Welsh Districts at a meeting of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 2 November to discuss local government finance matters.

Mr. Morgan: Perhaps one of the burning topics that will be put before the Secretary of State when he next meets the Welsh Counties Committee will be the appalling bungle that the Welsh Office has made during the past 12 months. It has prevented Welsh counties, including South and West Glamorgan and Clwyd, from submitting to the European Commission applications for grants from the regional development fund to help with infrastructure schemes. Now that the counties are in a position to submit schemes for consideration, the EEC has changed the rules, and large infrastructure projects are no longer available. I should like to hear from the Secretary of State what his own estimate is, but it looks to me as though his Department and his bungling have cost the British taxpayer more than £66 million. Can he comment on that?

Mr. Walker: Yes, I can comment on it. The hon. Gentleman's assertions are mythical and unfounded, and the Welsh counties local authorities have expressed considerable gratitude for all the help that the Welsh Office has given them.

Mr. Murphy: Did not Welsh council leaders tell the Secretary of State at the meeting last Thursday that his figure of £175 for the Welsh poll tax is a massive underestimate? Will be admit that the implementation of the poll tax in Wales is now a shambles, and that councils face even higher administrative and running costs as a direct result of his Government's policy? Does not all this anyway smack of back-pedalling and panic because there is not one friend of the poll tax in the Principality of Wales?

Mr. Walker: I am only sorry that the hon. Gentleman was not present at the meeting, which was cordial and constructive. There were no complaints along the lines that he describes, and I suggest that he consults local authorities more fully to find out what is really going on.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Did my right hon. Friend discuss the fear of many in Wales that some local councils are using the inevitable confusion arising from the change in revenue raising next April and the fact that many of them do not have to face elections to raise the community charge far higher than is necessary? That will be a decision of the Welsh local councils. What steps does my right hon. Friend propose to take to protect the people of Wales from such councils?

Mr. Walker: I hope that such actions will not be taken. The background is that Welsh authorities in the main have acted responsibly and that is one reason why we have succeeded in negotiating a community charge in Wales of about £100 less than that in England or Scotland.

Mr. Flynn: Did the counties committee raise with the Secretary of State the disparity in spending in Scotland and Wales—especially spending on the Health Service? Is he aware that two parliamentary answers today show that the average spending on the Health Service per head of the population is £504 in Scotland, whereas the average in Wales is a mere £445. Why is that?

Mr. Walker: As the hon. Gentleman tabled the questions himself, he will know that exactly the same differential existed in 1978 and 1979.

Mr. Barry Jones: On a matter as important as poll tax transitional relief and revenue support grant in Wales, why has the right hon. Gentleman decided not to make an oral statement? We note that the Secretary of State for the Environment proposes to make such a statement and to submit to oral questioning. Do you note, Mr. Speaker, that on the Order Paper for written answer today are questions tabled by the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) relating to the poll tax and revenue support grants? Why is the Secretary of State running away from the House? Why has he decided not to make a statement and answer questions? Why has he elected to behave in so slippery a style? He knows that Wales hates the poll tax and that Welsh local authorities are starved of cash. Why is there no statement to the House?

Mr. Walker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I intend to make an oral statement as usual—certainly way before Christmas—when I shall give full details of my proposals for local government finance. Following my constructive meeting with local authorities the local authority associations shared my view that it would not be helpful at this stage to publish examples illustrating the likely effects of my proposals on individual authorities. As Wales has done far better in terms of the poll tax than the rest of the United Kingdom, I shall rejoice in making that statement.

M4

6. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will invite tenders in 1990 to enable the sections on the M4 between Lon-las and Baglan to be completed by the end of 1992.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Tenders have been invited for the Earlswood Lon-las scheme with a view to letting the contract before the end of this financial year. Work on the two remaining schemes is planned to start early in the period April 1991 to March 1994 as shown in "Roads in Wales 1989". These schemes will take two and a half and three years respectively and will be completed simultaneously.

Mr. Wardell: The Minister has given a totally unacceptable time scale in his reply involving a three-year span and he is not willing to give a precise date when those two sections will begin. Does the Minister accept that the people of Wales must be deeply embarrassed after 10 years of Conservative Government because the M4 in Wales remains incomplete and that is a major obstacle to the creation of new jobs west of that particular bottleneck which is driving inward investment away from an area which desperately needs it?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman cannot have heard my reply. I said that the two remaining schemes were planned to start early in the period April 1991 to March 1994. We are well aware of the problems with congestion on the M4 and A48 and that is why we are currently undertaking a scheme of road widening and traffic signalling at Baglan roundabout which will be completed early in the new year. We have further schemes to alleviate congestion for Briton Ferry and the Earlswood roundabouts. Those schemes will give us time to complete this very large project which will cost £116 million at November 1988 prices.

Mid-Glamorgan Health Authority

8. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of Mid-Glamorgan health authority; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Grist: The Secretary of State and I met the chairman of Mid-Glamorgan health authority, together with other Welsh health authority chairmen, on 30 November 1988. We discussed a number of issues, including the NHS review and resource allocations for 1989-90.

Dr. Howells: Given the high rates of morbidity and illness in the Mid-Glamorgan health authority area and the dilapidated state of key sections of its most important hospital—East Glamorgan general hospital—does the Minister have any plans to speed up the replacement of that hospital? Given that until now it has been common currency that the site for the replacement hospital will be Ynys Plwm to the north of Talbot Green, will he explain the curious anomaly whereby information has been made public recently stating that the Minister wants that site to be available for industrial and commercial expansion?

Mr. Grist: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that although a number of planning approval and funding issues remain to be resolved, it is understood that Mid-Glamorgan health authority continues to focus its efforts on securing land at Ynys Plwm. That remains the position as of today. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we deferred consideration of the health authority's proposals pending the authority's financial and timing proposals. That remains the present position.

Mr. Ron Davies: May I draw the Minister's attention to the situation in Rhymney valley and will he raise that issue with the chairman of the health authority the next time he meets him? Waiting lists in Rhymney valley are increasing almost monthly and the quality of the service is deteriorating, but there are no plans to make adequate provision in Rhymney valley and the neighbouring Islwyn valley because of administrative arrangements and disagreements between Mid-Glamorgan health authority and Gwent area health authority. Does the Minister accept that about 150,000 people do not have a district general hospital? Instead of cutting the service and undermining the morale of staff in the National Health Service, should not the Minister be persuading those two area health authorities to get together and co-operate? If he provides the funds, we can have our new district general hospital.

Mr. Grist: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's local point on this contentious issue which has been running for a great many years now. However, it is ludicrous for the hon. Gentleman to talk about cuts when expenditure on the Health Service in Wales has risen from £488 million to £1,600 million. I assure him that our proposals under the NHS review should assist his constituents to have operations and treatment in neighbouring hospitals more easily and flexibly than hitherto.

Mr. Rowlands: Did the Minister's discussions relate to the problems faced by elderly people in Merthyr, for example, who are awaiting hip operations—people who do not have a lot of time to wait? Was he able to discuss how many such operations were to be conducted at the treatment centre at Rhydlafar, and how many people who are presently on the Prince Charles hospital waiting list will go for that treatment? Above all, why can we not have the facility at the hospital in the community in which those people are living?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on the very point that I was making to his hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) about our Health Service review. His health authority had various visiting consultants to the Prince Charles hospital, illustrating that the facilities there could be used at a far higher intensity. That is precisely what would be available under our proposals.

British Rail

9. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I last met the chairman of British Rail on 12 December 1988. The discussions covered a wide range of issues.

Mr. Jones: In view of the Minister of State's reply to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), will the Secretary of State now give the House the whole picture and confirm that British Rail intends to cut expenditure and upgrading work on the section of line between

Holyhead and Bangor? That information was provided by British Rail only recently. Does the Secretary of State agree that such cuts are utterly disgraceful, bearing in mind that British Rail is prepared to commit millions of pounds to the Channel tunnel project but is withdrawing investment from an important line connecting Ireland and Europe? Does he agree that that priority causes the people of Holyhead to wonder whether British Rail is committed to the future of that line? Will he make our views known to the chairman of British Rail when he next meets him?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman must bear in mind that British Rail is spending a great deal of money on improving rolling stock and times in mid-Wales and north Wales. Total expenditure by British Rail in Wales is at a high level, some of which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, must be heavily subsidised, and correctly so. British Rail is doing a great deal of modernisation work, which I welcome.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is a justified fear in south-west Wales that British Rail is not interested in anything west of Cardiff? In particular, there is concern that InterCity services will stop at Cardiff. There is concern also that no attempt is being made to provide a direct and speedy link from south-west Wales to the Channel tunnel. When the right hon. Gentleman next meets the chairman of British Rail, will he get an assurance that InterCity services will not end at Cardiff? Will the Welsh Office, British Rail and the county council try to plan a direct link from south-west Wales to the Channel tunnel?

Mr. Walker: Rail services to Swansea are exceedingly good by any standards. It is a great mistake for the right hon. Gentleman to imply that they have not been maintained to a high order. There are no plans to reduce that service. There are quite a few plans to improve British Rail's rolling stock and general service.

On the Channel tunnel, there is a need for better terminal arrangements in south Wales and north Wales. Important as it is to get good use of the Channel tunnel, if it has maximum success it will carry only 15 per cent. of freight from this country to Europe. It is in Wales's interests to look at where the other 85 per cent. is going.

Toxic Waste (Clwyd)

10. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from individuals and organisations opposed to the dumping of toxic wastes at sites in Clwyd.

Mr. Grist: Representations have been received from hon. Members and from a number of organisations and individuals in connection with proposals for new waste disposal sites and the operations of an existing one in Clwyd.

Mr. Jones: I should not be surprised if the representations include some from residents of Pentre, which is near the Penybont works. Those works will be used for toxic waste. Also, 80 per cent. of the perimeter of the works is surrounded by the River Dee. Will the Secretary of State ask the Government whether an environmental protection agency should be established to protect the residents of Clwyd and of Britain from such a dangerous development?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman is going a little far. I know of the concern that is expressed by him and by many residents in the area about the various proposals. However, this matter is still in the hon. Gentleman's county council's hands. That is the right place for it to rest for the time being.

Employment Training

11. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what number of males and females were employed on a part-time basis and on employment training for the past 12 months.

Mr. Peter Walker: In June this year 197,000 females were estimated to be employed in Wales on a part-time basis, an increase of 8,000 on the June 1988 figure. Comparable figures for male part-time employment are not available. Over the past 12 months, 24,894 males and 10,168 females have started employment training in Wales.

Mr. Powell: Is the Secretary of State aware that since the abolition of the community programme training schemes, the ET schemes have failed to keep pace with the number of people employed on the CP schemes? What can the Secretary of State offer the people of Wales in terms of real training and real jobs? He said that male part-time employment figures are not available, but will he tell me, the House and Wales where he stands on the issue of the part-time Sir Alan Walters who was sacked by the Prime Minister and on the question of the dispute between the Prime Minister and the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer because that is what——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is wide of the question.

Mr. Walker: As, I believe, the one Cabinet Minister who has no advisers, I have none of those problems. One of the most important aspects in developing training is the development of training and enterprise councils. I am pleased by the degree to which Glamorgan is giving the lead in that respect and I hope that the TECs will soon be in place doing important work.

Mr. Wigley: As one of the 38 full-time advisers to the Secretary of State in Wales, may I ask him whether he accepts that part-time and seasonal jobs often camouflage problems in areas that are heavily dependent on tourism? Will he therefore look sympathetically at grant applications for projects that are meant to extend part-time and seasonal jobs into full-time job opportunities?

Mr. Walker: Obviously, I would be reluctant to sack the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* That should do him damage. Any application will be considered on its merits.

Mrs. Fyfe: May I say first how pleased I am to join my sister and brother Celts this afternoon? Secondly, has the Minister any advice—part time or otherwise—on the appalling imbalance between the opportunities for men and women on employment training in Wales, and what is he doing about it?

Mr. Walker: I am glad that over the past two years there has been a substantial increase in the opportunities for female employment in Wales and I hope that that will continue.

Salmonella

12. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the Welsh Office inquiry into the salmonella outbreaks in Flint to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Department is conducting an internal review of the handling of the outbreak to establish any lessons that can be learned for the future. The review will be completed as quickly as possible.

Mr. Raffan: Will my hon. Friend ensure that the review is completed in time for the Government to write their recommendation into next Session's proposed food Bill? Does my hon. Friend agree that in the event of future outbreaks it will be essential that we ensure much more effective co-operation between the local health authorities and local district councils involved, which means putting somebody in charge, preferably the local health authority?

Mr. Grist: The findings of the review will be considered in connection with the Bill. My hon. Friend has put his finger on the very points that the review will consider—co-ordination and co-operation between various authorities during an outbreak.

Mr. Livsey: Is the Minister aware that there is a two-to-three-day delay in the notification of food poisoning incidents between the Welsh Office and the district councils, whereas in England the Department of the Environment gives district councils the information immediately? What is he going to do to put that matter right?

Mr. Grist: As I have already said, that is one of the points that the review will consider. There are various points of view about how quickly one should issue warnings.

New Jobs

13. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new jobs he has been able to announce for Wales during the summer recess.

Mr. Walker: I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that a number of major industrial investments in Wales were announced during the recess, including projects by Newbridge Networks, Gooding-Sanken and Dow Corning-Cabot. During the same period, more than 40 companies accepted regional selective assistance offers involving total investment of £42 million and the creation of nearly 1,700 new jobs. Between July and September, seasonally adjusted unemployment in Wales fell by some 6,000—from 96,200 to 90,200.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my right hon. Friend aware that these extremely satisfactory figures are a tribute to the manner in which he has combined the use of market forces, judicious intervention and some pretty ruthless arm-twisting?

Mr. Walker: A range of factors are involved in that, but it is pleasing to know that, during the past year, unemployment in Wales has fallen faster than in any other region on the United Kingdom, and unemployment in the valleys has fallen faster than the rate for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Does the Secretary of State agree with the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) who said in the House last Tuesday that we were once again in a downswing and that:

"a dull 1989 is bound to be followed by a difficult 1990"?—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1989; Vol. 159, c. 209.]

How long will it be before unemployment in Wales starts to rise again?

Mr. Walker: I am certain that the hon. Gentleman is one of those who have been cheering since the last general election. At that time, unemployment in Wales was 74 per cent. higher than it is now.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Rudolf Hess

34. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Attorney-General what decision the Director of Public Prosecutions has come to in respect of the Jones report on the circumstances surrounding the death of Rudolf Hess in Spandau prison in 1987.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The inquiries carried out by Detective Chief Superintendent Jones have produced no cogent evidence to suggest that Rudolf Hess was murdered; nor, on the view of the Director of Public Prosecutions, is there any basis for further investigation.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Solicitor-General agree that that is a deeply disappointing answer, if it is the truth? While the Government and the Prime Minister may not have improved their batting average in the veracity stakes over the past weekend, does he agree that, as the Jones report recommended that there were grounds for a full criminal investigation, it is deeply disappointing to find the hon. and learned Gentlemen coming to the House to say that he has done a Stalker on the issue.

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman fails to realise that the prosecution process is wholly independent of the Government. It is assessed independently by the Director of Public Prosecutions and the results represent his independent conclusions.

Kincora Boys' Home

35. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received asking for a re-examination of the evidence relating to Kincora boys' home with a view to prosecuting some of those involved.

The Solicitor-General: None, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: What event or series of events prompted or induced so careful a Permanent Secretary as Sir Michael Quinlan to write formally to Sir Robin Butler to ask for a public inquiry into Kincora?

The Solicitor-General: There have been two inquiries into Kincora. Neither has given rise to justification for any further criminal proceedings, over and above those that took place and led to the conviction of four people in 1981.

Mr. Maclennan: Why has the Solicitor-General completely failed to answer the question asked by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)?

The Solicitor-General: I have nothing to add to my previous answer.

Criminal Cases

36. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent discussions he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions regarding criminal cases.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I have met the director on a number of occasions in the past month to discuss matters of departmental interest.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Director of Public Prosecutions considering the serious allegations about insider dealing by companies? Arising from that, is it part of the role of the Attorney-General to advise the Prime Minister on the need for rules to be tightened on shares held by Ministers?

The Attorney-General: The answer to the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question is no. The policy of criminal law is the ministerial responsibility of the Home Secretary. I would gladly give the answer to the first part of the question, if I could remember it.

Mr. Fraser: I wonder whether the Director of Public Prosecutions, when he met the Attorney-General, discussed the Guildford Four bombing case. Does the Attorney-General agree that, without disrespect to the courts, the acquittal of the Guildford Four was a ritual by the Court of Appeal, in the sense that they were convicted by one police force and acquitted by another? Can the Attorney-General confirm that the DPP, when giving evidence to Mr. Justice May's inquiry, will take a constructive view of his role, not just to secure good convictions but to avoid miscarriages of justice?

Outstanding cases of miscarriage of justice have often been righted not by the ultimate investigations of the courts but by outside investigations which might be put in hand by the DPP.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman asks whether the acquittal of the Guildford Four by the Court of Appeal was a ritual acquittal. No acquittal is a ritual acquittal and no conviction is a ritual conviction. The acquittal of the Guildford Four followed upon the Court of Appeal's attention being drawn to new information, which in the opinion of the Director of Public Prosecutions, with which I entirely agreed, rendered the original convictions unsafe.

As to the attitude of the Director of Public Prosecutions to Sir John May's inquiry, I assure the House that the Director wishes to co-operate in the fullest possible way with Sir John May as he pursues the terms of reference that have been given for his inquiry, which could hardly be more widely drawn.

Mr. Gow: What further steps will be taken by my right hon. and learned Friend or by the Director of Public Prosecutions to bring Mr. Patrick Ryan to trial, either in the United Kingdom or in the Republic of Ireland?

The Attorney-General: If Mr. Patrick Ryan is located in any country outside this jurisdiction with which we have the means of securing his arrest so that he may be brought to face trial here those steps will be taken. I assure the House that the Director of Public Prosecutions and the prosecuting authorities of this country will take all steps open to them to secure that Mr. Ryan faces trial.

Appeal Statistics

37. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the number of appeals against conviction made to the Court of Appeal in the last five years, the number that have been allowed and the number that have been refused.

The Attorney-General: From 1 January 1985 to 30 September 1989 the total number of applications for leave to appeal against conviction received by the Court of Appeal was 7,964. A total of 2,179 appeals against conviction were considered by the court and of those 878 —40·3 per cent.—were allowed in full or in part and 1,301 were dismissed.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the criminal courts and the Court of Appeal can act only on the basis of the admissible evidence before them? Over the centuries the courts have worked painstakingly on admissibility and on the law of evidence to ensure that the best interests of the defendant are served. In those circumstances does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that those who are urging some sort of new tier in addition to the Court of Appeal, whether it is a people's court or something similar, simply do not understand the nature of the criminal court system or the painstaking efforts that are now taken by trial judges and by the Court of Appeal to act in the best interests of fairness and justice?

The Attorney-General: I agree very much with my hon. Friend. I have greatly regretted some rather loose imputations that have been made against the courts in the light of recent events. I say that without commenting in one way or another upon the events with which the House has already been concerned this afternoon. The Court of Appeal deals with such matters in a most conscientious way and the work is extremely arduous. I can only suggest to those who are minded to make adverse imputations about the way in which the Court of Appeal does its work that they should go to watch that court at work.

Mr. Sedgemore: If it is true, as we have just heard, that, over the centuries, the judges have been arduous in the pursuit of justice, how does the Attorney-General explain the actions of Judge Jeffreys after the battle of Sedgemoor?

The Attorney-General: I do not know how many centuries we are going back, but I would be happy, with the hon. Gentleman, to compare the record of this country's judiciary, century for century and in the light of contemporary standards, with that of any judiciary of any other country in the world. One interesting thing that I find extremely reassuring is the way in which people who live in other civilised countries speak of our judiciary and police force and about how they feel very much safer in this country than anywhere else.

Mr. Lawrence: Further to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), is he aware that in only six cases in the past 20 years has the Court of Appeal quashed a conviction because it was not satisfied with the jury's verdict? Would it not be better for public confidence in the ability of the Court of Appeal to correct miscarriages of justice if the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 were amended so that the court had to satisfy itself on the evidence that the jury's verdict was correct, as was recommended by a recent Justice committee report chaired by a former Lord Justice of Appeal, Sir George Waller?

The Attorney-General: My hon. and learned Friend could well make that interesting suggestion, if he were so minded, to Sir John May's inquiry which has the widest possible terms of reference.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

India

45. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom doing to help improve primary education in India.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): A grant of just over £31 million was approved in September for a primary education project in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It provides for the design and construction of some 1,100 teachers' centres and 4,000 classrooms mostly in remote rural areas throughout the state. It also covers teacher training, in child-centred learning techniques, teaching materials and research and evaluation.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend agree that educational support is a particularly important form of aid, especially because of the long-term benefits that it confers? Therefore, will she tell the House whether, in India, the United Kingdom benefits other than primary education?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why we provide more than £3 million towards the development of the Indira Gandhi national open university and other distance learning projects. In addition, there are a large number of English language tuition programmes and numerous collaborative links between British and Indian academic institutions. There is also a United Kingdom training programme which costs about £11 million a year.

Mr. Vaz: The Minister is probably not aware that Leicestershire county council's director of education has recently returned from a three-week visit to India, where he established important links with Indian schools. Does she join me in supporting such ventures? If she does, what plans has she to enable more resources to be made available for local authorities to establish such important cultural links?

Mrs. Chalker: Of course I welcome cultural links between local authorities and other countries that can benefit from such links. I should like to learn more about the links between Leicestershire county council and the Indians. If they are worthwhile projects, which fall in with the Indian Government's overall considerations, there is no reason why, in due time, other projects should not follow.

Wildlife Conservation (Africa)

46. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what Britain is providing through the aid programme to help with wildlife conservation in Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Britain has long been helping African Governments with their wildlife conservation efforts, and we are always ready to consider new requests for help. I have placed a list of recent and continuing activities in the Library of the House.

Miss Widdecombe: Following the recently imposed ban on the international ivory trade, have the Government any intention of helping specifically with elephant conservation in east Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: We have been providing help to the Kenya wildlife department for many years, and expect to continue to do so. Following a request from the Tanzanian Government, we are about to appoint consultants to look at possible ways of helping that country with its conservation efforts. We shall look at all the ways in which we can reasonably help with conservation.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Government are not doing enough. Will the Minister commend President Arap Moi for destroying millions of dollars worth of ivory which was confiscated from poachers? Will she give an undertaking that Governments such as the Kenyan Government and others that wish, and are willing, to destroy poached ivory stocks will be fully compensated by the British Government? That is what the people of this country want.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman takes the issue further than many in the House and country would do. Of course, President Moi gave the world an important signal about poached ivory stocks. It is also important that we should help African countries to conserve and preserve their elephant stocks. However, we must eliminate ivory poaching. That is why we have long been engaged in helping countries that have an active programme against poaching, and we shall continue to do so.

Ethiopia

47. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the value of food aid given to Ethiopia since 1985.

Mrs. Chalker: According to World Food Programme statistics, total food aid from all sources to Ethiopia since 1985 is some 4 million tonnes of cereals and more than 300,000 tonnes of other foods, including dairy products. Figures for the total cost of this aid are not available to us.

Mr. Baldry: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House the value of United Kingdom food aid during that time? Is she aware that all the reports from Ethiopia from such organisations as the Disasters Emergency Committee suggest that the drought in Ethiopia this year is as bad as, if not worse than, it was in 1985? Is not that position made worse because the areas being hit hardest are those where civil war is raging? Is it not true that there will be no solution to the problems of Ethiopia until the civil war comes to an end? Should not the international community, including Britain, make every effort to bring together the parties in Ethiopia in an attempt to end a terrible civil war which is costing many hundreds of thousands of lives year on year?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is right to condemn the way in which the civil war in Ethiopia adds to the terrible problems of drought suffered by the Ethiopian people. We have been doing our best to help, and since 1985—the period under consideration—not only have we directly given more than 150,000 tonnes of food, valued at almost £23 million, but we have helped to the tune of £9 million through European Community help. In the past year alone, and additional to those figures, we have given a total of £3·3 million in bilateral aid to Ethiopia, and an additional £2 million of food aid through the non-governmental organisations of the European Community.

My hon. Friend is right to say that unless the civil war is brought to an end it will be difficult to get food to those who need it most—the people living in the rebel-held areas. We are very conscious of that and are discussing with our European partners ways in which we can get the food to those most in need.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Minister agree that, apart from wars and politics, the underlying problem of the famine in Ethiopia is environmental deterioration? In those circumstances, does she not think that there is some inconsistency in the Government's policy, especially as at the Hague today the Government intend to block an international fund to help Third world countries improve their environment? It is not even more glaring hypocrisy that the Prime Minister, later this week, will strut the world stage at the United Nations as the champion of the environment?

Mrs. Chalker: I welcome the hon. Lady to the Dispatch Box in her new role. I note that she has not lost any of the fire that she showed in her previous incarnation.

The hon. Lady is misreading what is happening at the Hague today. Wherever there is environmental degradation, this country will never take a position that will make it worse. However, we will carefully consider the means by which we can stop that environmental degradation. If we believe that the means that are about to be deployed are unneccessarily bureaucratic and really do not do the job that we intend them to do, we will argue for a far better way of doing it.

South Africa

48. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government give aid to help the housing of the black population in South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes. We intend to contribute up to £500,000 towards the Urban Foundation of South Africa's loan guarantee fund. The fund will trigger the release of about £230 million in loans from South African building societies for low-cost housing. Over the next five years that will result in the construction of 40,000 homes for a quarter of a million black South Africans.

Mr. Butler: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important that black people in South Africa have an increasing stake in that country? Could not the programme be expanded in the future?

Mrs. Chalker: I welcome my hon. Friend's comments. We must make a start with the Urban Foundation programme, to provide families having household incomes of between £200 and £400 a month with housing that is not currently available to them. If that programme is successful, as we trust that it will be, it is to be hoped that the foundation will undertake a further programme for families having household incomes of below £200 a month.

Ambulance Service (Pay Dispute)

3.30 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government concerning the use of additional personnel and vehicles during the ambulance dispute.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The Government's overriding duty in the industrial dispute affecting the National Health Service ambulance service is to maintain an adequate accident and emergency service for the general public.

If action is taken that threatens the adequacy of that service in any part of the country, the NHS will call upon the services of the voluntary bodies, private ambulances and police. If the threat to accident and emergency services is sustained for any length of time, the Government will be obliged to use military ambulances and personnel wherever necessary to maintain those essential services to the public.

The sole intention of the Government in asking police and military personnel to prepare themselves and their vehicles for ambulance duties if necessary is to protect injured or seriously ill members of the public. I hope that common sense will prevail and that NHS ambulance staff will not take action that threatens the emergency services.

It is entirely a matter for NHS management to decide whether, and to what extent, to use voluntary or private sector personnel and vehicles to provide non-emergency services for patients affected by industrial action. I expect the management to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the NHS provides as full a service as possible to all its patients for as long as industrial action persists. I hope that the staff sides will quickly decide to take up the management side's offer to resume negotiations in the relevant Whitley councils to settle the outstanding issues between them.

Mr. Spearing: That is not a reassuring answer. Does the Secretary of State recall the trauma in London exactly a fortnight ago today and tomorrow, when the ambulance management diverted all 999 calls from ambulance personnel who were standing by with vehicles to respond to them? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that as a consequence, in Canning Town a Mrs. Lander of Berwick road and a Mr. Lambert of Fox close waited more than one hour for an ambulance and that Mrs. Lander has since died? Will he assure the House that wherever ambulance crews in the United Kingdom are ready and willing, and are standing by, to respond to emergency calls, their services will not be dispensed with, and neither will calls be diverted? Will he also assure the House that any additional personnel and vehicles that he may have assembled will be used in such a way that the services of ambulance crews will not be dispensed with?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman will recall that the problems in London were discussed in the House about 10 days ago. I pointed out then that the unions had drawn up 14 points of their own, which were designed to damage the ambulance service. Some of them were put into effect in such a way that it was impossible to guarantee an accident and emergency service. As a result, for 36 hours or thereabouts the police and voluntary bodies had to provide the service. Fortunately, on that occasion the unions also withdrew some of their points—in particular, their refusal to use radio telephones and to crew up emergency vehicles, with the result that the accident and emergency service could be restored. As the unions continue to say that they have no intention of threatening or withdrawing accident and emergency services, I hope that they will stick to that intention in all parts of the country.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): May I assure my right hon. and learned Friend that his action in making certain that our emergency ambulance services continue to function has strong public backing? Will he do all that he can to pursue the ideal that those who hold the lives of others in their hands do not go on strike?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Obviously, no one wants to use the police, the Army or any other unsuitable service to carry patients to hospital, but it is plain common sense that when industrial action threatens to go too far and puts the services at risk it is necessary to ask the police—or, in extremis, even the Army—to step in.

I certainly dislike the whole concept of industrial action in the Health Service. We all feel great respect for what the ambulance men do, and I think that it is high time that the action was stopped and the dispute returned to the Whitley council, where I am sure that it can be negotiated. So far, the management has made offers—including a two-year deal bringing forward some of next year's money—to try to help to resolve the dispute. As yet, however, the unions remain intransigent, and are taking action against patients in support of a double-figure percentage pay claim.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Is it not about time that the Secretary of State took positive action to resolve the dispute? It is no good his telling the House that it should go back to the Whitley council, when he is preventing the council from meeting the demands that the amulance men are quite rightly making. They say that they want to go to arbitration. Why will the Secretary of State not allow that?

Mr. Clarke: About 95 per cent. of Health Service staff have settled this year, and all those whose pay is negotiated in the Whitley council have reached agreement, with the exception of the ambulance men and a few other small groups.

The ambulance men are asking to be allowed either special arrangements by way of arbitration or a much higher settlement figure than other groups, and in support of that claim are pressing their industrial action, mainly against patients. I entirely understand why the management does not find such action in pursuit of a double-figure pay claim acceptable, when the rest of the staff settled for much less at the relevant time—last April. I see no reason why a settlement should not be negotiated sensibly, if only the union would settle down to talks and stop believing that threatening the well-being of patients will somehow gain them an advantage.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Will my right hon. and learned Friend encourage the negotiators to regard the ambulance men and women of London as providers of an emergency service for which they should be properly remunerated if account is to be taken of the often dangerous job for which they undergo substantial training? Will he use his influence not only to bring about an acceptable solution to the problem, but to incorporate in it a no-strike agreement?

Mr. Clarke: The ambulance men of London are at present turning down a 9·3 per cent. pay offer. That was part of the April 1989 offer and is a higher percentage increase than the police received in the relevant settlement, and a much higher increase than those granted to most other NHS staff—including nurses, who received 6·8 per cent. I therefore feel that it is not an unreasonable basis on which those who represent the ambulance men might consent to continue to negotiate a way out of the dispute.

Unfortunately, at a time when the management did not regard the negotiations as being at an end, the National Union of Public Employees decided to turn the whole thing into industrial action. The sooner the union decides against continuing such action and goes back to holding sensible talks in which it takes a flexible line, the sooner the whole worrying problem can be resolved.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Surely the Secretary of State must recognise that progress will not be made if he keeps talking about NHS management as though holding it at arm's length, and adopts a Pontius Pilate role in his office of Secretary of State. Is not the central question—which follows from what was said by the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby)—that of resources being made available by central Government to enable a fair settlement to be achieved? How can it be fair to say—and how can any hon. Member avoid skating on thin ice if he says it—that the figures being suggested are justifiable, especially in the light of the firemen's settlement? How can we say that, when we enjoy comparability with the Civil Service—and, indeed, when we read in the newspapers that we are to be awarded a pay settlement above the rate of inflation? How can that be justified when the Secretary of State will not talk positively about the ambulance dispute?

Mr. Clarke: The Government make the resources available, but in any sensible world it must then be for the Health Service management, through the Whitley councils, to decide how to distribute those resources between the various groups and also how to distribute the resources between pay increases on the one hand and the development of patient services on the other. It is wrong to claim that a Minister should be answerable to the House for the pay of nurses, clerical staff, electricians and ambulance men and should negotiate each pay claim in detail. A sum of money has been given to the Health Service, out of which it is meeting perfectly reasonable pay settlements for all its groups of staff. This attempt to politicise the dispute will undermine the mangement and the proper adminstration of the Health Service. It will also threaten patient services if people take industrial action, turn it into a political issue and get money that had been regarded as being for patients.

Comparisons are now being made with firemen. To make a proper comparison, one has to compare the pay of ambulance men with the pay of firemen after the two pay settlements that the ambulance men will get. They have to be counted before that comparison can be made. We are talking about the April 1989 settlement. If one wants to compare ambulance men's pay with the relevant fireman's pay, it is no good counting the current settlement. One has to look back to what the firemen got last year. Ambulance men compare quite reasonably with firemen. The reason that comparisons are made with fifth-year fire fighters is because they are paid a higher hourly income than third and fourth-year fire fighters.

As for the pay of Members of Parliament, again we are looking at this year's proposed settlement for the House of Commons, which is tied to civil servants with London weighting. What we are talking about is last year's ambulance men's settlement of 9·3 per cent. I must admit that I cannot remember what on earth Members of Parliament were given last year, but London ambulance men have been given 9·3 per cent. That is not a particularly unfavourable comparison to draw with Members of Parliament, either. All these matters should be resolved by discussions. They cannot be resolved by strikes.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Would it not be reassuring for the future of our country if just once, if on just one occasion, one Labour Member of Parliament could be found to support the public against outrageous pay demands and restrictive practices? What does this say for the grim reality behind the facade of the new model Socialism? Labour Members of Parliament are still in the pockets of the trade unions. When will they start to stand up for the public?

Mr. Clarke: If any group of staff in the National Health Service decided to take industrial action tomorrow in support of any pay claim, the Labour party would give them its wholehearted support. That has been its consistent policy for years. The Labour party has no regard for patients or for the safety of the public. It has no responsibility on the subject at all.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Minister aware that there is overwhelming public support for the ambulance workers in their pursuit of decent pay and that there is a full understanding that at no stage have any ambulance workers refused to answer radios in respect of 999 calls or to respond to 999 calls? Instead of this awful gap of £60 a week between firemen and ambulance workers and instead of heaping abuse on ambulance workers, the right hon. and learned Gentleman should ensure that they are properly paid and properly staffed and that there are sufficient vehicles to maintain a proper ambulance service rather than threatening to bring in the Army to try to destroy the dispute in that brutal way.

Mr. Clarke: I know of no member of the public who has yet approached me in support of an increase of over 11 per cent. for ambulance men, which is the claim that is being pressed by the unions and from which they do not appear to me to be prepared to resile. Most members of the public would prefer the dispute to be settled by negotiations, not by industrial action. It is not true that the unions did not threaten the accident and emergency services in London. They did. They drew up 14 points that were designed to do damage to the service. Some of those points made it impossible to guarantee a reliable accident and emergency service. There is no question whatever of using the Army or the police to break any industrial action, but if the unions are so irresponsible as to take action that puts the safety of the public at risk, the Government must obviously put the police and the Army in a state of preparedness so that injured or desperately ill people are not left without the help that they need.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is it not clear that a lot of skilled ambulance men's time is being wasted? Is it not time, therefore, for us to start to contract-out the service?

Mr. Clarke: The managements of ambulance services up and down the country are having to make other arrangements to carry non-emergency patients. They are using taxis, hire cars and private ambulances and there is no reason why they should not do so. In some parts of the country unions are refusing to take non-emergency patients unless they satisfy some fancy criteria drawn up by the unions. It is no good for individual patients to be told by the union convener that their appointments are not necessary or urgent for their health, and it is quite right that managements are looking for alternative methods of getting the patients the treatment they need.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question, which is an extension of Question Time. I shall take two more questions from each side and then I shall call the Secretary of State for the Environment to read his statement.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Does the Secretary of State recall that when I was Home Secretary the last Labour Government were faced with problems concerning police pay which resulted in Edmund-Davies recommendations designed to make them a special case, and equally big problems with the firemen which resulted in their being treated as a special case and their pay being tied to the upper quarter of manufacturing wages? Is there not a case for the ambulance service to be treated as a special case, and if there is, whose job is it to see to it?

Mr. Clarke: That was a long time ago. My first recollection is that the then Government treated everyone who went on strike as a special case, turn by turn. But it was not quite so straightforward. It is not true that the last Labour Government recognised the claims by the police. They rejected the Edmund-Davies recommendations which were implemented by the present Government. The Edmund-Davies recommendations went out of their way to distinguish between the police and other emergency services and said that they were not comparable. We implemented the Edmund-Davies recommendations on that basis.

It is certainly true that the last Labour Government gave the firemen a special formula; they backed down in the face of industrial action by the firemen, and we shall not go back on those long-standing arrangements. The last Labour Government refused claims from the ambulance men to tie their wages to those of either the police or the firemen or any other emergency services and allowed their pay to go down compared with inflation in three of Labour's last four years. The last Labour Government let the ambulance men's claim go to the Clegg commission which reported that there was no comparison between police, firemen and ambulance men and that they all had some emergency duties, but in each case the emergency duties took a comparatively small proportion of their total time.

I certainly would not wish to emulate the record of the last Labour Government in regard to any of those groups. It gives no foundation to the right hon. Gentleman saying that he has now suddenly decided that ambulance men should be treated in a special way because they are taking industrial action.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that although many ambulance men in the north of England are just as upset by the Government's position as those in London, perhaps an offer of 9·3 per cent. outside London might settle the dispute? Are not the Government and those negotiating missing the opportunity being offered by the ambulance men of solving the present dispute and entering a long-term agreement for no strikes in the ambulance service in future?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is an irony that the most militant ambulance men appear to be those in London who have already secured a 9·3 per cent. pay offer. Ambulance men throughout the country are being offered the possibility of a two-year settlement with some of next year's money being brought forward; discussions on local flexibility on pay, which might help local ambulance services; a re-examination of the deal with the unions entered into in 1986, because they are now discontented with the way that affects overtime; and generally an invitation to talk. We all wish to avoid strikes in the ambulance service. To the best of my knowledge and belief, NUPE and the other unions concerned will make promises but will not enter into no-strike agreements with any credibility. More to the point, they are demanding a double figure pay settlement this year.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): The Minister's excursions into history may be interesting, but they are hardly constructive. We require a just settlement that will not only resolve the present dispute but will ensure that we have a service in years to come. That requires examining the situation impartially. Why is the Minister afraid of submitting the claim to ACAS? He may wish to see himself as Pontius Pilate, but the public is beginning to see him as Lady Macbeth.

Mr. Clarke: I know that I am not famed for my sartorial elegance, but I am not accustomed to appearing in drag. On the serious parts of the question, Duncan Nichol and his management team held discussions at ACAS, and made various propositions but were faced with total intransigence by the trade unions. I have already said that I have every desire to see the dispute settled. Health Service pay will not sensibly be resolved by getting a third person from outside to make a ruling on the pay of groups that have taken industrial action against patients. Countless Whitley councils determine the pay and conditions of different grades of staff. It is not fair to the staff if one group is given special treatment by a chap who is called in to split the difference because that group has been prepared to take action against patients when other staff have not.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that he has effectively given a guarantee that 999 calls will be answered whatever happens in the dispute or under any other circumstances? Will he use the present position to try to improve the London ambulance service so that patients are not kept waiting hours to be collected for treatment or left for hours at hospital before being returned home after treatment, which has happened all too often as a result of bad management?

Mr. Clarke: The steps that we have taken should enable us to maintain an adequate emergency service should ambulance men be so misguided as to take action that threatens it. Obviously, I hope that they will continue to provide a 999 service. I agree that the sooner that the service returns to normal the better. "Normal" includes continuing efforts to improve the quality of the service given by the London ambulance service and others.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): May I apologise for the unavoidable absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who has a long-standing engagement elsewhere? Are we to see another premeditated management escalation of the dispute with the connivance of Ministers? Is that what the right hon. and learned Gentleman is asking the House to accept? Is not the obvious lesson of this long-running dispute the fire crews' acceptance last Friday of a deal of 8·6 per cent. after only two hours of talks and negotiations? Should not ambulance crews be given the same treatment?

As the Secretary of State gave us an excursion into history, does he recall that when the Prime Minister was the Leader of the Opposition in 1978 she was sending letters from her office recommending that the pay of ambulance crews should be treated exactly the same as fire crews? I have a copy of the letter here. If she believed that in 1978, why does she not believe it now, or has she done another U-turn over the past few days?

Why are the Government persisting with their mulish obstinacy when all reason and common sense point to comparable treatment with fire crews for ambulance workers or independent arbitration to resolve the deadlock? The Secretary of State has made some unpleasant comments about ambulance crews. If he is so convinced of his case, why is he terrified of independent arbitration, which ambulance crews are perfectly willing to accept?

Mr. Clarke: In 1978, the letter was written by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to a Government who were maintaining that there was no case.

Dr. Cunningham: No, it was not. It was written to members of the public.

Mr. Clarke: It was written to two members of the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel, but at the time the Government were resisting any such arrangements. We have fought three general elections in which neither our manifesto nor that of the Labour party has returned to a formula for linking ambulance men's pay with the pay of anyone else. The only reason why the hon. Gentleman is arguing for it is that he believes that we should give in to a strike. I have dealt several times with comparisons with firemen's pay. This Government, the last Labour Government and the Clegg commission have all said that the job of a fireman is not exactly comparable. However, the comparison that is being made by the ambulance men's union is with fifth-year firemen. The hourly rates for ambulance men are better than those for first, second, third and fourth-year firemen. An arbitrary selection is being made.

I resent the hon. Gentleman's allegation that I have said anything against ambulance crews. I have not done so, today or at any time during the dispute. We have no desire to have a dispute with the ambulance men. We wish to see them resume their good normal service as quickly as possible.

On escalation, it is obvious when we look back over the past six or seven weeks that NUPE and the other trade unions have found their action ineffective. They keep finding fresh ways of trying to tighten the screw on the public in order to hype up the Labour party to give them more support, or to gain an advantage for their union. Every change in the dispute has come about because NUPE has decided on some new and dangerous action at the expense of the patients. I wish that it would stop that and return to the negotiating table.

Local Government Finance

3.55 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the local authority grant settlement for England for 1990-91.

I am today sending a consultation paper to the local authority associations setting out my proposals. Copies are being sent to each local authority, and are available in the Vote Office. The consultation paper summarises the various reports which will be made later this year. Drafts of two of the reports, dealing with the distribution of grant and the calculation of relevant population, have also been circulated. There are also exemplifications showing the amount of grant and the community charges which, on certain spending assumptions, would result for each area. In this first year of the new system a number of basic definitions and principles have to be set out, and that accounts for the large amount of material. It may help the House if I outline the main features of the proposals.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) proposed in July that the total of external support, known as aggregate external finance, for local government services next year should be £23·1 billion, an increase of 8·5 per cent. over the figure for this year on a comparable basis. That support comprises three elements: the yield from business rates, specific grants, and revenue support grant.

To calculate the yield from non-domestic rates, I have now made a firmer estimate of the national non-domestic rate multiplier for 1990-91. On the basis of the most up-to-date information available about the effects of the 1990 rating revaluation, I estimate that the multiplier for 1990-91 will be 36p for England. That figure will be provisional until I have final information about the effects of the revaluation, which will be available before the revenue support grant report is laid before the House; but I would expect it to vary only very slightly, if at all. It also includes a small allowance for reductions in rateable values in cases where the initial valuations turn out to be high.

Using that multiplier, I estimate the yield from non-domestic rates in 1990-91, and hence the amount to be distributed to local authorities, will be £10,428·5 million. That estimate represents the total amount which I expect charging authorities to receive in respect of rates paid by private businesses, by the nationalised industries, and by local authorities themselves, together with a contribution in aid in respect of Crown property. I have made allowance for a number of factors, such as rate income forgone as a result of empty properties and of charitable or discretionary relief, and for losses in and costs of collection. The amount estimated to be collected from private businesses and the nationalised industries is in line with the Government's commitment that the yield from these sectors will be broadly the same in real terms as in the current year, 1989-90.

I anticipate that specific grants and transitional grants will amount to £3,182 million. Further details will be available at the time of the Autumn Statement.

I am proposing that revenue support grant should be £9,490 million. Our principal objective in distributing grant is to ensure that, in general, if each authority spends so as to provide a common standard of service, the community charge could then be set at the same level in every area before allowing for the transition arrangements. My right hon. Friend announced in July that the Government consider that it would be appropriate for local authorities to spend £32·8 billion in total in providing services, an increase of 11 per cent. over the amount which, on a comparable basis, we thought it appropriate to spend this year. In order to distribute grant, we shall need to calculate an assessment for each authority of what it would cost to provide services locally to a common standard, consistent with that total.

The proposed method for making these assessments, known as the standard spending assessments or SSAs, is set out in the documents published today. SSAs replace grant-related expenditure assessments in the present system. In summary, the SSA for each authority will be based on an assessement for each of the main services for which it is responsible. It will be calculated using information for each authority about factors which lead to differences in the costs of providing services to a common standard. In this way, we can take account of variations between authorities in the costs they face. These proposals take account of recent research, extensive discussions between officials over the last year and the views of the local authority associations.

SSAs are central to the new grant system. Apart from the transitional arrangements, the relationship between an authority's budget and its SSA determines the community charge for that area. If spending is higher than the SSA, the community charge will be higher than the national community charge for standard spending, and vice versa. It is therefore important that the methods used to calculate these assessments should be fair and right.

If authorities were each to spend at the level of their SSA, the community charge in each area would be about £278. The final figure will not be known until we know the number of people on community charge registers. This figure, the community charge for standard spending, will be the benchmark for accountability. It will appear on the bill which each chargepayer will receive and will help chargepayers to assess the policies and performances of their authorities. In this way, councils will be made accountable to those who must pay for their activities.

The existing system of grant-related expenditure assessments had become over-complex and difficult to explain. We have therefore introduced a simpler, more understandable method. *[Interruption.]* I appreciate the fact that all these things are relative. As now, the method is applied to each authority, using objective measures of the cost of providing services such as the number of pupils to be educated and the number of miles of road to be maintained. There has been discussion about the factors to be taken into account and the weight to be attached to each, and the associations have put forward a range of alternative suggestions. In my view, the proposals that I have made represent the fairest judgment between the various viewpoints. I believe that they provide the best basis that can be devised for distributing grant.

In place of the 63 separate assessments in the present GRE system there will be 13 components: 11 covering the five major services—education, social services, fire and civil defence, police and highway maintenance—another covering all other services and one reflecting the financial costs of capital expenditure. In general, the method proposed involves fixing a unit cost of providing each service and multiplying this by the number of clients for that service. Our original proposals were placed in the Library last December. For some services we have amended these proposals after discussion. In particular, in response to representations, we are proposing to include an allowance for overnight visitors—to reflect the demands that tourists make on local services—and to recognise separately the costs of flood defence and coast protection work. I know that these matters are of particular concern to hon. Members from the areas affected.

The consultation paper also describes the transitional arrangements. As my noble Friend Lord Hesketh announced on 11 October, it is intended that the area safety net will be for one year only. For the following three years the Exchequer will pay for protection for areas that lose as a result of introducing the community charge and related changes. In 1990-91 chargepayers in these areas will be expected to find the first £25 of any loss to their area, but above that there is full protection. Gaining areas will receive about half their gains in the first year, and the full gain in the second year. It is right that the new system should be phased in, but gainers will still see substantial gain from the start.

My right hon. Friend proposed in July two transitional grants to provide extra help for chargepayers for inner London boroughs, and in areas with very low domestic rateable values. These grants will significantly reduce community charges in some areas.

I have included with the consultation paper exemplifications showing the amounts that each area would receive under these proposals. I stress, however, that figures for authorities are provisional at this stage, and will change, though in most cases only marginally, when local authorities notify me in December of the number of adults that they have included in their community charge registers.

The exemplifications also show what the community charge will be in each area if local authorities spend at the same level as their income from rates and grant in 1989-90, adjusted for changes in function, and increased to be consistent with spending of £32·8 billion in total. It is these charge levels which it is intended should form the basis of the transitional relief scheme announced last month to help principally those former ratepayers, pensioners and the disabled who would otherwise face increases of more than £3 a week. This relief scheme will cost about £300 million in 1990-91. In addition 9·5 million people will receive help through community charge benefits. Many individuals will, therefore, see their bills substantially reduced.

I have asked the local authority associations to respond to these proposals by 4 December. I hope to lay the formal documents before the House in early January for debate later that month. The proposals amount to a substantial package of support for local authorities. The amount of external support has increased by 8·5 per cent. If authorities budget sensibly and spend in line with the Government's assumptions, the average community charge next year should be about £278. If they can do better, charges will be lower. But if their spending increases faster, charges will be higher. Local authorities are now answerable to their chargepayers for their decisions.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): The Secretary of State knows that we and many others have long attacked the poll tax proposals as being inherently complicated and unworkable, and fundamentally unfair. He and his predecessors have tried to deflect that attack by taking refuge in misleading generalisations, and false and unrealistic assumptions. I am sorry to say that we have heard no improvement today. The mixture is much as before and the more additions that the right hon. Gentleman makes to the whole ramshackle structure, the more unconvincing and unstable it becomes.

At the heart of the illusions that the Government have sought to create is the fairy tale that the poll tax average is or could be £278. That figure is a hopeless mirage. It has increased with remarkable rapidity. The Government's estimate in 1986-87 began at £170. By 19 July it had risen to £275. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, even in the interim, it has risen by a further £9 from £269—the true figure on 19 July because of the £200 million transitional specific grant—to £278? Does he agree that there is plenty of room yet for growth? Will he confirm that even if the figure were halfway accurate, local authorities could not be expected—indeed, he does not expect this of them—to meet that figure immediately or even in the foreseeable future? If that were the case, scores of Tory authorities would be pilloried by him as overspenders.

Will the Secretary of State confirm—and this is the most fundamental point—that the figure is an invention because it is based on an invention? He estimates a level of local government spending of £32·8 billion, but that figure is based on an assumed level of spending this year rather than the actual level of spending. Does he acknowledge that all the local authority associations, irrespective of political control or allegiance, agree that that basic error leaves local authorities £1·6 billion adrift?

Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that the basic error is compounded by a further error on inflation? One assumes that the inflation rate has been calculated at the forecast of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of 4·5 per cent., rather than the actual retail prices index figure. When that is taken into account as well, it leaves a shortfall of £2·5 billion. Will the Secretary of State further agree that every last penny of that shortfall will have to be financed out of poll tax, as it is not covered by grant or aggregate external financing, and that means that the figure of £278 is hopelessly out of touch with the reality, which is far in excess of that figure?

Does the Secretary of State also recognise that his basic errors on the side of optimism are added to by the view that he and his officials have taken in making their calculations? They believed that they could safely assume 100 per cent. registration and collection. Will he confirm that everybody who has studied the issue knows and understands that that is hopelessly optimistic? Those errors invalidate the figure of £278 which the Secretary of State described as the "benchmark for accountability".

The consequences of those errors are serious. Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that for local authorities, with their obligation to deliver services, the errors mean that they are faced with Government-sanctioned pay increases to teachers, firemen and policemen far in excess of the actual inflation figure, let alone the Chancellor's fairy tale, and that they will have no option, therefore, but to cut services further? In view of that shortfall, will he tell local authorities this afternoon where he expects those cuts to be made? Should local authorities employ fewer teachers, social workers or home helps? Will he concede that, if his benchmark is so hopelessly wrong, so too are all the other calculations that flow from it?

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

It can already be seen that the transitional relief scheme, for example, will fail to help most single people, those who will be liable to pay for the first time or those who do not own or rent their homes and who will most need help. However, it will miss its target by an even wider margin because it proceeds on the basis of a ludicrously low notional poll tax figure. Many who believe that they qualify for transitional relief will find that they are paying far more than an additional £3 a week and many of those who will pay more than £3 a week will not qualify for transitional relief.

Is the statement not typically uninformative about the needs formula used, and is not the formula itself, in so far as we know what it is, open to detailed objections? Why, for example, are overseas visitors excluded from the overnight visit figure that is included in the formula? Does not the statement keep up the long and unfortunate tradition of telling us nothing we need to know about the business rate? Is not the 36p figure useless and wholly uninformative for individual business men until they know the effects of revaluation? Is it not equally clear that the Confederation of British Industry has been rebuffed in its request for a £2 billion reduction in total business rate? Will the Secretary of State confirm that in saying that the business rate will be kept at the same level in real terms he is using a figure for the RPI different from that used to calculate local government spending? Is it not an astonishing inconsistency to use two different inflation rates in the same statement?

Is it not sad to see the Secretary of State so bogged down in a morass not of his creation and from which he cannot extricate himself, but is it not even sadder to contemplate the future of local government and the services for which it is responsible and the future of those millions who depend upon and pay for those services when they, too, become the victims of this Government's obsession?

Mr. Patten: First, I welcome the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) to his new responsibilities. I can say without qualification that I hope that he enjoys his new job for as long as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) who we hope has enjoyed doing it for the past six years.

The hon. Gentleman seemed to base his questions on the principle that, whatever the level of local authority overspending this year, we should validate it. That is not remotely the Government's position, and nor, I imagine, would it be the position adopted in the new-look Monklands, East financial policy that the Opposition are pursuing. We are allowing for an increase of 11 per cent. in spending by local authorities next year—over what we believe they should have spent this year. The Audit Commission has suggested savings of £900 million that local authorities could make. The authorities have made about £350 million of those savings, so they still have some way to go.

Our central support for local authorities will increase next year by 8½ per cent., and I think that that is a fair settlement. It is a challenging settlement. If all Government Departments received equivalent settlements, I think that they would be quite pleased.

The hon. Member referred to the standard community charge figure. That figure represents what local authorities would have to charge if they were spending at a reasonable level. The figure has increased from £275 to £278 since July because of the increase in the number of exemptions. The hon. Gentleman is netting off the grant for the Inner London education authority and for low rateable value areas and so is not comparing like with like. I repeat that the community charge of £278 represents the figure that local authorities should have to charge to provide a reasonable service.

The hon. Gentleman referred to registration. So far registrations are going very well. I cannot guarantee that they will go quite as well as in one local authority area in Scotland where the registration figure was 106 per cent., although we can aim for that and we hope that registrations will be as successful as they have been in Scotland.

The hon. Member referred to the needs formula. As he knows, we have set out in considerable detail in the distribution report the basis on which the new needs formula is based. It is a simpler and better formula than the last one, taking into account, as it does, the cost of providing a service to the client and the number of clients. It is based on substantial research and lengthy discussions with local authorities, but perhaps in the next few weeks the hon. Gentleman will have suggestions to make about how we could modify it. He may, for example, think that we have been wrong to provide so well for the education needs of young children in Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and inner London, although I rather doubt it. If the hon. Gentleman has any suggestions about how we can improve the needs formula, we shall look forward to hearing from him in due course.

The hon. Gentleman's main argument was that we were wrong to replace domestic rates, or, to put it more correctly, wrong to introduce the community charge. There is at least one thing on which hon. Members on both sides of the House agree: the domestic rating system is inequitable and it should go. The difference between us is that the Government have advanced proposals for replacing the domestic rating system, whereas the Labour party, I am afraid, has not. The Opposition periodically make a proposal and then take it away again. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have read the motion tabled by the Dagenham constituency Labour party at the Labour party conference, which called the party's proposals "unacceptable electorally and administratively". I assume that those proposals have now been dumped. However, we look forward to a time when the Opposition will be prepared to make the change from domestic rates and also meet the challenge of suggesting an alternative.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that this is a very complicated statement, but we have a busy day before us. The Front-Bench spokesmen have taken about 30 minutes, I will give a comparable time to Back Benchers. May we have brief questions please?

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the London borough of Haringey is still at the top of the league, with a community charge of £554? In the poorer areas of my constituency where rateable values are low, the £3 threshold will be insignificant for my constituents. It is absurd that community chargepayers must still make a contribution to the safety net. Is there nothing more that my right hon. Friend can do to help my constituents?

Mr. Patten: I suggest that my hon. Friend's constituents should press their local authority to spend more sensibly. I believe that my hon. Friend will agree that the main reason for the impact of local authority spending on his constituents is the level at which that spending is pitched by the council. I believe that our interim relief scheme, the transitional relief scheme, should assist many people who would otherwise be paying more than £3 a week in additional charges. However, there is another way in which we may be obliged to help individual chargepayers. If local authorities insist on budgeting in a ludicrous way, and if they insist on budgeting at far too high a level, we will have no alternative but to cap them.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): May I first point out to the Minister that he promised me a copy of the statement at 2 pm and I did not receive it from his Department until 3.10 pm, in spite of a telephone call. The seventh paragraph of the statement refers to common standards to which every local authority must adhere. The statement contains something new, based on the common standard. What is the common standard of service?

Mr. Patten: I apologise unreservedly to the hon. Gentleman for the fact that he did not receive a copy of the statement at the time that it was promised. I hope that other statements on local government finance—who knows, there may be some—will arrive with the hon. Gentleman on time.

The common standard is set out very clearly service for service. For example, we establish for education what the costs should be for each child and what particular factors should be taken into account. Similar considerations apply to personal social services and to other local authority services. The basis of those different assessments is included in the distribution report which I hope the hon. Gentleman will find helpful. Although we have reduced the number of individual assessments, I hope that we have not lost any of the necessary sophistication in order to produce a comprehensive and fair settlement.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the few months since the previous statement was made by my right hon. Friend's predecessor my constituency has moved from being a contributor to the safety net to a recipient? In the short-term, my constituents will undoubtedly be grateful for that, as indeed is their Member of Parliament.

Will my right hon. Friend not hesitate to use the reserve powers that he has in law should we find at the end of the first year that there are such big rises in the uniform business rate, particularly in London, that many businesses would be threatened if they had to face similar increases in the second year?

Mr. Patten: On my hon. Friend's first point, there are several reasons for the differences between the figures that my hon. Friend saw in July and those that he sees now. The most obvious change is that the figures that he saw in July were based on this year's spending rather than on next year's assumed spending. There are several other reasons for the change, including the movement from the grant-related expenditure assessment formula to standard spending assessments, and the decision to ring-fence the housing revenue account. Those and other factors have a bearing on the figures for hon. Members' constituencies.

On the uniform business rate, we have introduced reasonable transitional arrangements. They include particularly generous treatment for smaller businesses, and we have doubled the threshold definition for smaller businesses. I hope that we will be able to ensure that the UBR is introduced smoothly and without some of the dislocation which my hon. Friend understandably fears.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): As some Bradford schoolchildren are being sent home because their temporary classrooms are considered to be too dangerous for them to use, and as the Conservative chairman of the city's education committee says that £100 million is needed to put schools into a good state of repair, does the Secretary of State think that the spending limits for Bradford set out in his statement are realistic?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman will find that provision for additional educational needs in Bradford includes extra expenditure on education. I have great confidence that Bradford council, which is led outstandingly well by councillor Pickles and others, will continue to provide the people of Bradford with a better deal than they have enjoyed in the past. One of the consequences of that Conservative council coming to office is a substantial attraction of new private investment to the city.

Mr. John Lee (Pendle): Despite my right hon. Friend's considerable charm and the transitional relief that has been announced, many people in low-rated areas such as Pendle will suffer substantial increases because of the community charge. May I make it clear to my right hon. Friend in the nicest way that my campaign and those of hon. Members with comparable constituencies will continue?

Mr. Patten: I understand the particular problems faced by my hon. Friend in representing a constituency in which rateable values are low. As my hon. Friend knows, we have tried to give additional assistance to cope with that problem. I am sorry that my hon. Friend does not feel that it is sufficient. I look forward to discussing the matter with him further. I hope that we can come nearer to satisfying him and his constituents.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Secretary of State confirm that, for metropolitan authorities, the figure in the seventh paragraph of the statement includes the extra poll tax for the police and fire authorities which is listed separately? Why are Birmingham citizens expected to pay a poll tax surcharge of £60 a head to pay for high-spending Tory authorities such as Blackpool? That will not wash, and the right hon. Gentleman knows it. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that a couple living in an average-rated property in Birmingham will still lose more than £2 a week?

Given the added complications of this matter, which is made more complicated as the weeks go by, would it not be a good idea to delay the introduction of the poll tax until 1991 and avoid the problems of the first year of safety nets, or, better still, put back the poll tax until after the general election?

Mr. Patten: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question is yes. The answer to his second question is that,

[Mr. Patten]

as he will have recognised from the figures, Birmingham is one of the major beneficiaries of the move from grant-related assessments to standard spending assessments. The hon. Gentleman will surely have the honesty to accept that. The largest beneficiaries from the changes, in one year only, are the largest contributors to the safety net. That is the position that existed in July and it still exists. They were talking about a one-year contribution only. Thanks to the move from GREAs to SSAs, as the hon. Gentleman knows, in the long-term his constituents will be better off. Recalling what the hon. Gentleman said in July about the likely level of the community charge for his constituents, I am sure that he will be delighted that the figure now is a good deal less than he feared in July.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that this is not as bad as we had feared in July? Will he further explain the business grants, which look like a mystery wrapped up in an enigma, and how they will ultimately affect businesses because the business rate is particularly important in Birmingham? According to those figures—which we have had two minutes to look at while the Minister has had three months—it seems as though businesses will be confused about whether we in Birmingham will be reasonably off or two or three times worse off than many other areas.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend knows a good deal about business problems not only in the west midlands, but well beyond as well. If my hon. Friend consults some of those representing businesses and business organisations, he will find that the 36p poundage figure is a good deal less than many were predicting. It enables us to continue to raise broadly the same amount of money as has been raised this year. I think it is a fair figure. As my hon. Friend knows, one consequence of the move to the uniform business rate is, on balance, a shift of resources to the midlands and the north. I hope that that will help some of the parts of our country that are so important to our manufacturing future.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Does the Secretary of State realise that, no matter how much he tries to stamp on the fuse, the poll tax time bomb will still explode in the Tories' faces next year? Lambeth has now had varying figures for the poll tax per head of the population, varying from £287 to £547. That is a wide variation. Which figure is likely to be true?

Mr. Patten: The lower figure would be nearer to being true if the Lambeth local authority spent its money and administered its affairs as competently as many other local authorities in London, such as nearby Wandsworth. Given the additional resources that Lambeth is receiving from the ILEA grant and the additional assistance it is receiving from the shift from GREAs to standard spending assessments, I very much hope that Lambeth will find that it has adequate resources to do a good job without penalising its chargepayers. Of course, that hope might represent a triumph over experience.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Is it not clear from table 2 that some of the high exemplifications that we saw a few months ago for some of the inner London boroughs have now been avoided and many chargepayers will be grateful for that, but is it not also the case that many will be protected by the transitional household protection? However, what will happen in year two, when the interim household protection begins to unwind and when many authorities lose the benefit of the safety net? Is there not a risk that, having secured low increases this year, there will be some high increases in year two?

Mr. Patten: I believe that I am right in saying that the largest single loss for a London borough from the unwinding of the safety net is just over £1 per week. We are announcing today that the interim relief scheme will be unwinding at a rate of 25p in the first year. I do not think that my hon. Friend will find the situation as difficult as he had feared. In the second year of the interim relief scheme, we shall still be spending about £230 million of the nearly £700 million that we shall be devoting to the scheme in all.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does the Secretary of State recognise that, because of the changes that he has announced today, the poll tax in Burnley will be £184 per head, which is exactly the same as the average rate per head at present? However, the majority of people in Burnley will pay more than they do now because they live in properties with low rateable values which means that the wealthiest people will be the ones to benefit from the change that he has announced.

Will the Secretary of State make it clear that when the safety net and the transitional arrangements are ended people will be able to see the full folly of the poll tax and how difficult it is to try to make it fairer when the basis of the system is totally unfair?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman should recognise that poorer households will benefit from a more generous rebate system than that which exists for ratepayers. We will spend about £2·5 billion on rebates and increased income support. The hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members should not overlook that. Their constituents would suffer far more from the Labour party's policy—although I understand that it may not be the Labour party's policy any more and I look forward to seeing what it will do when it brings its next policy along.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in some major cities Labour-controlled local authorities will be determined to overspend regardless of the methods by which they raise revenue? Can my right hon. Friend reassure me that he will not hesitate to use the expenditure-capping mechanisms as they will be the only protection for my constituents and for the poor constituents of Coventry where municipal Socialism is being built on the backs of ratepayers?

Mr. Patten: I recognise the problem that my hon. Friend has identified. I shall once again make it clear, as I tried to do in my response to a similar question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), that if local authorities insist on budgeting excessively, or spending too much money, we will have no hesitation about charge-capping them. I hope that local authorities will behave more sensibly, and I hope that their electors, as chargepayers, will ensure that they behave more sensibly.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Does the Secretary of State recognise that in the standard spending assessment there is no acknowledgement of the needs of the under-fives? Given the additional duties that have been laid upon local authorities in the Children Bill by the Government, will he explain the extraordinary removal of the under-fives from the calculations?

Mr. Patten: We have considered general additional education needs. A range of factors have to be taken into account in the next assessment. I think that the hon. Lady will find that all aspects of education provision have been taken into account. I am sure that she will be particularly pleased by the emphasis we have placed on the needs of children in some inner city areas.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), before he left the Chamber, initimated that these documents are incomprehensible? He is not alone. I can read the bottom line. For some reason that is unclear to me, the community charge with safety net for Wirral is £371, whereas that for Sefton, which is a not dissimilar area, and is represented by the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn), and that for Liverpool, where the council spends like a drunken sailor, are a good deal less. Will my right hon. Friend let me know, in simple terms, how I may explain that to the people of Wirral? At the moment I cannot.

Mr. Patten: I think that my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities is better placed than I am to explain that situation to my hon. Friend. Perhaps the existing council has inherited a good deal of Labour overspending, which it has to deal with. My hon. Friend says that the documents are incomprehensible, but I hope that the consultation period that we have allowed will be helpful to hon. Members and to local authorities. Normally we would not make an oral statement on documents that were to be the subject of consultation at this time of the year. Normally we would make an oral statement when we agreed the distribution report, but, this year, since we were going over to a new system, I thought that it was important to make an oral statement to give hon. Members as much opportunity as possible to see what we were doing.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shewsbury and Atcham): My right hon. Friend's statement displayed marked clarity. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will recall that under table 2 the average rate bill for my constituency is anticipated at £255 per head whereas the long-run community charge will be £247. Although that is clearly good news for my constituents, can my right hon. Friend tell me what advice I could give them on whether that charge would go up or down if the alternative proposals for a capital value and local income tax system, as advocated by the Opposition, were to be adopted? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Patten: I believe that I am right in saying that the figure for the hon. Gentleman's constituents would be more than £600—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman doubts that, he should table a parliamentary question and we shall give the answer. We would be delighted to cost any Labour party policy which it puts on the table. Admittedly that means that we would have to answer for a different policy virtually every month, but we would do that.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Looking at the figures for Barnsley and Penistone, it appears that some of the problems that we discussed with the right hon. Gentleman's colleague have been taken into consideration. After the safety net is removed, it appears that there is a £150 per head difference between the figure suggested by the Secretary of State and that suggested by our local treasurer. It is important to take into account the local problems. If the figures are worked out again, and if the same figures are arrived at, that will mean that my area will have to take £2·5 million out of its education budget, which it cannot afford to do. Is the Secretary of State willing to come to Barnsley to discuss the situation and to see for himself our exisiting problems?

The right hon. Gentleman has spoken about Labour party policy. I was in Canada last week and I had the opportunity to study how that country raises its money. It operates a federal tax, which is similar to our income tax, a sales tax and a tax on the capital value of property. That system has worked for the Canadians.

Mr. Patten: It may well be that the hon. Gentleman's advocacy will encourage his right hon. and hon. Friends to pick up a policy which I thought they had dumped, but shall find out in due couse. The major reason for any substantial difference, such as that referred to by the hon. Gentleman, between the exemplifications in the tables and the sort of figure he mentioned is the decisions taken on spending by his local authority. Decisions on spending must, at the end of the day, be met by chargepayers. That is the point which Opposition Members——

Mr. McKay: The right hon. Gentleman is missing it again.

Mr. Patten: If that is the case I shall look forward to further discussions with the hon. Gentleman. As for discussing such matters with local councillors and local Government officials, I am looking forward to spending a lot of time doing precisely that in the next few months.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): In the past Bassetlaw district council never received any rate support grant from the Government as it had a high concentration of industry which brought in a massive amount of rates. That revenue came from the power stations and two or three pits, which are now closing. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he has taken the rateable income away from those massive industrial complexes to put it into a national fund, and that what he has given back to Bassetlaw district council and to the rest of Nottinghamshire in no way compensates for the loss of the rates that they receive from those heavy industries? Is he aware that the safety net contribution he has decided upon is far too low and that the people of Bassetlaw will have to pay a massive increase in their poll tax not because their authority is high spending—it is certainly not a high-spending authority—but simply because an enormous amount of income has been taken away from that authority by the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Patten: I believe that the hon. Gentleman will accept that Bassetlaw is getting a fairly substantial contribution from the business rate pool. Obviously I shall look at the specific figures to which he has referred. In all, however, the contribution from the uniform business rate and from the revenue support grant—the total aggregate external finance—should ensure that local authorities are able to provide standard services at the price to chargepayers that I mentioned earlier. I very much hope

[Mr. Patten]

that that is possible in Bassetlaw as elsewhere, but I shall certainly look at the specific figures mentioned by the hon. Gentleman.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I regret that I shall be unable to call all the hon. Members who wish to put a question. I shall call two more from each side. We then have a Standing Order No. 20 application to follow and a long day ahead of us.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the failure of the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) to launch the expected onslaught on the level of RSG for Bradford may be an eloquent tribute to his success in getting a rather better deal than the Jeremiahs on the Opposition Benches were expecting? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the result for the metropolitan districts, such as Leeds, is rather more neutral than option 3 for which they argued? I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend say that the rate for the unwinding of the safety net would be at a quarter rather than the expected one third. Is that rate for the safety net and the transitional arrangements, as that is critical for industrial areas with older properties?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right to point out that Bradford and a number of other local authorities with considerable urban problems have done substantially better than the Opposition prophesied. The safety net will be unwinding at a rate of £25, or 25 per cent., which ever is the higher, and the interim relief scheme will be unwinding in the first year to the tune of 25p.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Is the Secretary of State confident that his standard spending assessments are computed sensibly? One of the indices that the right hon. Gentleman has used relates to the proportion of children or families born outside the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States of America or the old Commonwealth—I presume that in this context that means the white Commonwealth. If that index is meant to refer to the number of black children and black families, the Secretary of State should be aware that that figure will be hopelessly out. In my community, in common with many others, many of the black children and many of the black families are second or third generation British citizens. If the number of black people in the community is an index of need, why does not the right hon. Gentleman use an accurate index?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Lady has raised an extremely important point. When she looks at the way in which that assessment was calculated she will see that, as a proportion of the educational assessments, we have increased that covering additional educational need—that revenue is precisely directed at, among other things, the problem she has identified—from 11 to 24 per cent. of the total amount available. That is one of the main reasons why a number of inner city areas—I mentioned Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester as well as London earlier—have done very well out of the move from GRE assessment to standard spending assessments. It is important that the hon. Lady's point is met, and I hope that I have done so reasonably well.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on a statement which can only be categorised as magical. Can he reassure me that the bias hitherto in the RSG system against the south-east generally and against East Sussex in particular has now been eliminated and that proper allowance is being given to the vast numbers of elderly people in my constituency and the general area, to the large road building programme that must be constructed to join up with the Channel tunnel, and to meet the worries of the small business men in the south-east?

Mr. Patten: My right hon. Friend is right in implying that we have moved to a fairer system for his constituents and those of many other hon. Members. We have ended the hidden subsidy which, for 30 years, transferred resources from high rateable value areas to low rateable value areas. In the standard spending assessments, which we have set out, we have made particular allowance for labour costs in London and the south-east which should also be of some assistance to local authorities in the area. On both those counts, as well as the greater generosity of rebates and the interim relief scheme, his constituents and those of other hon. Members have reason to believe that we have treated then extremely fairly.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does the Minister accept that it is staggering that, even according to the unrealistic figures that he has offered this afternoon, the average rate bill in my constituency is predicted to go up by 8 per cent. and that people in low rateable value properties, such as Tyneside flats, face an increase—even those affected by the relief scheme—of about £4·50 a week rather than £3? Will he have the courage to ask for more money for a better interim relief scheme and for that scheme to be permanant so that people who live in low rateable properties can look forward to a life of sense rather than the indecency which he offers?

Mr. Patten: I would not get very far by arguing that an interim relief scheme should be made permanent. The point about the scheme is that it should help us to smooth the introduction of the changes in the way in which we raise funds for local authorities. The main reason for some of the problems to which the hon. Gentleman referred is overspending by local authorities. That will be the main reason why, if it turns out to be the case, some people will face larger charges than they would like.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that I have not been able to call all the hon. Members who wished to participate. It may be possible with ingenuity, for them to raise some of their points during the debate on the Local Government and Housing Bill.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No, not yet.

Teacher Shortages

4.53 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely;

"the escalating crisis in filling teaching posts in our schools."

The House is well aware that we have recently had a debate on teacher shortages. The Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, of which I am a member, is currently in the last stages of preparing a report on the matter. It is an important matter, requiring urgent consideration, because on this very day the six major teaching unions in this country have, for the first time, joined forces to produce a survey on teacher vacancies which shows that the number of vacancies is double that which those at the Department of Education and Science think it is on the basis of the evidence that they produced for the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay.

It could be argued that this matter could be left for the interim committee to discuss at its leisure in time for the pay award next April. However, instead of there being about 4,000 vacancies, the figure is closer to 8,000 and that affects between 200,000 and 300,000 pupils attending schools today. The Government should say that they are willing to accept this new survey, which is far bigger than previous ones, and, as a result, remove the restrictions limiting the interim advisory committee on the pay award, which is about £650 million. Therefore, instead of taking action next April, when another full academic year will have passed, the Government can consider this new evidence and announce an interim award this month, thereby enabling schools to attract teachers. There are 400,000 qualified teachers who are not teaching at the moment. An immediate impact could be made on the huge number of vacancies in our schools if the Department of Education and Science were to act immediately to deal with this problem.

Therefore, I sincerely hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will allow the Adjournment of the House so that this urgent matter, which is of importance to all schoolchildren, can be discussed this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the issue of teacher shortages."

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20 I have to announce my decision without giving reasons to the House. I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said. I have to decide whether his application comes within this Standing Order and, if so, whether the debate should be given priority over the business already set down for today or tomorrow. The matter he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

4.56 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you will be aware, the shire counties, with the exception of the Isle of Wight, are represented in this House by between five and 15 Members of Parliament. It has always been my experience that you, Mr. Speaker, have always been most generous in allowing me to put my point of view on behalf of my county. I hope that you will appreciate that when announcements such as we have had this afternoon are made there are at least five chances for the views of the constituents of every other county represented in the House to be made.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry for the hon. Gentleman. I have listened to what he has said but he will perhaps have other opportunities to raise this matter later today.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. On previous occasions, particularly on Scottish questions, you have allowed English Members to intervene in the contributions of the Secretary of State for Scotland on the basis that this is a United Kingdom Parliament. In the Secretary of State for the Environment's statement he alluded to Scotland, but you, Mr. Speaker, did not call any hon. Member from anywhere outside England during a statement which affected Scotland. Therefore, would you reconsider your views on Scottish Question Time?

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman knows that today's statement did not apply directly to Scotland. There were a large number of hon. Members with English interests to whom it did apply and who, sad to say, were not called.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a matter which is of concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. You may remember that last week there was a dispute over whether United Kingdom military aid was being given to Cambodian guerrillas fighting side by side with the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), the Minister said that he had no further comment to make on the question. In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), the Leader of the House effectively blocked that question. The answer is important because I am told that, at this moment, according to the Chinese——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this a matter of order in the House? What has it to do with me?

Mrs. Clwyd: It is a matter of the question being blocked. It is important because a Chinese report states that 17,000 people have already been killed in Cambodia. The military aid which it is alleged we give is not the sort of aid which we want to give. I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will assist us to raise the matter of the blocking of this question because lives are at stake.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady has had her say, but this is not a matter for me. There will be other opportunities for raising this important issue.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that hon. Members whom I have unfortunately been unable to call will not persist in rising.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last week I tabled a question to the Ministry of Defence to ask how many members of the British armed forces were engaged in training Cambodian guerrillas, where they were based, what their rank was, when the programme commenced and what the cost was to public funds. On 30 October I received an answer stating that it was not the practice to provide information of this nature.

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the House knows, I am not responsible for answers to questions. That is not a matter for me at all.

Mr. Mullin *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not a matter for me. I repeat that I am not responsible for the answers that are given to questions.

Mr. Mullin: It is.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman referred to an answer that he had received——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): It was a blocking motion.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) wishes to have the rules changed, he must approach the Procedure Committee. I am bound by the rules.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I realise that you have a difficult job. In common with the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), I wish to point out that I have spent the past two hours jumping up and down like a demented jack-in-the-box. Do you honestly think that that time was usefully spent?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must make that decision for himself. I called other London Members.

Mr. Mullin *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking the hon. Gentleman's point of order because it is not a matter for me.

Mr. Mullin *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Mr. Mullin *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will hear the hon. Gentleman, but it must be a matter on which I can adjudicate.

Mr. Mullin: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. My point of order is that British taxpayers' money is being spent on military aid in Cambodia. My understanding is that the Government are accountable to Parliament for the expenditure of taxpayers' money. It is not good enough for the Government blandly to decline to account to Parliament for that expenditure. Will you, Mr. Speaker, use your influence to ensure that a Government Minister comes to the House and explains what is happening?

Mr. Speaker: I have no authority to bring Ministers to the House. The hon. Gentleman had his say, so perhaps he has done the job for himself.

BILL PRESENTED

SECURITY INDUSTRY

Mr. John Wheeler, supported by Sir Marcus Fox, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg and Mr. Ivan Lawrence, presented a Bill to require the creation of an inspectorate to regulate the employment of uniformed guards and personnel in the security industries; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday next and to be printed. [Bill 214.]

WAYS AND MEANS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING BILL

Resolved,

That any Act resulting from the Local Government and Housing Bill may provide for sums to be paid to the Secretary of State in respect of non-domestic rating—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Orders of the Day

Local Government and Housing Bill

[FIRST DAY]

Lords amendments considered—[Prince of Wales's consent signfied.]

5.6 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that during the passage of the Housing Act 1988 I raised the concern of the House about the number of amendments that had been tabled by the Government—more than 400. I did not think that that would happen again because there was considerable agreement that there had been an abuse of the procedures of the House. I am now asking for your assistance in what we consider to be a continuing abuse.

You will be aware, Mr. Speaker, that no fewer than 606 amendments have been tabled, many of them only last Wednesday. No Back Bencher, on either side of the House, has had the opportunity to consider those amendments or to prepare any points that he might wish to make. I checked with Officers of the House and with hon. Members, and no one can remember so many amendments being tabled to a Bill. No one can recall such an abuse of the procedures of this House.

If I wanted to have a Bill of this nature taken on the Floor of the House, there would have to be a vote to that effect. Yet what is happening with this Bill is, in effect, a Committee stage being taken on the Floor of the House without any adequate safeguards. I ask you to draw to the attention of the House, through whatever measure is available, the fact that that is utterly unacceptable—not only because the procedures are being abused, but because Back Benchers on both sides cannot properly contribute to the debate because there has been so little notice of the amendments. I object strongly to the Government saying that only 70 of the 606 amendments are major. Seventy is bad enough in itself, but the suggestion that the other 536 are not important is based on their judgment, not the judgment of the House.

Not only have both Front Benchers and Back Benchers had difficulty sorting out their briefings, but in all fairness to the House and to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) I must point out that, for my hon. Friend, those amendments must be translated into braille. I have asked my hon. Friend to deal with these amendments today, yet he received them only towards the end of last week. All of them have had to be translated into braille, yet he is expected to deal in depth with them today. That is an appalling abuse of the procedures of the House, which I thought had been satisfactorily dealt with after the passage of the 1988 Act.

I strongly urge you, Mr. Speaker, to exert whatever pressure you can on the Government to ensure that they never again bring a Bill to the House that is so ill-prepared that we end up having a Committee stage on the Floor of the House without any of the usual safeguards being imposed.

Mr. Speaker: I have sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman has said. I am aware that there is a very large number of amendments. I am sure that his remarks will have been noted by the Government. All that I could do was to try to be as generous as possible in selecting the hon. Member's amendments, in the hope that that might help him and the House.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are well aware that there is a separate legislative process for Scottish legislation. We have a separate Act—the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987—that deals with poll tax in Scotland. The Bill before us is riddled with amendments to the Scottish Act—an Act that Scottish local authorities are trying in vain to administer. Indeed, we are trying in vain to keep track of it. This is a disgraceful way to deal with Scottish legislation and it is a disgraceful way to treat this House.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The amendments that affect the Scottish legislation introduce four new aspects that have not been debated previously in this House. They have never been debated in relation to Scotland and the Scottish poll tax system. They have suddenly appeared on the Amendment Paper and, under your selection, Mr. Speaker, have been put in a group of almost 200 amendments,. Somehow Scottish Members have to try to debate the Scottish amendments within the context of a whole series of other amendments. Even at this late stage, is it not possible for there to be a separate Scottish debate?

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman is unhappy with the grouping of amendments, he must raise that matter with the Government.

Ordered,

That the Lords Amendments to the Local Government and Housing Bill be considered in the following order, namely, Nos. 12, 1 to 11, 514 to 581, 583 to 601, 603 to 606, 256 to 264, 328 to 424, 13 to 19, 309 and 310, 81 to 111, 20 to 80, 311 to 317, 112 to 128, 318 to 327, 135 to 255, 129 to 134, 271, 272, 278 to 280, 282, 269, 266, 265, 267 and 268, 270, 273 to 277, 281, 283 to 308, 425 to 510, 513 and 582.—*[Mr. Chris Patten.]*

Lords amendment: No. 12, after clause 17, insert the following new clause—

"*Schemes for basic attendance and special responsibility allowances for local authority members*

.—(1) The Secretary of State may by regulations authorise or require any such relevant authority as may be specified or described in the regulations to make a scheme providing for the payment of—

(a) a basic allowance for every member of the authority who is a councillor;

(b) an attendance allowance in relation to the carrying out by any such member of such duties as may be specified in or determined under the regulations; and

(c) a special responsibility allowance for any such member who has such special responsibilities in relation to the authority as may be so specified or determined.

[Mr. Speaker]

(2) Regulations under this section may also authorise or require a scheme made by a relevant authority under the regulations to include provision for the payment to appointed members of allowances in respect of such losses of earnings and expenses as—

(a) are necessarily sustained or incurred in the carrying out, in connection with their membership of the authority or any committee or sub-committee [illegible] in or determined under the regulations; and

(b) are not of a description in respect of which provision is made for an allowance under any of sections 174 to 176 of the Local Government Act 1972 or sections 46 to 48 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

(3) Without prejudice to the generality of the powers conferred by subsections (1) and (2) above, regulations under this section may contain such provision as the Secretary of State considers appropriate for requiring a scheme made by a relevant authority under the regulations—

(a) to make it a condition of any payment by way of allowance that, in the financial year to which the payment would relate, the aggregate amount which the authority has paid out or is already liable to pay out under the scheme does not exceed such maximum amount as may be specified in or determined under the regulations;

(b) to make provision for different maximum amounts to be applicable, for the purposes of any such condition, in relation to different allowances or in relation to different members or members of different groups;

(c) to make provision in relation to claims which cannot be paid by virtue of any such condition and provision for the payment to members of the authority who are councillors of an amount by way of supplement to the basic allowance where, in any financial year, the aggregate paid out or owing under the scheme is less than an amount specified in or determined under the regulations;

(d) to provide that the amount authorised by virtue of subsection (2) above to be paid by way of allowance in any case shall not exceed such amount as may be so specified or determined;

(e) to contain such provision as may be so specified or determined with respect to the general administration of the scheme, with respect to the manner in which, time within which and forms on which claims for any allowance are to be made and with respect to the information to be provided in support of any such claim;

(f) to contain such provision as may be so specified or determined for avoiding the duplication of payments or of allowances, for determining the bodies by which payments of allowances are to be made and for the apportionment of payments between different bodies.

(4) Regulations under this section may—

(a) prohibit the payment, otherwise than in accordance with sections 174 to 176 of the Local Government Act 1972 or sections 46 to 48 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 or in such other cases as may be specified in the regulations, of any allowance to a member of a relevant authority who is a councillor or to any appointed member of a relevant authority;

(b) impose requirements on a relevant authority with respect to the publication, in the minutes of that authority or otherwise, of the details of amounts paid in pursuance of a scheme made under the regulations; and

(c) contain such incidental provision and such supplemental, consequential and transitional provision in connection with the other provisions of the regulations as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

(5) In this section "relevant authority" means—

(a) a local authority of any of the descriptions specified in any of the paragraphs of section 20(1) below, other than paragraphs (d) and (j), or in section 20(2) below; or

(b) any body on which a body which is a relevant authority by virtue of paragraph (a) above is represented and which is designated as a relevant authority for the purposes of this section by regulations made by the Secretary of State;

and references in this section to an appointed member, in relation to a relevant authority, are references to any person who is a member of the authority without being a councillor or who is a member of one or more of the authority's committees or sub-committees without being a member of the authority."

Read a Second time.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), in line 9, after 'regulations', insert—

'(bb) a financial loss allowance'.

Mr. Speaker: With this we shall discuss Government amendments (b) to (d).

Mr. Blunkett: I wish to support the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) about the chaos surrounding the Bill. However, I wish to thank the Minister for his co-operation, within the bounds of the mess that surrounds the Bill, in providing facilities to help to sort out my braille arrangements. I am grateful to him.

Nothing that is said this afternoon can detract from the proposals for financial arrangements for councillors because their voluntary actions are of the essence in making our democracy work. We rely on such people to give their time at weekends and in the evenings, week in and week out, to ensure that local democracy is alive and active. As we said on Report, without proper arrangements for financial remuneration only the rich and the retired could take part in our democratic process, which would be detrimental to us all. Neither in Committee nor on Report did we have the detailed proposals that are before us today. They were introduced in another place and, as my hon. Friend said, it has not been possible to scrutinise as we would wish.

I wish to put it on record that local authority associations and many local councillors are relieved that the Government have been willing to listen and to alter their proposals just a little in line with the suggestions that have been made to them.

In Committee we debated extensively the issue of financial arrangements for councillors, and it was agreed by hon. Members on both sides that it was desirable to make arrangements that do not penalise those who genuinely undertake work—and so ensure that local authorities can go about their business in a reasonable fashion. There were differences between myself and the then Minister for Local Government, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), as to the role of elected members and on the way in which they should undertake their responsibilities. However, at the bottom line we all agreed that it is necessary to make proper arrangements.

We are anxious that the proposed arrangements may penalise the very people whom both Government Members and my right hon. and hon. Friends want to see encouraged to participate in local government. I refer mainly to those who are in paid work and who need time off to perform their local government duties. They must be made to feel that they are damaging neither their own nor their families' financial well-being. They are the people who would benefit by arrangements for compensating for financial loss, rather than be subject to a complicated scheme of flat-rate payments based on councillors' general activities, an attendance allowance covering a 24-hour period, and a special responsibility allowance for those undertaking at leadership level duties that obviously go beyond the normal responsibilities of an elected local government member.

It is making a mistake to proceed without allowing the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment to compensate for loss of earnings in respect of councillors who will otherwise be compelled to play only a minor part in their authorities or to resign their seats.

Although the retired or the wealthy who serve as councillors make a valuable contribution, we do not want to rely on them alone. In a few local authorities, the regulations will have no detrimental effect on their financial arrangements, and the cash limits imposed on those authorities will not affect individual councillors. Those councils' traditions and functions will allow elected members to continue undertaking their responsibilities without difficulty. However, many local authorities shoulder a larger burden of functions and have bigger populations. Some of them cover wide areas of the country, involving long travelling distances for those attending official meetings. In such areas, councillors may be required to observe traditional shift work patterns and are unable to pop around the corner for an evening meeting. Therefore, some councillors will be badly hit unless the financial arrangements made for them are not altered and improved.

5.15 pm

Although local authorities welcome the fact that the global sum available to them has been improved slightly, it is still abysmally short of the level recommended in the Widdicombe report. The figure of £42 million now proposed compares with the sum of £75 million that the Association of Metropolitan Authorities extrapolated in its updating of Widdicombe's proposals. The most worrying aspect of all is the cash limit on individual authorities. An authority could get halfway through the year and then literally run out of money, which would be absurd. I hope that the Minister will allow teaming and lading between particular authorities, and will be flexible in respect of their cash limits, so that the system can operate sensibly.

The local authority associations say that they are willing to monitor the arrangements with the Government to ensure that there are no wide variations in spending or in the criteria for claiming allowances. They are willing to co-operate and to ensure that the system works properly, but their role must be acknowledged and their voice must be heard. The associations will find it unacceptable if magistrates, co-opted local authority members, those appointed to quangos, and people still running residuary bodies—such as the chair of the London residuary body —receive salaries of as much as £55,000 per year, while being told that local councillors with responsibility for education, social services, housing, transport, environmental and leisure facilities must manage on sums that will damage not only their own finances but those of their families.

In the past, there would have been no ideologically division between the Opposition and the Government, and neither should there be one in the future. On behalf of people who have spent all their lives in local government service, I make a plea that we get this right. When coupled with the restrictions on the amount of paid time off from public service that will be allowable, the financial arrangements will be crucial in determining whether both Tory and Labour councillors in all parts of the country will feel able to continue contributing their time to their communities and to perform a decent job on behalf of those who elect them.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): In replying to amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 12, I shall speak

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

also to Government amendments (b), (c), and (d), and to Government amendments (a) and (b) to Lords amendment No. 554. In doing so, I may point out that the line references in some of those amendments on today's Amendment Paper are incorrect. On page 3709, the line references in Government amendments (b), (c) and (d) amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 554 on page 3711 should refer to line 6.

Lords amendment No. 12 introduces a new clause to provide a system of remunerating councillors. We have come a long way since the House last considered that subject on Report, following discussions with local authority associations on how to implement proposals for the basic flat-rate allowance set out in the White Paper that formed the Government's response to the Widdicombe report. We made progress, but there was concern in local government that a flat-rate allowance by itself, without any attendance-related element, would be unfair on those hard-working councillors who put in most time and effort.

The special responsibility allowance can of course provide additional remuneration for holders of key posts, such as the chairmen of committees. However, it was pointed out that many back-bench members work long hours on specialist committees—such as those dealing with licensing and appeals.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), as Minister for Local Government, met representatives of the local authority associations in July and listened carefully to the concerns that they expressed. He agreed to consider any alternative proposals that met the Government's objectives.

To their great credit, the associations responded quickly with an outline proposal for a combined system of attendance and flat-rate allowances coupled with the existing special responsibility allowance. The local authority associations met the Government's anxiety about possible abuse of what would effectively be an open-ended attendance allowance system by suggesting that a limit be imposed on the total amount that each council could spend on allowances and that a restriction be placed on the definition of approved duties for which the attendance allowance could be paid. Those proposals form the basis of the new scheme for which the amendments provide.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) generously acknowledged the success of the consultation exercise, and I believe that we have got it right. The new clause to be inserted after existing clause 17 will require each local authority to draw up a scheme for payment of the three main allowances. First, there will be a basic allowance, previously referred to as the flat rate. Secondly, there will be an attendance allowance, as at present, but with the definition of "approved duties" determined by the Secretary of State. Thirdly, a special-responsibility allowance will be payable—as at present—to councillors with special responsibilities, such as committee chairmen.

The Secretary of State will be able to set a limit on the total that each authority may spend on the main allowance. It is intended that the amount should be calculated according to type of authority, and population in Scotland, and that it should take account of the number of councillors in each authority. Within that amount, authorities will be free to determine the level of allowances, subject to any limits on different types of allowance set by the Secretary of State. That will ensure that a minimum proportion of the overall amount is allocated to the basic allowance, and will provide upper and lower limits for the special-responsibility allowance.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Am I right in dreaming up extra meetings to obtain extra cash?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend is quite right; there have been instances of apparent abuse, in which a proliferation of meetings, committees and sub-committees has been observed. The new scheme will end that, and it will cease to attract the minority of councillors who seek to increase their attendance allowance by such means.

Mr. Maxton: Has the Minister made any allowance for Scotland's island councils—the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland? They have specific problems over allowances. Councillors have to be away from home to attend meetings of, for instance, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, but small councils with few councillors would not be covered in the same way as those with a large membership.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The attendance allowance will continue to be paid as part of the overall scheme, which may be adopted by the councils concerned. In addition, there will be a flat-rate allowance. If, however, the hon. Gentleman was referring to the equivalent of parish and community councils, the present provisions will remain more or less unaltered.

Mr. Soley: The Minister has again revealed the weakness of the Government's position, and the weakness of legislating in this way. What he is really saying is that he will cash-limit the island councils, most, but not all, of which are in Scotland.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have already explained that the overall amounts that can be spent by each local authority will be subject to limits set by the Secretary of State. That was one of the agreements that we reached with the local government associations.

Mr. Soley: Am I not right, however, in saying that that agreement did not take the needs of the islands into account?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The needs of the islands were considered as part of the overall settlement. We are legislating for the United Kingdom, and each part was considered before we finalised our proposals.

The principal advantage of the scheme is that it will enable each local authority to decide on its own system of allowances, within the framework that I have described. Some authorities may wish to opt for a flat-rate system with no attendance allowance, as originally envisaged in the White Paper, and they will be able to do so. Others will continue to be able to provide for an element of attendance allowance in recognition of the differing work loads and commitment of their members. Equally important, however, is the fact that the scheme will make councils more aware of the cost of allowances and what they are paid for, as well as focusing attention on the timing, extent and necessity of meetings. I believe that that covers the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman).

I will not trouble the House with details of all the consequential amendments that deal with the administration and application of the provisions, except to mention that the arrangements for travel and subsistence allowances, and allowances for parish and community councillors will remain broadly unchanged.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I may have missed something; if so, I apologise. Is the Minister saying that local authorities will receive a grant and will then be able to choose the method by which they decide how to pay councillors—whether they are paid a flat rate or, in certain circumstances, receive an enhanced payment? Will the system be based on the present payment of councillors, or on the "X thousand pounds a year" that is currently spent on allowances?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I shall deal with the question of overall resources later, but I think that I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the total allowable expenditure on councillors' allowances will be no lower than it is now. The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that, within the guidelines laid down by the Secretary of State, authorities will be able to decide on the mix between the three types of allowance that I have described.

The five amendments that the Government have tabled to the Lords amendments are all minor and technical, but they are necessary if the provisions are to operate effectively. Amendments (b) and (c) ensure that appeal committees set by governors of maintained schools continue to be able to receive allowances under the new arrangements. Amendment (d) enables the Secretary of State to provide that members of bodies to which the provisions apply are to be treated as councillors for the purpose of the new allowances. Without that, members of the London and metropolitan joint authorities would not be able to receive attendance or special-responsibility allowances as they do at present.

The two amendments to Lords amendment No. 554 make consequential changes to ensure that the Broads Authority can be brought within the new arrangements. There is, I hope, nothing controversial there.

Amendment (a) would enable councils to pay a financial-loss allowance to council members. If he will excuse the pun, I am at a loss to understand quite why the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) considers such a provision necessary. At present, only 1 per cent. of councillors claim the allowance—only 250 in the whole of Great Britain—so it is clearly not popular. The main benefit that it provides over attendance allowance is that, for historical reasons, it is paid at a higher rate.

There must be doubt about any system that allows some councillors—those whose circumstances permit it—to claim a higher rate of allowance than others. Such an arrangement becomes even less justifiable under the new system, in which total expenditure will be limited: high levels of financial-loss allowance would be paid to a few councillors at the expense of those receiving attendance allowance. The new system provides for three types of allowance, to take account of differing requirements. We did not want to complicate it further by defining another sub-group of councillors entitled to claim not because of extra duties, but because of background circumstances or business commitments.

The hon. Gentleman alleged that only the rich would be able to participate in local government. That is not the case at present, and the hon. Gentleman must know that the present financial-loss allowance, when it is paid, frequently goes to the self-employed, who tend not to be among the poorest councillors. I am convinced that the system that I [illegible] all councillors for the work that they do.

Let me say a word about resources. The local authority associations have estimated that councils will spend about £37 million on the main allowances in the current year, if all councillors claim their entitlement. In the joint letter in which they put forward the new proposals they said that this was a minimum level of resources that they would consider as acceptable for the new scheme. Against that background, we have decided that the allocations to individual authorities for next year under the new scheme should be worked out within the context of a clear ceiling of £42 million at current prices. We believe that this is a fair and reasonable starting level which takes account of the fact that, in future, expenditure on allowances will be subject to limits. We shall be discussing ways in which this could be distributed with the local associations, together with the other details of the scheme which are to be prescribed in regulations.

I hope that the House agrees that the provisions represent a great improvement over the existing arrangements.

5.30 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The Minister clearly does not understand how local government works. When he replied to the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) he made it clear that only a small minority abuse the system by creating meetings that they can attend. It is important to emphasise that it is only a very small percentage who abuse the system. The Government are therefore legislating for the 99 per cent. who do not abuse it.

The amendment to which my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) spoke relates to loss of earnings. The Minister does not understand that many of those who serve in local government lose out in two ways. They incur a financial loss, through loss of earnings. They are entitled to have reasonable time off to attend to council duties, but they do not have to be paid and a large number of them are not paid for the time that they have off work. Increasing pressure is being placed on the definition of "reasonable time." Many employers are putting pressure on employees who serve on local authorities and on those who undertake other duties, such as magistrates, not to undertake those duties because they do not like those employees having time off.

Furthermore, it does not help people's promotion prospects if they wish to serve on local authorities. I know many people who have not been promoted because they have undertaken local government duties. A good friend of mine was the leader of Burnley council for many years and he lost out twice on promotion. It was only when he stood down as leader of the Labour group and leader of the council that he was promoted. Within a couple of weeks of standing down he was promoted and became a

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

shift engineer at a local factory. The fact that he missed out on promotion for many years affected not only his financial position but that of his wife and the whole family.

The Minister may be correct when he says that only 1 per cent. take that form of payment, but that is because of the way it is handled. Local authority members have to determine at a certain point during the year which method of payment they want to have. When they have taken that decision they do not have the option of moving from one method of payment to another. That can lead to difficulties; it is not always easy to work out in advance how best to minimise financial loss. No Opposition Member would want people to make money out of local government, but those who undertake important public duties should not suffer as a result of doing so. We must do everything that we can to minimise financial loss.

A certain amount of time may be spent on travelling to meetings. Local authorities take arbitrary decisions on attendance times. If a person has to attend a county council meeting rather than a local council meeting, his pay for the whole day may be affected because of the time it takes him to travel to that meeting. Account should also be taken of working patterns. Some people may not be able to take just an hour off work, early or late, to attend a meeting. If somebody works on a production line, another person may have to cover his position on the line for four hours. I was in that position when I worked shifts. Somebody else had to cover my shift, or half my shift, because if I had been missing from my position on the production line the whole system would have ground to a halt.

Amendment (a) is sensible and positive. People would not be put at a financial disadvantage. We have a responsibility to ensure that people do not lose out financially, especially as it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract people to serve on local government. That is partly because the Government continue to remove responsibilities and duties from local authorities, but it is also because of the increasing pressure that is being put on employees by their employers not to take time off. The Minister ought to respond more positively to that point than he has done so far.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): My point relates to young women who wish to enter local politics. Local authorities have been very considerate towards them, but we cannot attract very many because often they have young children. If women have to attend meetings held at night, their children have to be farmed out to relatives, if possible, but in many cases they have to be looked after by child minders or baby sitters, who have to be paid. My council and, I believe, many others make no allowance for baby sitting fees. A heading on the form that local councillors have to fill in is entitled "Incidental expenses." They include car parking, but no mention is made of baby sitting fees, the payment of which would encourage young women to stand for election. Some of the young women who have entered politics are one-parent families, but we do not attract enough of them.

The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) was right when he said that in many cases promotion is blocked by local government service. However, unions that have been able to negotiate proper terms and conditions have negotiated 18 days, which could amount to 36 half days of time off to attend to public duties. That includes justices of the peace. Many of the major firms and banks do not, however, do that. At their board meetings, arrangements are made for employees to have time off, but that is entirely at the board's discretion.

I have asked many times why no ruling has been made, as Widdicombe suggested. There is no Government directive that 18 days or 36 half days should be allowed for time off. Is the Minister able to say whether any thought has been given to that point? Will anything be done about it? Until something is done about it, only elderly gentlemen will be prepared to serve on local government.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I pay tribute, as did the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), to the many hundreds of hard-working councillors who enable local authorities to function. I know that they make great personal sacrifices, in addition to the financial sacrifices that some of them have to make. I am thinking particularly of late-night meetings which hardly impose a financial burden, but can put considerable strain on family life.

However, we believe that there should continue to be a strong element of voluntary public service in becoming a councillor. That element is adequately taken care of and respected in the scheme that we are introducing, which sets out as its guardian principle that allowances should be paid to ensure that councillors are not significantly worse off and do not suffer financial hardship.

Those councillors who have to incur considerable travel expenses—and hon. Gentlemen who raised this matter may be thinking particularly of the islands councils—will in future be able to claim travel and subsistence allowances which remain outside the scope of the new arrangement, so those Scottish councillors will not find that their allowances are limited.

The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) mentioned the role of women on local authorities. I, too, pay tribute to their important contribution. The personal and family sacrifices that they make are particularly acute. However, the hon. Gentleman's request illustrates the point that there are so many different groups who can claim to be special, and we could continue proliferating allowances to take account of different groups of people. We are confident that the three allowances that we are suggesting and the mix between them, which is largely at the discretion of local authorities, will take account of the circumstances of all the different groups to which he and other hon. Gentlemen have drawn attention.

In my experience, good employers are quite happy to allow their employees time off, and even welcome it. Certainly the Government encourage employers to be reasonably generous with their time, but I do not think it right that there should be a statutory requirement. The present arrangements are working fairly well, and there is no evidence that people are seriously deterred from local government service by the intransigence of local employers. With that in mind, I ask the House to reject amendment (a) and accept the Government amendments.

Question put and negatived.

Amendments made to the Lords amendment:

(b), in line 76, leave out second 'or'.

(c), in line 80, at end add

'or (c) any appeal committee so designated which is constituted in accordance with paragraph 2 or 3 of Schedule 2 to the Education Act 1980'.

(d), in line 85, at end add—

'(6) In this section any reference to a councillor includes a reference to a member of the authority concerned who, in accordance with regulations under this section, is to be treated as if he were a councillor.'.

Lords amendment No. 12, as amended, agreed to. *[Special Entry.]*

Clause 2

POLITICALLY RESTRICTED POSTS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 3, line 26, after first ("with") insert

"subsection (1A) below and any directions under section *(grant and supervision of exemptions from political restriction)* below"

Read a Second time.

5.45 pm

Mr. Blunkett: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), in line 1, after '(1A)', insert '(subject to subsection (1AA))'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3 and amendments (a), (b) and (c) and Lords amendments Nos. 4 to 9.

Mr. Blunkett: I am particularly concerned with amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 1 and amendments (a), (b) and (c) to Lords amendment No. 3.

We welcome the changes that have been agreed in the House of Lords. We welcome the changes to financial limits in terms of the salary range and the changes in the categories of persons to be restricted in standing for public office and political activities. We commend the way in which the Government have handled the matter since our debates some months ago.

We are concerned about the principle of restriction based on salary levels and the restrictions on individuals' political activities purely because of their membership of or earnings from a local authority. We are also concerned about the restrictions on those employed as political assistants, who, by the very nature of their activities, are hardly expected to be impartial. Under the Bill as drafted, they remain under those restrictions. We should have preferred only those mentioned on the face of the Bill to be restricted from standing for office in authorities and we reject the restrictions on holding office in a political party or being able to canvass, write or speak or in any way persuade others on behalf of a political party.

We recognise the value of the changes that have been made, and the alleviation of the worry and concern of more than 100,000 people, so we shall not press amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 1 or amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 3.

I give notice that we shall seek to divide the House on amendment (c) to Lords amendment No. 3. The idea of restricting out-of-work activities of members and officials of local authorities remains unacceptable. We do not believe that it will be possible to monitor or to police certain measures; nor do we believe that that will be necessary. The idea that people should not be able to be chairman, secretary, or treasurer of a local branch of a political party or be able to contribute to it in their spare time is not worthy of a democracy and we should strike it out. We are particularly concerned about the notion that people should not be able to engage in canvassing, writing or speaking on behalf of a political party.

The anomalies in the Bill as drafted are self-evident. The idea of using the Representation of the People Act 1989 as it applies to police officers is absurd. It states that they should not, by word, message or writing or in any other manner, persuade or dissuade any person from giving their vote whether as an elector or proxy. That is absurd. The idea that an individual cannot persuade people to cast their vote for a political party will lead us into all sorts of difficulties. If that is what the Bill means, it will need to be policed and monitored and we shall have to brace people who knock on people's doors, and, still more ridiculous, those who deliver leaflets through people's doors.

Perhaps we shall even have to monitor our discussions. Carried to an extreme, that could mean that people having an argument in a pub on a Saturday night could be reported by someone with a vindictive streak. However, it is quite possible that people who attend public meetings in a non-political way could be caught by the Bill because someone decided to report the fact that, although they were employed by a local authority at a specified level and fell into the category of politically-restricted personnel, they were engaged in persuading people in a way which might be construed as asking them to vote for, or perhaps not to vote for, a political party. Under section 100 of the Representation of the People Act 1989 they might even find themselves restricted in normal conversation. That would be ridiculous. If Conservative Members agree that it would be ridiculous, they should accept the amendments. If they believe that it is unenforceable, we should not accept it, but if it is enforceable we must know how it will be enforced.

The Representation of the People Act refers not to persuading people to vote for a political party but only to a person, who could be someone holding minor office, standing as an independent or engaging in any measure of political activity. If the Government are serious about this provision they should be clear about how it would be enforced. If they are not, we ask them to withdraw the Lords amendment.

The Government have seen sense and responded positively on a number of issues. When we last debated the Bill, many hon. Members felt that our democracy was at threat. It was not a major issue outside the House, but it would have become so. There was talk of having to take action through European Community institutions to ascertain and retain our democratic rights. The Government have seen substantial sense, and tonight they could make a substantial contribution to reassuring people outside by accepting amendments (b) and (c) to Lords amendment No. 3. For those reasons, we shall divide the House on amendment (c).

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. David Hunt): As this is my first opportunity to do so, may I thank the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) for his earlier remarks? To reassure him, what is now being proposed is merely to apply the rules that have applied to thousands of civil servants for generations to those who will fulfil the same role in local government. That is a wise and sensible measure, because all hon. Members condemn the abuses that have occurred. Indeed, many Opposition Members have told me that they do not support the abuses that have brought the system of independent local government into disrepute.

[Mr. David Hunt]

We are in a complicated position, because the nine amendments to which we are speaking were moved by the Opposition spokesman in another place, the noble Lord McIntosh of Haringey. In doing so, he announced that agreement had been reached between the Government and the Opposition about which posts should be subject to the restrictions on public political activity. In accordance with that agreement, I shall recommend that the House should accept the Lords amendments. As the hon. Member for Brightside said, the Opposition have now tabled four amendments to the Lords amendments. In part, they raise questions about which their noble Lordships expressed reservations, but on one significant point they would effectively undermine the agreement reached in the other place.

To set the four Opposition amendments in context, it might help the House if I were to explain the effect of the nine Lords amendments and the reason why the Government recommend their acceptance. The proposals in the Bill, with the Lords amendments, will ensure that all posts that are properly regarded as politically sensitive —not just those over a certain salary level—will be subject to political restrictions, and that there will be proper independent scrutiny of what those posts should be. Two separate questions must be addressed.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As the restrictions will apply to a number of people who earn less than £19,000 but who are considered to be politically sensitive, may we have a calculation of how many are likely to be affected?

Mr. Hunt: If I may, I shall move on to that point in a moment. I shall be unable to give a precise calculation, but I will ensure that I write to the hon. Gentleman.

On the first question of which local authority officers should be subject to restrictions, the Widdicombe committee recommended that the restrictions should apply to all officers of the rank of principal officer and above. At that time, after consulting widely, the Government took the view that that would spread the net too widely and therefore proposed that the restrictions should apply only to a much more precisely targeted group of staff. Initially, it was proposed that chief executives, chief officers and their deputies, monitoring officers and all officers to whom council functions had been formally delegated should be politically restricted; to that list, for separate reasons, we added political assistants.

Next, we proposed that restrictions should apply to all people in three politically sensitive categories—those who advise councillors, those who speak to the media for the council, and those who deal with the public and seem to represent the council. We proposed two mechanisms to apply those categories. For those paid a specified salary level or higher, to whom the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) referred, there would have been a system of contracting out. The restrictions would normally have applied to those with jobs on that salary level or higher, but if the employing council and adjudicator agreed that the posts did not fall into any of the three politically sensitive categories, they would be exempted. For those paid at less than the specified level, there would have been a system of contracting in. The restrictions would apply only if the employing council considered the post to be in one of the three politically sensitive categories. As the House knows, the specified salary that divided the two approaches was £13,500

Three main changes are effected by the Lords amendments. First, one of the three categories of politically sensitive posts has been dropped. The two that remain are those who advise the council, a committee or sub-committee and those who speak for the council to the media. We came to the conclusion that the third category —those who deal with the public in ways whereby they seem to represent the council—was of less significance in local government than in equivalent posts in the Civil Service, which are politically restricted. I think that that is one of the most significant changes.

Secondly, the salary level that divides the contracting-out approach from the contracting-in approach has been raised to £19,500. We have further agreed that by regulation we shall link that salary to spinal point No. 44 of the national joint council scale; it will therefore be increased in line with that scale. Provided it can be adequately drafted, we shall provide for the disregard of nationally agreed local weightings. That change reflects a decision to raise the level at which it is assumed that a post's duties will be politically sensitive in the ways defined. As the hon. Member for Walsall, North said, that change does not mean that those in politically sensitive jobs on a salary below £19,500 will be free from political restrictions. If the duties of a post under that salary level fall within the definitions of the politically sensitive categories, the employing council will be required to apply the restrictions. If they fail to act when they should, the adjudicator can ensure that the restrictions apply either as a result of a complaint or on his own initiative.

The reason for that lies in the third main change, because the role of the adjudicator has been widened. He will now be able to consider applications for exemption from the political restrictions even if the employing council thinks that they should apply. Equally, to prevent abuses that may flow from the raising of the salary level, he will be able to consider complaints from anyone that an employing council has failed to apply the restrictions to a post that meets the criteria for political sensitivity. If he agrees, he will be able to direct that the political restrictions shall apply to that post. I must stress that the Government regard this safeguard as important to ensure that the criteria for what posts should be restricted are properly applied. It provides an important assurance to those who have expressed concern, including many of my right hon. and hon. Friends who have written to me about it, that raising the salary level to £19,500 would give councils carte blanche to employ political activists as long as they were not paid more than £19,500. The new powers of the adjudicator will help to ensure that that does not happen. In addition, a number of minor changes will be made. The adjudicators will be empowered to issue guidance to which the local authorities are to have regard. The drafting of the definition of those who speak to the media for the council has been improved and other aspects have been clarified.

We regard as satisfactory the agreement reached in another place with the Opposition parties on the arrangements for determining what posts should be politically restricted. We commend the nine Lords amendments in this group to the House. I regret to have to reveal to the hon. Member for Brightside that I cannot say the same for the four Opposition amendments. However, I want to make some remarks that I hope will be of assistance to him.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Can the Minister clarify whether every officer who reports to a council committee, regardless of status, will be politically restricted?

Mr. Hunt: I have not said that, but I will come back to the hon. Gentleman's point in a moment. I have laid down the criteria carefully. The question of what restrictions there should be will go some way to answering the points raised by the hon. Members for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) and for Brightside.

The Bill provides formal prohibitions on those in politically restricted posts from being Members of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament and councillors on principal councils. It further provides for contractual restrictions on certain other activities. The consultation paper that we have issued makes it clear that those are, being a candidate for those elected offices, holding office in a political party, canvassing and speaking and writing in public in support of a political party.

It was suggested in another place that there should be two levels of contractual restrictions for all but those in the most senior posts. Although I am not immediately convinced by that argument, I shall consider it carefully.

The four Opposition amendments reflect, in part, the questions raised in another place by the Opposition spokesman. Amendment (a) would negate the basis of what has been agreed on the question of the post to which the political restriction should apply. It was argued in another place that there should be a distinction between the restrictions that apply to chief executives, chief officers and their deputies and those that apply to other staff. It was suggested that all politically restricted staff should be prohibited from being elected to public office, but that the other restrictions should not be necessary in the case of staff other than chief executives, chief officers and their deputies. We have agreed to consider that.

We have issued a consultation document which proposes that the restriction should be uniform for all the officers to whom the restrictions apply, as they are in the Civil Service for all members of a fully restricted group who are the equivalents of the politically restricted group in local government. We have an open mind on the issue and, as my noble Friend Lord Hesketh said, we will consider the case for a different approach.

However, I cannot accept the approach of amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 3 because that would exempt staff, other than the most senior, from not only the wider restrictions that we acknowledge are to be considered but from the basic prohibition on being a councillor in another local authority. It would mean that the only political restriction on staff other than chief executives, chief officers and their deputies would be a restriction on being a Member of Parliament or a Member of the European Parliament. I stress that everything other than actual membership would be permitted. That would go back on the agreement as to which post should be politically restricted by making the content of those political restrictions practically non-existent for posts other than chief executive, chief officer or their deputies.

The basic mischief at which the provisions are aimed is that of being a publicly active politician and at the same time claiming to be the impartial servant of the local authority. I cannot therefore accept this attempt to set aside the Government's proposals to restate in law conventions which have previously ensured that there are no problems in this area.

Mr. Soley: The Minister must know—he is not naive—that the Government got into an indefensible mess on this and that our colleagues in the House of Lords bailed them out. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brightside said, that does not mean that it is legislation that we would introduce. The Minister has said that he has an open mind on one or two issues and is willing to move on them. I am delighted to hear that. But how on earth can he legislate for that given we are at the final stages of the Bill and at the tail end of the Session? Does the Minister think that he can do these things by an Order in Council?

Mr. Hunt: As the legislation and the consultation paper point out, there is scope for setting out the guidelines so that they are acceptable along the lines that I have already indicated. If I heard the hon. Gentleman correctly, he agreed with his hon. Friend the Member for Brightside on canvassing. He is under a misapprehension. Our consultation paper suggests that those in politically restricted posts in local government, like those in comparable posts in the Civil Service, should not be able to canvass for political parties or for candidates in elections to main local authorities or Parliament. The consultation paper suggests that a special definition of "canvassing" is needed, but if one were needed the definition of what is forbidden to policemen might be appropriate. That was the definition that was criticised by the hon. Member for Brightside. I do not think that it is an unacceptable approach.

Mr. Tony Banks: The political activist in one area is usually employed in another area, and the logic behind the Government's point is that if someone who lives in the area where the activist works were to see him canvassing for a political party that ratepayer would lose confidence in the local authority. How does that apply when the political activist will be canvassing in the area where he or she lives rather than works? Why is the restriction being introduced?

Mr. Hunt: It does not need me to reductio Zenosis as opposed to the hon. Gentleman's reductio ad absurdum. The consultation paper shows that we are adopting a sensible and fair approach to the issue. We have an open mind as to the way in which we can best ensure that the objective that I clearly laid out, and thought was agreed on both sides of the House, can be achieved. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) referred to clause 1(5). Under that clause we have to lay regulations to determine the restrictions other than those on membership of councils, Parliament and the European Parliament. That is what we are consulting on.

Amendments (a), (b) and (c) to Lords amendment No. 3 in part exempt assistants to political groups from restrictions other than being a Member of Parliament or a Member of the European Parliament. We have now sent to the local authority associations a consultative document setting out our proposals for restrictions for those political assistants, other than those on being a councillor, Member of Parliament or Member of the European Parliament which are included in the Bill. The document acknow-

[Mr. Hunt]

ledges that the arguments for restrictions on these staff are different from those on other staff. Here there can be no conflict between the duties of the post and declared political allegiance. However, there must be safeguards against such posts being used merely to support a local party organisation. For instance, similar restrictions apply to Minister's special advisers for the same reasons. Such restrictions must exist if there is to be a power to appoint political assistants.

Amendments (b) and (c) would exempt more junior staff from restrictions on being officers of political parties and on canvassing. As my noble Friend Lord Hesketh said in another place, we have agreed to consider the case for a less restrictive approach for staff other than the most senior. However, there are disadvantages in such an approach. It would make it much more difficult for people to understand what particular officers were allowed to do. It does not deal with the basic problem of a clash between publicly declared political views and a claim to serve a council impartially, and it would represent a significant step away from the traditional conventions on this subject.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my hon. Friend clarify this point? Is there a limitation on the number of political advisers that each authority is allowed to engage, or are we considering legislation that will enable any authority to engage, say, 50 of them?

Mr. Hunt: I seem to recollect that the restriction applies to three political advisers per authority.

Mr. Holt: Is that three per party or three per authority?

Mr. Hunt: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that it is three per authority.

I shall carefully consider all the arguments, but I do not think that the case is so clear that we should now rule out the possibility of uniform treatment of everyone subject to political restrictions.

I may have misheard the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg). I should like to clarify a point. I thought that he was referring to a member of staff who in any way advises a council on its decisions. I should like to make it clear that every officer who advises a council committee or sub-committee will be restricted, regardless of pay level.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Will the people who put together reports for the council officers who advise committees be included in the restrictions?

Mr. Hunt: My recollection is that the legislation applies to the officer who advises. A typist who types the document or someone similar much further down the chain will be affected by the restrictions only in the way that I explained earlier.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): My hon. Friend may or may not know that each council chairman of a committee in Ealing has a personal assistant whose wages are paid by the ratepayer. That is a political figure. Am I to understand that this will be disallowed by the Bill in all cases but three?

Mr. Hunt: My recollection is that three political assistants are allowed per local authority. I do not know whether Ealing council will attempt to find some way of explaining such a post as other than that of a political adviser. I should be interested to investigate the status of a political adviser who overnight assumed a different mantle. No doubt, through my hon. Friend's vigilance, combined with my authority, we shall defeat any attempt to circumvent the legislation's provisions.

Mr. Allen McKay: I do not agree with the Government's views. The legislation seems to result from shallow thinking and a biased view towards local government, and the Government have got it wrong. A chief officer may advise committees, but his advice will have come from further down the chain. Is the person further down the chain also debarred from taking part in political activities?

Mr. Hunt: Let us not get the matter out of context. The hon. Gentleman and I know individuals who work in local government. I have constantly been in touch with such public servants for most of my political life. The majority in no way transgress in any of the respects which I have outlined. We are well served by the high calibre of public servant at local authority level.

I remind the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) that the amendments were moved by the Opposition in another place to find a common solution to an uncommon problem—the individual who openly canvasses views for a political party and at the same time seeks to occupy an impartial position as a member of a council. It is to those people that the legislation is addressed. That is why I strongly urge the House to vote against the Opposition's amendments and to support the Lords amendments.

6.15 pm

Mr. Winnick: The Minister concluded by paying a tribute to local government staff, and I echo his sentiments. There is, however, no evidence to show that the small numbers of people employed by local government who are politically involved do their job other than in the manner described. It is a slur on those people to argue that an officer who is employed by a local authority and is a member of another authority is not carrying out his basic function as a local authority employee in a forthright, honest and impartial way. If I had been a member of a local authority and were employed by another, I would consider it my duty, despite my strong political views, to carry out my responsibility as an employee impartially. Why should we believe that restrictions are necessary to cover someone who is a member of a local authority and is employed by another?

Like my hon. Friends, I believe that in so far as these restrictions are necessary—I deplore them—it is far better to accept the Lords amendment than the Government's original provision. The original figure of £13,500, to which the Government clung in Committee, was unacceptable. If it had been accepted, a number of local authority employees would have been barred from carrying out any kind of democratic activity.

I am worried about the legislation because those who earn less than £19,500 are to have their activities restricted, as the Minister made clear. When I asked him how many were affected, he said that he was not in a position to reply. I do not want to criticise him personally, but I should have thought that his advisers could give a rough calculation.

Those employees earning £19,500 will incur further restrictions, to which the Minister referred. People will be caught in the net.

It is unfortunate that these restrictions are necessary, but in so far as they are necessary, they should apply to chief officers and deputy chief officers. I accept the possible need to impose a restriction on those two categories. One can argue that it is anomalous to allow a chief education officer or town clerk to be elected to serve on another local authority. I accept that argument, even if I am not wholeheartedly in favour of the restrictions. I would not go further, for the reasons which I have given. A number of people who are not chief officers or deputy chief officers and who do not occupy anything like those senior positions will be caught up in these restrictions because it will be argued that they hold politically sensitive positions such that they should not be allowed to stand for public office.

Mr. Pike: Was not the Minister himself confused about how the people caught below the £19,500 figure would be defined? It is common in many councils for members of either the controlling or opposition party to consult the officer who prepared a report on a matter about which they are not clear, even if his is not the name on the report that goes to the committee.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend is right. As I said earlier, I am still worried that some who earn less than £19,500 will be caught despite the appeal system. Such employees may find that they are in the category, and I deplore that. The Minister must be aware that anyone who earns less than £19,500 is probably not in a position of seniority.

Teachers are not included in the category. I am not in favour of including them. Indeed, I am not in favour of the Bill as it stands, let alone of extending the category. The only explanation that I can find for teachers and head teachers not being included is simply that the Government assume that the majority of teachers involved in political activities, such as being a member of a local authority, will be Conservatives. I see no other reason why one group of local government employees is included while another is not. That confirms my original view, expressed on Second Reading, that the ban or restriction is politically motivated. The Government have a deep authoritarian streak which works on the basis that the people whom they do not like should be banned. Similarly, they decided to finish off the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils because they were Labour controlled.

If there are to be restrictions on election to another local authority, they should not include canvassing for a political party or holding office in a party. Hence the Opposition amendment. It is crazy that a citizen of our country should be prevented from being elected as treasurer to his local Labour or Conservative ward. Is it really suggested that a person who comes within a politically sensitive category may not carry out his functions because he is a member of a local political party, goes to its annual general meeting, and has been elected as treasurer, secretary or chair of the ward, or because he canvasses?

I do not know the view of the Minister or of his hon. Friends, but, as a democrat, my view is that the more people are involved in political and democratic activities the better. In my party, and quite likely in the Conservative party, we usually moan that too few people are willing to carry out such chores. Yet the Government say, "If you are employed by a local authority and you come within a politically sensitive category, you are not allowed even to canvass".

Like so many other Bills, this Bill in anti-democratic. I regret the motives behind the Bill and the fact that the Government have not shifted further. They have removed the figure of £13,500 only because they have taken into account the arguments advanced in another place and the possibility of an action in the European Court of Human Rights. Our amendment would be some improvement on a bad, anti-democratic Bill, and I urge my hon. Friends to support it.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I welcome the remarks of my hon. Friend the Minister. He made a proper distinction between elected councillors and officers of a council. Too much and too often recently the line dividing the work of councillors and of council officers has become blurred. Full-time employees of one authority elected to another have been allowed to spend almost all their office hours on politics. There should be a distinction between councillors who are elected to lay down a local authority's policy and officers who are employed to carry it out. The Labour party, both locally and nationally, seems to believe that councillors should work full time and direct the minutiae of council policy. I disagree. It is for council officers to carry out the policy laid down by councillors and the Lords amendment will ensure that that happens.

It must be seriously wrong for council chairmen to have political assistants. In Ealing, each committee chairman has a personal assistant who is effectively a political assistant. Many think that the chairman's aide is there to make sure that the chairman does what the party wants him to do.

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: No.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman has made a speech. I have only just begun.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: No, I am not giving way.

Mr. Banks: Chicken.

Mr. Greenway: Chicken is almost a non-parliamentary word.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: No. I have not yet made my point.

Mr. Soley *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I call Mr. Greenway.

Mr. Greenway: I am simply saying that it is absurd and wrong for chairmen of local authority committees to have personal assistants who are really politicians at the behest of the local Left-wing hierarchy, in the case of Ealing, to see that he does what the hierarchy wishes. I am not saying that it is corrupt.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: In Ealing, between eight and 13 Labour councillors would certainly have been caught by the £13,500 cut-off and prevented them from standing for re-election—in which they would probably have been unsuccessful—to Ealing council next year because they are employees of other authorities. There is political unfairness in the way in which councillors who are employees of other authorities operate. In many cases they seem to be given leave by the council employers to work full time on council work in Ealing.

Thirty years ago I was at the Oxford university settlement in Bethnal Green. Poplar councillors were employed by Stepney council, Stepney councillors were employed by Bethnal Green council, Bethnal Green councillors were employed by Poplar council, and so on. In effect, the councillors worked full time in politics. That was grossly absurd because the Labour party had 100 per cent. control of each council.

Mr. Lofthouse: The hon. Gentleman will have noticed that the Minister has eight personal advisers in the Box. Does he agree that there are quite a few distinguished hon. Members who have been politically active while employed by local government and who would never have been able to become Members of Parliament under this legislation? Does the Minister also agree that local government officers are as honourable as headmasters of schools who are politically active?

6.30 pm

Mr. Greenway: I know that the hon. Gentleman is an honourable man and his comment is interesting. However, the Minister's advisers are not apparatchiks in the same way as the political or personal assistants to Ealing council chairmen, to whom I have referred—or at least they do not look like apparatchiks. I was prevented from becoming a councillor when I was a young teacher, although I would have liked to have been one, because teachers were not then allowed to stand for election to their local authority, and they are not allowed now.

Mr. Maxton: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: No, because I want to be brief.

Some councils are thought to appoint officers whom they believe will drive through a political point of view in their work as council officers. That is a serious problem because, like civil servants, council officers should not drive through political objectives for themselves. They should drive through policy objectives laid down by the council and should not pursue their own political aims, so they should never be appointed for such reasons. The Bill will help to ensure that that does not happen.

Another problem is that some local government officers who speak to the media are in a sensitive position, as my hon. Friend the Minister said. It can soon happen that information put out to the media, electors, ratepayers or community charge payers becomes propaganda. It is right to ensure that anybody who deals with the media or who distributes information from councils is above reproach in political terms.

I say that with particular feeling because a magazine called "Voices", which is a highly political document, has been produced in Ealing, financed by the ratepayers of Ealing. It is wrong because it is merely Socialist propaganda. The leaflet that Ealing council produced on the community charge—and presumably it was produced by officers with access to the media—was incorrectly called "Poll Tax Information", and was highly prejudiced political propaganda. The amendments will rightly stop that. If people do not have the self-restraint or integrity to stop such practices themselves, it is right—although sad—that Parliament should do so for them.

Council officers must be appointed on merit, regardless of political beliefs, sex, or ethnic background, but it is clear that that is not always the case. The Bill will ensure that such corruption ceases. Many of us are sorry that the Government have raised the cut-off point from £13,500 to £19,500, although we understand their reasons. Many of us fear that many council officers below the level of £19,500 will slip through the net into political activity and it will be important to ensure that they do not. However, I honour local government employees in general for the marvellous work that they do.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) expressed concern that press officers in particular, who are responsible for issuing information, may become involved in issuing party propaganda. Will the hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to intervene and to say whether he thinks that Mr. Bernard Ingham is beyond political reproach for the way in which he issues information on behalf of the Prime Minister's Office? Time and again the information he has issued has been pure political propaganda. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us whether he thinks that Mr. Bernard Ingham is above reproach in terms of allowing political propaganda to interfere with his work as press officer for the Prime Minister's Office? The hon. Gentleman seems to be remaining in a sedentary position because he knows what the truth is.

Mr. Greenway: The Opposition make so many attacks on that gentleman that they have lost all credibility.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman obviously has no defence to offer for that individual.

I welcome the concessions in Lords amendment No. 3 and the change in salary level from £13,500 to £19,500. I also welcome the Minister's assurance that he will recommend the amendment to the House. I was interested to hear what the Minister said about politically sensitive posts remaining under the salary level of £19,500. I remember that in Committee the Minister who was then responsible for the Bill and who has now moved on to pastures new as Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food went to great lengths to try to justify the figure of £13,500. He gave the Committee two examples of high salary earners and low salary earners who would be affected. For his example of a low salary earner, he referred to a council officer in his own constituency who was responsible for allocating houses in the area. The Minister said:

> "It is important that he should not have political affiliations because his decisions must be clearly seen to be on the basis of priority . . . When decisions have to be taken and advice given to the authority about allocation, it is easier if the political affiliations of the person taking that decision are not known. He cannot then be accused of favouring someone who has a housing priority, even if they have the same political affiliations."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 7 March 1989; c. 188.]

It seemed a strange principle to apply. The Minister seemed to be saying that it was unacceptable for an officer to allocate houses and at the same time to have open political affiliations, but that it was wholly acceptable to do so if those political affiliations remained secret. It seemed that if the people in a particular area did not know what was going on, they had no need to worry. That has a masonic ring, and I hope that the Minister does not extend that principle.

Will the Minister tell us whether council officers who are responsible for allocating houses will continue to be regarded as being in politically restricted posts, as the former Minister suggested they should be? Their salary level will be well below £19,500, so it is important that the Minister clarifies whether such officers will be affected by the politically restricted posts legislation.

I was interested to hear the Minister say that the reason for the Bill was the extent of the abuses which had brought the whole system of local government into disrepute, and that point was made many times in Committee. If such abuses exist, they are alleged to exist only in England and Wales, and have never existed in Scotland to my knowledge. In Committee, I tabled an amendment that sought to exempt Scotland from the effects of the provision. Twin tracking has never been a concern in Scotland. I and my hon. Friends believe that and Widdicombe said that the traditional practices survive more readily in Scotland than in England or Wales.

The research study upon which Widdicombe was based said that

"the professional adviser model of officer-member relations remains dominant in Scottish local government".

The research study also pointed out:

"Councillors expect, seek and generally receive"

politically neutral advice and said that, in general, relationships in Scotland are satisfactory and in no need of legislation such as this. The Government are trying to apply a remedy for a perceived disease in England and Wales and they have no basis for arguing that that remedy should also apply in Scotland. That is why I should have been pleased had Scotland not been included in the Bill.

If anything, Scotland suffers from the opposite of the problem with which the Bill seeks to deal. We suffer not as a result of council officers' openly saying where their political affiliation lies but from officers not telling us where their affiliation lies, especially when that affiliation interferes with the advice that they give to elected councillors. I cite the case of compulsory competitive tendering because it has recently caused anger in my own area, the Tayside regional council area, where a contract was lost to an outside tenderer. Everyone who has been involved in the process has said that, if the in-house tenderer is to win, it is most important that elected members' trade unions representing the work force and council officers work closely together and show the same commitment to winning the contract. Council officers do not say what their political affiliation is but often by their actions and by failing to show such commitment, they undermine the in-house tender and make it possible for the contract to go to an outsider tenderer. That often happens without our being told the real political affiliation of the council officers and whether that affiliation is interfering with the advice that they give to the elected representatives.

Some other council officers will remain caught by the politically restricted posts provisions. They include press officers. Press officers are professional council officers and they act in a wholly professional manner. They impart information concerning democratically reached council decisions, publicise statements made by elected conveners on council committees, and so on. The Government have decided to reward them for doing a thoroughly professional job by designating press officer a politically restricted post and disallowing press officers from standing for political office or taking part in political activity—even from canvassing or taking part in the democratic process in any way.

Our amendment (c) to Lords amendment No. 3, on which we shall divide the House, would at least restore some democratic rights to council officers. It is important that those Conservative Members who take these matters seriously should vote with the Opposition. After all, we are dealing with a serious infringement of civil liberties.

The Minister said that the Lords amendments represented a sensible and fair approach on the part of the Government. Although it is true that the Government are taking a more sensible and fair approach than they did in Committee, the principle of politically restricted posts remains deeply objectionable on democratic grounds. I remind the Minister that, perhaps for very good reasons, Germany introduced the concept of politically restricted posts in the aftermath of the second world war. The Germans tried to exclude from public service those extremists who were opposed to the constitution and to the very notion of public service. They did that to deal with the Nazi party and its supporters. Unfortunately, in practice, Berufsverbot has been used not against Nazis but against those who subscribe to Left-wing ideologies. Since 1972, there have been 3½ million political screenings in Germany, several thousands of hearings and 1,250 rejections of applicants for jobs in the public service. There have also been 300 forced retirements. The orginal concept of Berufsverbot has been abused for political ends just as the principle of politically restricted posts will be open to abuse for political ends. It should be opposed, and the House should accept the amendments tabled by my hon. Friends.

Mr. Tony Banks: There has been more than the usual whiff of hypocrisy on the Conservative Benches this evening. The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) talked about propaganda. It comes ill from the Conservative party these days to talk about information as propaganda or propaganda as information, given the publications that now emerge from the Ministries almost daily. The last one that I saw was published by the Central Office of Information and dealt with the Conservative Government's approach to South Africa. It was printed in blue and there was a picture of the Prime Minister on every single page. That is the sort of publication that we believe should be paid for by Conservative Central Office and not by the hard-pressed taxpayer, but the hon. Member for Ealing, North would never say that.

6.45 pm

Much of the information that the Government publish about privatisation—at a cost of about £150 million of taxpayers' money—in so-called public information schemes is no more than propaganda to advance the Conservative party's cause. We do not need lectures from the hon. Member for Ealing, North about propaganda and information because the Government are past masters at squandering taxpayers' money to push the Government's cause. It will do them no good because the public see through these thinly disguised activities and will boot them from office in the next couple of years or so.

Let me say to the Minister, however, that I welcome his appointment. Perhaps he will take my congratulations to cover next week's ministerial reshuffle as well, as that will save me from repeating myself.

In Committee, I made it clear that I was not in favour of twin tracking. I speak as one who was in local authority service as an elected member for 16 years. But the principle that we are discussing goes much further than twin tracking. I objected to twin tracking not so much because I was concerned about whether the advice given would be impartial but because of the pressure of time on the individual concerned.

My solution was to suggest that if we approached local government responsibilities seriously and remunerated councillors so that they were not required to seek jobs with other local authorities—which might be broadly sympathetic because of the sacrifices that councillors have to make—we might prevent it from happening. It is difficult to get a job or hold a job when one is acting as a councillor, but if we were prepared to admit that we have local government on the cheap and to make positive suggestions about remunerating councillors, the twin tracking that occurs in some parts of England and Wales would cease to exist.

The Bill goes much further, however. We are talking about placing restrictions on low-level political activity such as canvassing or holding political office. The Minister spoke as though political activity and involvement with a political party were in some way criminal. If that is so, this is a home for recidivists. I do not understand how the Minister can say that being involved in cavassing or holding political office disbars someone from being an effective local government officer. That person is not in the same position as someone who works for one local authority and advises another.

As I understand it, Conservative Members would argue —I do not accept the argument—that public confidence is diminished if people receive advice from or make contact with a supposedly impartial council officer knowing that that officer is also an active member of a political party working on or representing another council somewhere else. One can almost go along with that argument a little way in the case of twin tracking, but canvassing and holding political office are completely different matters. The political activist does those things in the area in which he or she lives and not in the area in which he or she works. There is no reason why anyone who meets a political activist on the doorstep or within the local party should have their feelings about the local authority diminished, because that is not the same local authority. It is another local authority. Obviously if a council officer were canvassing and held a political office in the area where he or she worked, there might be something in it. However, the proposals in the Bill amount to an attack on the democratic civil rights of thousands of local government officers around the country. The proposal goes too far. The Minister has said that the matter will be reconsidered, but I want to know what he intends to do.

With regard to holding office, the consultative paper states:

> "The concept of 'holding office' seems sufficiently self-explanatory not to need any special definition."

That is not so. Does it really include being the social secretary? If one holds that office, is one excluded from being a councillor? Would the organiser of the revolutionary jumble sales that we have from time to time in the Labour party be excluded? In my constituency there is a premises officer and an assistant premises officer. If they happen to work for another local authority, will they be excluded?

The proposal really is a reduction to the absurd, as the Minister said. I am not reducing it to the absurd; the Minister is doing that by accepting the absurdity that

> "The concept of 'holding office' seems sufficiently self-explanatory not to need any special definition."

We need a definition or the concept will be so imprecise as to be meaningless.

The consultative document also states:

> "Canvassing seems sufficiently self-explanatory not to require a special definition."

I am beginning to get the feeling that, because it was too difficult for the people who drew up the draft code to provide any definitions, they decided that everything was self-explanatory. That is a rather neat way of surmounting the problem.

In many cases canvassing is an anonymous activity. I try to make it as anonymous as I possibly can when I am canvassing in the London borough of Newham. I must be honest about it, I do not like canvassing for myself. I do not like trying to sell myself from door to door like a suitcase full of Kleenezee brushes. However, I find many ready takers. I normally knock on the door and say, "Excuse me, very sorry to disturb you, but I am from Newham, North-West Labour party. I hope you will be voting Labour in the next election." If I am asked, "Are you Tony Banks?" I look at them very carefully and decide whether the question is asked in an amicable or a hostile fashion and either admit it or deny it according to the circumstances.

Canvassing is an anonymous activity. People are not going to say, "Hang on. I know you. You work for the local authority down the road. My God, what are you doing canvassing for the Conservative party or the Labour party?" It is absurd to include canvassing and holding political office as activities that will carry disqualification.

What will happen if someone continues to act in this way? The Bill states:

> "It will be included in contractual terms."

If someone grasses on the person who comes round canvassing or is organising the jumble sale or the bring-and-buy down the local Conservative association or Labour party office to the employer—the local authority —will that person face dismissal? That must be spelt out. This proposal goes much further than the concept in Committee. It is an attack on people's civil and political rights who are trying to organise within a political party.

If our democracy means anything and if political parties are in any way supportive of our democracy—some might argue that they are not, but I assume that all hon. Members would argue that they are—anything that limits people's involvement at even the most humble level in political parties should be rejected out of hand in this House, of all places.

Mr. David Hunt *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Does the Minister have the leave of the House to speak again? *[Interruption.]* It seems that he has.

Mr. David Hunt: I was listening to the debate and I was enjoying it. However, from time to time I had to remind myself that we are debating the acceptance of Lords amendments which are the product of all-party agreement. I had to remind myself of that as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was speaking. I have made a pledge not to be critical of him because he paid me such a fulsome tribute. It was so fulsome that I cannot remember exactly what he said—I was in a state of shock.

This has been an interesting debate on a very important subject. The hon. Member for Dundee, East Mr. McAllion) should not claim that the proposal should not apply to Scotland. He should listen to his hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) who said that it would be wrong for a chief executive of a council to be a councillor on another council. It just so happens that the chief executive of Clydebank district council is a member of Glasgow district council.

Mr. Maxton: And he does a very good job in both posts.

Mr. Hunt: I am sure that he does, but we are laying down the guidelines on how he can best carry out his duties in future. Therefore, the restrictions should apply to Scotland as much as to the rest of the United Kingdom.

In response to the hon. Member for Walsall, North, I can state that the criteria for political sensitivity applies to those who regularly advise council committees and sub committees, not those who may offer advice to individual councillors. With regard to other members of staff, what matters is who personally puts the advice to the committee. If a chief officer is assisted, but takes responsibility for the advice, the assistant is not regularly advising the committee. If the junior officer takes responsibility for the advice, he or she will be restricted.

There are already provisions in education legislation to restrict the professional activities of teachers in political areas.

Mr. Maxton: I do not know whether that is true in England and Wales, because I am not an expert. However, someone employed as a teacher in Scotland by the regional council is quite entitled to stand as a district councillor on the tier below that.

Mr. Hunt: I have just said that teachers are not dealt with in the Bill, because there are already provisions in education legislation to restrict their professional activities.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North referred to treasurers of political parties. Since 1948 that has been regarded as incompatible with being a senior civil servant. I remind the House that these provisions would come as no surprise to the vast majority of public servants in local government, because our proposal is a code of conduct to which they already subscribe. We are dealing with a very small minority of people who may feel that they are caught by the provisions.

With regard to Ministers' advisers, I must state that I am honoured to be so well served by some of the highest calibre civil servants who give me just as much loyal and impartial advice as they gave to members of the last Labour Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) was right to stress the inadequacies of Socialist propaganda on the rates. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West did not try to justify that propaganda; he tried to show that other political parties tried to put forward political propaganda. While I do not accept the correctness of anything that the hon. Member said, he is talking to the same subject. It is wrong to have party political propaganda either funded on the rates or from people who are normally associated with the impartial activities of a local council.

Mr. Soley: May I have a commitment from the Minister? He is a Minister in the Department of the Environment, and it has been admitted in the background papers that the expenditure of £21 million by the water boards was designed to help privatisation. Given that the Minister has said that that is unacceptable, will he resign?

Mr. Hunt: No. That was to explain the importance of the measure, and it was in accordance with Government policy. If Opposition Members were reasonable, they would understand that we are talking about official council policy and official Government policy as opposed to party political propaganda.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister is demonstrating how difficult it is to make an acceptable distinction between information and propaganda. Politicians are deciding that the Government are putting out information and that local authorities are putting out propaganda. That is the problem. There is no objective assessment. Unless the Minister can come up with an acceptable and objective way of determining what is propaganda and what is information, he is simply interfering in a party political way in the affairs of local authorities.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman must trust the fair-minded people, such as myself, who are Ministers in the Government.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): We are getting to the nub of the matter. Many people in local government fear that, although there may have been some all-party compromise rather than agreement in the other place, everyone is not necessarily talking about the same thing—they may think that they are, but they may not be. Will the Minister elaborate on future progress in defining some of the things that he promises and what opportunity there may be to review and reflect in future?

7 pm

Mr. Hunt: I readily respond. It has been an interesting debate, and I shall carefully consider the points that have been made.

To return to the all-party approach which characterised the start of the debate, the Lords amendments are the product of compromise and agreement between the Opposition and the Government. That they must now work effectively must be agreed. That is why we have gone out to consultation, and that is why, before we bring forward the regulations, we shall carefully consider all the points that have been made and listen to further representations that hon. Members may wish to make. We are determined to ensure that the product of these amendments is put into good law and that everyone knows exactly where he stands.

Amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 1 negatived.

Lords amendment No. 1 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 2 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 3, line 29, at end insert—

"(1A) It shall be the duty of every local authority to prepare and maintain a list of such of the following posts under the authority, namely—

(a) the full time posts the annual rate of remuneration in respect of which is or exceeds £19,500 or such higher amount as may be specified in or determined under regulations made by the Secretary of State;

(b) the part time posts the annual rate of remuneration in respect of which would be or exceed that amount if they were full time posts in respect of which remuneration were paid at the same rate as for the part time post; and

(c) posts not falling within paragraph (a) or (b) above the duties of which appear to the authority to fall within subsection (3) below,

as are not posts for the time being exempted under section *(grant and supervision of exemptions from political restriction)* below, posts for the time being listed under section 100G(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 or section 50G(2) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 or posts of a description specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this subsection"

Read a Second time.

Amendment proposed to the Lords amendment: (c), in line 21, at end insert—

'(1B) No regulations issued under section 1(5) above in respect of a post in a list prepared and maintained under subsection (1A) above, or in respect of a post falling within subsection (1)(f) above, shall prohibit a person holding such a post from endeavouring to persuade any person to give, or dissuade any person from giving, his vote for any candidate, whether as an elector or a proxy at any election.'.—*[Mr. Blunkett.]*

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 203, Noes 283.

[Division No. [illegible]] [7.2 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*

Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alistair Goodlad and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment No. 3 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 4 to 7 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 8 and 9 agreed to.—[Special Entry.]

Clause 11

CONFIDENTIALITY OF STAFF RECORDS

Lords amendment: No. 10, in page 16, line 18, leave out "Subject to subsection (3) below".

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 11. *[Interruption.]* Order. There is a great deal of noise in the Chamber and we are considering amendments that are extremely complex and difficult for hon. Members to follow. Would those hon. Members who wish to hold conversations do so elsewhere?

7.15 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The amendments are important because they relate to a significant number of local authority staff and deal with the confidentiality of staff salary records. We are pleased that the amendments that have been pressed in both this House and in another place have been accepted by the Government because they mean a great deal to a lot of people.

I should like to put one point to the Minister arising from the debate in their Lordships' House. It was decided that a working party would be established consisting of civil servants in the Department of the Environment and officers of the local authority associations to try to work out a proper formula about how the confidentiality provisions would apply both in total and in general.

We have been given to understand that the working party has yet to be established. If an amicable arrangement cannot be agreed with officers of the Department of the Environment and local authority associations, before any action is taken on the proposals, can the matter be brought back to the House for a general discussion? There may be contentions or difficulties to resolve.

This involvement is far-reaching. That is borne out by the way in which the Government have accepted the amendments that have been submitted. The Opposition parties deserve congratulations for the way in which they have pressed these amendments. If the working party cannot reach an agreement with the various officers, no action should be taken until we have had an opportunity to discuss it in the House. I ask the Minister to give that request his careful consideration.

Mr. David Hunt: The amendment provides that protection of personal information under clause 11 for employees of local authorities and certain other bodies at the time of audit should be extended to information about gross pay and benefits. As amended, the Bill provides that no information about employees will be available for public inspection at that time.

As my noble Friend Lord Hesketh made clear during consideration of the amendments on Report in another place, we remain of the view that it is important to get the right balance between public accountability and personal privacy.

No departmental officials are involved here. The issue is being considered by the Audit Commission and by the local authority associations. Together they are examining the system of public inspection at the time of audit.

I understand that the working party has already been established but, in view of the doubt that the hon. Gentleman has expressed, I shall check that information immediately after I leave the Chamber.

I understand that the working party will publish its recommendations, which will then be open to comment. I should like to make it absolutely clear that we will then wish to consider any recommendations that it makes. I cannot go further than that. In the meantime, we recognise that no information about local authorities' employees will be open to abuse and, for that reason, we accept the amendment.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister says that the working party is in place and I accept that. If its report is published for consultation, I am prepared to accept the assurances given by the Minister. We look forward to obtaining the report.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 11 and 514, to 553 agreed to.

Schedule 11

ENACTMENTS REPEALED

Lords amendment: No. 554, in page 219, line 18, column 3, at end insert—

"In section 177, subsection (2A) and in subsection (3), the words "(but not for the purposes of subsection (2A) above)".
Section 177A.
In section 178, in subsection (1), the words "and 177A"."

Read a Second time.

Amendments made to the Lords amendment: (a), in line 5, at end add 'and subsection (5)'.

(b), in page 223, line 4, at end insert—

'1988 c. 4.	The Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988.	In Schedule 6, in paragraph 10, sub-paragraphs (6) and (7).'.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Lords amendment No. 554, as amended, agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 555 to 581, 583 to 601 and 603 to 606 agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Clause 132

SCOTTISH NON-DOMESTIC RATES: INTERIM PROVISIONS

Lords amendment: No. 256, in page 118, line 29, after "value" insert

"or, where a rateable value has been prescribed or determined in respect of the lands and heritages under section 128 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, according to that rateable value"

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, we may discuss Lords amendments Nos. 257 to 264, 328, 329, 330 and amendments (a) to (f) thereto, 331 to 371, 372 and amendments (a) to (d) thereto, 373 to 399, 400 and Government amendment (a) thereto and 401 to 424.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is not our responsibility to challenge the grouping of amendments, but some of these relate expressly to Scotland. Am I right in understanding that a Scottish Office Minister may move those amendments separately, if he should manage to catch your eye? Will those amendments that relate to Scotland be moved by a Scottish Office Minister?

Madam Deputy Speaker: If a Minister seeks to catch my eye, I will call that Minister.

Mr. Douglas: Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sorry, but will the Secretary of State make it clear that he is not grouping these amendments to move them collectively and that the amendments relating to Scotland will be moved by a Scottish Office Minister?

Mr. Patten: Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We intend to give my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland the opportunity to speak during the debate, if that is agreeable to the House. I think that a Scottish spokesman from the Opposition Front Bench will also intervene—in fact I know now that that will happen. I am sure that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) and other hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies will want to have a say. I hope that is acceptable to the House.

Mr. Blunkett: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I should like it to be made clear that we are taking this whole group of amendments together, and that they can be moved and debated as one.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I can clear the air on that I am sure. We are dealing with the group of amendments beginning with No. 256, which is the lead amendment and which the Secretary of State is currently moving.

Mr. Douglas: On a point or order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I correct my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett)? My understanding is that the amendments will not be moved and debated as one, but that the amendments relating to Scotland will be moved separately. Can I be clear about that?

Mr. Patten: I understand that it has been agreed, in the normal fashion, that I should move that this House agrees with Lords amendment No. 256 and that we should then discuss with it a group of amendments including some that affect Scotland. Because some of the amendments affect Scotland, there will be interventions from appropriate spokesmen on both sides of the House. At the end of the debate, with the leave of the House, I shall wind up for the Government and someone—I am not quite sure who—will wind up for the Opposition. I hope that that will take proper account of the legitimate Scottish interest in the business before us.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Secretary Patten on Lords amendment 256.

Mr. Patten: The amendments that we are now considering deal with issues that relate to the introduction of a new system of local government finance for next year. They are grouped together for discussion because I am sure that the House will wish to spend substantial time discussing the main issue that arises from them—the introduction of the transitional relief scheme.

There are bound to be areas and individuals who gain or lose from any substantial change to the system of local government finance or a comparable revenue raising system. As I understand it, that is the problem which is causing the Labour party further to sophisticate its two-tax policy for local government finance.

Under the existing system of domestic rates, many people have been unfairly treated. One thinks straightaway of single pensioner households, widows, single-parent families, and all those on the lowest incomes. They will almost all be better off as a result of the new system.

I shall spend a few minutes explaining to the House how we intend to ensure a smooth transition to the new system for those areas and groups of people who will, to some extent, be worse off. We propose two measures to help such areas. The area safety net was specifically introduced for that purpose. It provides that average ratepayers will lose no more than 50p a week on a comparison with their rate bill this year, increased by the GDP deflator of 4 per cent. We have now decided that the safety net will be abolished after the first year, but in the succeeding three years protection for those areas will be paid for by the Exchequer. The cost will amount to more than £600 million during that period. In addition, we are providing nearly £100 million next year to help areas with particularly low rateable values. That relief will be phased out over the same period as the general relief for areas.

7.30 pm

It is important to remember that individuals in those areas received subsidy from other areas regardless of their own level of income. That has never been a fair way of distributing grant and it is right to abolish it. The Government have always recognised, however, that it was important to cushion the effects on those areas that would lose out as a result. That is the effect of our proposals.

Protection for those areas will not ensure that all those individuals who need help receive it. That is why we are ensuring that the new system of rebates for the community charge will be more generous than that provided for under the old domestic rating system. The rate at which rebates will be withdrawn will be 15p for every pound of extra income instead of 20p for every pound under the rates. The cost of rebates in Britain next year, including uprating of income support to help pay community charge bills, will be of the order of £2·5 billion and more than one in four adults are expected to benefit as a result. By any standards that represents a generous level of help for those in need.

It would not be right to build permanently into the system yet more protection, but I recognise that many individuals whose earnings are above the rebate level could face substantial increases in bills unless they are given special protection. That is why we are introducing the transitional relief scheme.

The first question to be answered is how one decides who should receive help. I do not believe that it would be right to include all first-time payers. The whole point of the introduction of the new system is that almost everyone should make a contribution towards the cost of local government. Arguably those who have not yet contributed should have been contributing all along.

[Mr. Patten]

local government. Arguably those who have not yet contributed should have been contributing all along.

It would also be wrong to protect individuals from the consequences of overspending by their local councils. The remedy for that lies in the ballot box. I recognise, however, that a move from a system based on rateable values to one based on adults means that some people living in low rateable value properties may find themselves worse off. It is those people that the new relief scheme is intended to help. We also thought it right to go somewhat further than that. We believe that disabled people and pensioners who are not paying rates deserve special help. We have therefore decided that first-time payers who are pensioners or are disabled will also qualify for the scheme. If they are already ratepayers, of course, they will receive help in the normal way. In total, the transitional relief scheme should help about 6 million

The second question to answer is how one defines the floor and the ceiling for protection. In one sense it is unfair to use this year's rate bill as the floor. We all know that were the rating system to continue almost everyone's rate bill would have been higher. In that sense they all would have been losers. None the less, we thought it right to be generous in providing help for the new system, so we are defining the floor for protection as this year's rate bill.

Mr. Soley: It is an open secret that the Secretary of State did not like the poll tax and I suspect that that was because he knew that it was unfair in the way in which it hit people. The point about rates is equally unfair because he knows that, over the years, the Government have cut £28 billion from the rate support grant. If the Secretary of State intends to argue that this year's rate bill should be the floor, surely, by his own previous arguments, he should accept that the way in which to give relief should be based on need by assessment rather than through the blanket approach that he has now adopted. That approach will leave many people worse off.

Mr. Patten: There are two important ways in which to deal with need. The first is through the rebate system and that is why I am pleased that the rebate system for the community charge is more generous than that for domestic rating. The second method is to look at the particular problems that arise because of a change from a system based upon rateable values to one based upon adults. That does throw up particular difficulties in low rateable value properties, as I have already explained. The interim relief scheme is designed to assist in solving such problems.

I think it improbable in the new model Labour party, which is substantially committed to the standards of fiscal rectitude trooped by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), that it would decide that the only way in which to be fair to local authorities would be to add £28 billion to what they are spending and consider that that was the right starting point. I have read —I dare say I am one of the few people who have done so—

"Meet the Challenge: Make the Change"

and I have seen what it says about the importance of bearing down on overspending. I find it difficult to understand why those views about overspending never seem to apply to local authorities, but to the Ministry of Defence alone. During the time that I hope to spend in my job I look forward to learning more about the Labour party's views on controlling local expenditure.

Mr. Soley: Let me help the Secretary of State get out of his misery. He knows that the Labour party's alternative has not only been warmly welcomed by all—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes, that is right. It has been warmly welcomed by specialist local government groups, especially those concerned with finance. Our proposal operates in almost every other advanced democracy and it is recognised that it not only gives more flexibility to local authorities in the way in which they raise their expenditure, but deals with the issue of fairness. The Secretary of State cannot bring himself to face that issue. When he took on the job he knew that the Government's proposals were unfair, but he still took that job on and he is still doing his lady's bidding.

Mr. Patten: I believe that the community charge is incomparably fairer than the domestic rating system. If any Secretary of State stood at this Dispatch Box and tried to argue, with a straight face, that we should base the way in which local revenue is raised on notional rental values 16 years out of date—*[Interruption.]* That is what the domestic rating system amounts to. I am describing the present system.

If the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) believes that the policy left behind by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is still the policy of the Labour party he should have a word with the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). I am not absolutely convinced that the hon. Member for Dagenham, who is extremely bright and sensible, has quite the same idea. It was the constituency Labour party from Dagenham that tabled a motion at the Labour party conference to say that the Labour party's proposals were electorally and administratively unacceptable. I predict that the Labour party will be back with a new Mandelson-proof scheme as an alternative to domestic rates in a few months' time. We will then be delighted to provide exemplifications on that alternative as well. I believe that there are some Opposition Members who secretly wish that their party had never abandoned its commitment to the domestic rating system.

Mr. Douglas *indicated assent.*

Mr. Patten: I note that there is one on the Opposition Benches. We are exposing one or two fractures in the carapace of the Opposition's position.

I shall move on in this spirit of convivial agreement. At least most of us are agreed—with one exception, and I am prepared to listen to more views—that none of us believes that we should continue with the domestic rating system. *[Interruption.]* I am not sure if one or two hon. Members disagree.

Mr. Douglas: I shall make my own speech.

Mr. Patten: We do not have unanimity, but we are approaching it. The alternatives on offer will be closely examined by the electorate at the next general election. I am sure that the Labour party will want to bring forward its proposals as soon as possible so that they can be subject to political debate and examination by the constituency Labour party in Dagenham and elsewhere.

We were talking about the definition of the floor for protection and I said that we were taking that as this year's rate bill. However, it would be wrong to provide protection for any level of spending which the local authority cared to incur next year. That would simply give the green light to excessive spending locally. Having listened to what has been said, I am sure that the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer would not wish us to do so. Therefore, we are providing help to match the level of local authority spending that we have assumed for next year. That level is 11 per cent. more than the level that we assumed for this year. In no sense can that be regarded as unreasonable or ungenerous.

Obviously, there are problems in devising a scheme to smooth the transition from a system based on households to one based on individuals. In particular, there are difficulties related to houses in multiple occupation. We are talking to the local authority associations about these problems, and we have to draw a line somewhere. Inevitably, there are arguments about who should and who should not be covered by the scheme. I am confident that they can be resolved and I shall do all that I can to ensure that they are. I wish to say immediately that, regardless of the political differences between us, I hope that we can enjoy an effective working relationship with the local authority associations, because that is in the interests of good government in this country.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Secretary of State seems to accept that there are serious concerns about the problems of perming any two out of an HMO. I hope that he will accept—I am sure that he will come in for a lot of criticism if he does not—that that proposal cannot be made to work. There is no way that two individuals can be permed out of a house of multiple occupation. The real world does not work like that.

Mr. Patten: I do not accept that principle. The hon. Gentleman and others should not exaggerate the scale of the problem. It stands to reason that most of the houses in which there are likely to be a large number of residents will be high rateable value houses and are unlikely to be those that are covered by the scheme. Nevertheless, there are practical problems which will probably affect 2·5 per cent. of the total expenditure of the scheme. We want to resolve those problems. I hope that we can find some way of agreeing their resolution with the local authority associations; if not, we shall have to agree to disagree.

I am aware that it is pretty late in the day to be introducing a new system of relief. It will cause difficulties for the local authorities implementing it. However, sensible local authorities welcome this extra protection for their community charge payers. I also understand that computer houses believe that these changes do not present insuperable difficulties. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) giggles. I do not know which computer firms he has consulted. We have discussed this——

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman will let me finish I shall let him intervene.

We have discussed this matter with a number of computer firms. There are problems with bolting additional requirements on to the existing system, but we understand that computer houses believe that these changes can be made in a way that will enable us to bill at the appropriate time next year.

7.45 pm

Mr. Maxton: I wonder whether the Secretary of State has spoken to the directors of finance and the directors of computer services, particularly those in large local authorities in Scotland, where an attempt is being made to bolt this system on to an existing scheme which has been up and running for seven months. Those computers, which are already dismally failing to cope with the present position, are being asked to cope with this additional matter. I wish that the Secretary of State would talk to people in Scotland about what is happening instead of relying on software experts in private companies.

Mr. Patten: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would take it amiss if I had had discussions with computer houses in Scotland about the Scottish system. Were that the case, the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) would quite properly take exception. I was talking about discussions that we have had with computer houses in England. I am sure that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland —my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton)—and the hon. Member for Cathcart will be able to describe the discussions which are taking place in Scotland.

Mr. Douglas: Does not the Secretary of State accept that he should not necessarily be discussing the matter with computer houses, but consulting with his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who would tell him of the difficulties of trying to rejig a system and rewrite programs? In Fife people are working night and day, and trying to rejig the system at considerable cost. What additional cost has the Secretary of State for Scotland said will be incurred in trying to rejig the system?

Mr. Patten: When we proposed this scheme, we discussed it with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, with whom we are always happy to have discussions. I repeat that I think that the hon. Member for Cathcart and others would take it amiss were I to try to speak for the Scottish Office or my right hon. and learned Friend, who is well capable of speaking for himself. Therefore, I shall leave discussion of the administrative problems in Scotland to my Scottish colleagues. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for the hon. Member for Cathcart to laugh, but he knows perfectly well that if I were to try to say too much about Scotland, hon. Members would regard it as an appalling piece of lèse majesté.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware, since my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland would have advised him, that the Scottish regions do not all operate the same system, equipment, or software. Consequently, the difficulties experienced in whichever region one considers depend on which system it operates and how effective it is.

Mr. Patten: I am sure that my hon. Friend has explained, to the universal satisfaction of the Opposition, the position in Scotland. I wish that I were as well informed about the position in Scotland as is my hon. Friend. Even if I were, I would not have dared to speak for Scotland during this debate.

[Mr. Patten]

As the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West implied, the relief scheme will involve additional costs for local authorities. I assure the House that we shall meet all reasonable costs associated with its introduction. I should make it absolutely clear that I want to ensure that the scheme is a success. I have argued that point strongly in my discussions with local authority associations. We shall do everything we can to ensure that it is a success.

The principle of providing transitional protection is undoubtedly right. When domestic revaluations were carried out in 1963 and 1973, transitional relief was made available. As I have explained, the scheme will not undermine accountability because it will not provide help over and above the level of spending assumed by the Government for next year. In those circumstances, it is reasonable to recognise the need to concentrate on those likely to be most affected, and to do so without building into the system permanent protection that would undermine the accountability that is so central to the community charge.

The other Government amendments relate to technical and other improvements to the legislation setting up the new local government finance system. In particular, they refer to the transition to the business rate—I hope that one or two of my hon. Friends will speak on that matter—to certain new exemptions from the community charge and to alterations to the arrangements for the standard charge. There are also some minor amendments relating to Scotland, but with the agreement of Scottish Members I shall leave them to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland who will reply to the debate. I look forward to hearing from the hon. Member for Cathcart, from, I hope, a vertical rather than a horizontal position.

I have made my main points about the transitional relief scheme in my answers to the various interventions. The Government have put forward their alternative to domestic rates and, with some honourable exceptions, almost everyone in the House is in agreement. Our proposals for the community charge are more equitable and more sensible than domestic rating. We look forward——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I was about to perorate.

Mr. Banks: Before the Secretary of State perorates, which is a painful experience for us all, will he say something about the publicity campaign? There is nothing in the Department of the Environment paper about that, but there has been some speculation in the newspapers. How much is likely to be spent on the publicity campaign for the transitional relief scheme and the poll tax generally? Is he prepared to consult local authority associations to ensure that that publicity will be based on information rather than on Tory propaganda?

Mr. Patten: The information about the publicity campaign was given in a parliamentary answer, not leaked through a newspaper. As the hon. Gentleman knows, if one really wants to keep a secret, one should announce it in the House. However, on this occasion the information was, surprisingly, picked up by the newspapers. I saw some exemplifications—a word that I have learnt in this job—in yesterday's newspapers of what the advertising might look like. They were rather interesting commentaries on local government finance and on some of the attitudes of the Labour party. They are not the sort of advertisements that would be likely to pass the scrupulous attention of my hon. Friends and others.

It is possible both in local government and in central Government to have good and effective advertising that does not cross over any of the political parameters. We shall try to ensure that take-up of rebates for community charge payers and the take-up of the interim relief scheme are as substantial as possible. I am well aware of the interest of hon. Members on both sides of the House in the quality of that advertising. I assure them that I am also aware of the political parameters that were discussed during our previous debates.

Mr. McAllion: The Secretary of State said that the Government wanted to ensure the maximum take-up of rebates. In that case, when it became clear in Scotland that by keeping the original date thousands of people would lose out on rebates, why did Scottish Ministers refuse to extend the deadline? As a result, many thousands of pensioners were denied the right to rebates.

Mr. Patten: Almost two months were given—*[Interruption.]* It was 56 days, which by my reckoning is virtually two months. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will deal more substantially with that point in his reply. The Opposition cannot have it both ways. Sometimes we are criticised for not encouraging take-up of rebates, and at other times we are criticised for suggesting advertising and are accused of doing something politically mischievous. I hope that all those eligible for rebates will take up those rebates. That is not a desperately partisan observation. I hope that all those who are entitled to benefit from the interim relief scheme will take up that benefit. That will involve public advertising, but I am sure that we can produce advertising that will satisfy hon. Members on both sides of the House who legitimately want to help those in need.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I support the Secretary of State's suggestion that people need all the help that they can get to pay the poll tax. If anything can be done to achieve that, so much the better. Previously I have been involved with a number of organisations trying to increase take-up of benefits in other areas. People are often unaware that they can claim benefits. I hope that, while promoting his campaign, the right hon. Gentleman will try to get his colleagues in other Departments to run similar benefit take-up campaigns.

Mr. Patten: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security would take exactly the same view as I do on the take-up of benefits. At least the House appears to be moving towards agreement that, without overstepping the proper political parameters, we should advertise the rebates and the transitional interim relief so that people can get the assistance that Parliament has voted for them. We want to introduce the community charge as smoothly and as successfully as possible, and the interim relief scheme is an important element in that process. When we first announced it, the Opposition denounced it as an electoral bribe. Judging by the amendments that they have now tabled, it appears that either they do not think that it is large enough or they think that we should be spending the money in other ways.

It is a sensible and effective way of targeting help on those who need it while the community charge is being introduced, and I unreservedly commend it to the House.

Mr. Blunkett: I was remiss earlier in not welcoming the right hon. Gentleman to his new position. I hope that he has greater fortune than his predecessors—although, perhaps, promotion out of chaos might be catching. Other than the previous Secretary of State who has gone to Rip Van Winkle land in the Department of Trade and Industry, every other change in the Department of the Environment team has meant promotion.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said earlier, by anybody's description the Bill is in chaos with more than 600 amendments having been tabled. One of the Department's former team has moved to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food while another has moved to pastures new in the Department of Health. Those who have been promoted have left behind them—if my canine friend will forgive me for saying so—an absolute dog's dinner. It must be a message for the hon. Gentleman—if he makes a big mess, he could end up a contender for the premiership. I advise him to think on rapidly. Any pretence that the poll tax is acceptable or workable has disappeared. The proposals announced on 11 October and put before the House tonight reflect an admission of defeat, in respect not only of the safety net but of the poll tax. It is not the device to soften the tax but the tax itself that lies at the heart of the Government's problems.

8 pm

The Secretary of State's words tonight cannot hide what is clearly a shabby bribe—an attempt to hold on to marginal Conservative seats by using public money to cushion the impact on the electorate of a tax that it does not want. There can be no other explanation. Again and again, we have appealed to the Government to alter the implementation of the tax. Even Conservative Back Benchers pleaded for banding of the tax to help those who are worst off, but that plea too was rejected. It was only in the wake of the Labour party campaign explaining to the public what the poll tax will really mean that Government Back Benchers began worrying about its repercussions on their seats.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) remarked earlier, the Government are so worried about the effect of the poll tax in the run up to the 1990 local elections and to the next general election that they propose spending £1 million of public money in an attempt to convince everyone how good their proposals really are. I wonder whether the publicity campaign in Wales will be slightly different from that used for England. The campaign used in Scotland will certainly need to be different, because what was unacceptable to the Scots and lost the Conservatives seats there will have to be made acceptable to the English. Perhaps the Secretary of State for Wales will present his proposals more clearly. Since the leaflet drop earlier this year, the hon. Gentleman has gained a reputation for demonstrating the unanimity of the Cabinet, by devising his own means of avoiding the pitfalls of the Department of the Environment. He is probably known in the Cabinet as "Do-it-yourself Peter", because he has his own ways of ensuring that the administrative chaos facing England is modified for Wales.

Nothing that the Government say will hide the truth from the electorate. No matter how much money they spend, their proposals to tinker with the poll tax will be exposed for what they are. The resultant confusion will lead not only to greater bewilderment but frustration and anger among people who think that they are entitled to relief but discover that they are not—and among those who believed that their poll tax bills would be lower but realise that they were misled.

Local authorities throughout the country point out that the administrative chaos will be something to see. The problems of 1982, with the transfer of unified housing benefit out of the social security system, were bad enough, but the bolt-on arrangements for the computer systems will lead to considerable difficulties. Some have already been evident. During the registration procedure, 15,000 forms were lost in transit between Wickham and the Philippines. Sastec, which was given the task of transferring the registration data to magnetic tape, sent work, under competitive tendering arrangements, to the Philippines. That material was lost in transit on the return journey. Perhaps other local authorities will, in the interests of achieving the lowest possible labour and other costs, send their registration data around the world in implementing transitional arrangements. If that is done, the chaos will be even greater than envisaged.

The continuing expense and delay has been criticised again and again by not only Labour authorities but the leaders of the Conservative-controlled Association of District Councils. Councillor Thomason feels that it will be necessary to delay the dispatch of poll tax bills until May or June next year, and I understand that the Secretary of State has told the ADC that such might be necessary. Some of us remember when councillors were surcharged and disqualified for failing to implement rates bills by 1 April.

Mr. Chris Patten: For the record, and as the hon. Gentleman raised this point, it should be possible for local authorities to send out bills at the appropriate time next year. There should be no need for delay.

Mr. Blunkett: The Secretary of State must be an optimist for bringing forward such proposals in the first place. I hope that he is right, but if the bills are not out by 1 April the poorest will suffer. They will find it hardest to catch up if the system for making payments on a weekly or fortnightly basis is not immediately implemented.

When things go wrong, the Government will blame the local authorities. When the predicted chaos comes about, the Secretary of State will suggest that such was never the Government's intention and that it is not their fault.

The public will not believe them. It will be understood that by introducing complicated and difficult arrangements at a late stage, the Government and not local authorities must take the blame for the consequent difficulties.

Mr. Patten: I have no doubt that introducing the scheme late in the day will place additional burdens on local authorities, who are already hard pressed, in making an important but difficult change to the community charge. I do not doubt either that many local authority officers are working flat out to introduce the community charge as proposed and that they have shown considerable commitment and professionalism in the work that they have already done. It would be neither sensible nor helpful

[Mr. Patten]

if I or anyone else were to make the kind of charges against local authorities that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) suggested we might be inclined to make. I want to work with local authorities to implement the interim relief scheme as successfully as possible. Despite the difficulties, we should, by working with local authorities, be able to achieve that objective. However, I do not for one moment underestimate the difficulties.

Mr. Blunkett: My belief is that local authority officials will do everything possible to implement the interim proposals and to cope with the administrative difficulties that confront them. I am anxious to ensure that no one remains under any misconception about the problems facing those officers and the difficulties that they will create for the public. I am anxious to stress also that if blame is to be allocated, it is not placed at the doorstep of the individuals who are nearest to members of the public, who are confused and suffering.

The Government will determine the level of poll tax through aggregate external funding and the arrangements announced by the Secretary of State for standard assessments and specific grants. The Government have constantly got wrong their estimates of the poll tax, so it is important to spell out again that it will not be a notional or imaginary figure. Three years ago, the Government suggested that, at average levels of spending, the poll tax would be £162 per person. The figure has since risen to £278.

That notional figure does not take into account balances that cannot be repeated by being used more than once, or the fact that no authority can achieve 100 per cent. take-up—in Scotland it is estimated that there has been a 7 per cent. drop. Nor does it take into account the real rate of inflation: the 3·8 per cent. figure is only half the true rate. Even if it were to take those factors into account, however, the notional figure would be about £345.

The importance of the Government figures is that the Government have chosen to use them in the implementation of transitional relief: people will be entitled to such relief only if the figure approximates to what the Government think the local authority should be spending. The notional figures, which are obviously either below or above that level depending on the Government's assessment, will determine whether they are so entitled.

Apart from collective poll tax and standard poll tax—with the exemptions which apparently are now available to Members of Parliament—along with the rating system that will continue to holiday lettings and the non-domestic rate applying to commercial premises, there are now seven different personal poll tax levels. There is the Government's standard spending assessment—the mythical target or ready reckoner of £278 which will have to go on poll tax bills. There is the notional poll tax or settlement figure for spending at Government-approved levels, exemplified in the papers that have been produced today. There is safety-netted poll tax; transitional poll tax for ratepayers; transitional poll tax and special help for non-ratepayers; rebated poll tax; and, finally, the real level of poll tax that will be levied by authorities working in and having to cope with the real world. They will set a level of poll tax that will retain the existing level of service for the people in their areas: that is the level about which people will be concerned, and on which they will make a judgment.

Since 11 October, the myth has been peddled that no poll tax bill be more than £3 above the existing rate bill. Because of the notional figure—because of the way in which the Government are intent on blaming the local authorities—literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people who think that they are entitled to relief will find that they are not.

It is no good saying that that is because local authorities are overspenders. Conservative Members can say that if they wish, but if they do they must then condemn their own authorities. More than 90 per cent. of local authorities in England spend more than the amounts in the Government's guidelines—the new target figures that have been reintroduced. Of the authorities that spend more than 10 per cent. more than the guideline figures, 56 are Conservative and 36 Labour.

Mr. Chris Patten: May I help the hon. Gentleman? I am not sure from what he is saying whether he has misunderstood the interim relief scheme. He seems to be suggesting that, if a local authority spends more than is consistent with total standard spending nationally, the scheme will not be available to those living in that area.

Mr. Blunkett: I did not say that at all, and I would not want to imply it. What I am suggesting is that people who believe that they are entitled to relief will then find that they are not, because if spending is higher than the notional level predicted by the Government they will not be able to claim the difference between their rate bills and their poll tax bills. Many people expecting lower bills next year will be disillusioned when the bills fall through their letter boxes.

8.15 pm

I will not be diverted from my argument, however. I was saying that, of the authorities that spend more than 10 per cent. more than the assessed level, 56 are in Conservative hands, while only 36 are in Labour hands. Of the top 20 per cent. of so-called overspenders, seven are Conservative and only three Labour. The highest overspender—in terms of the assessment—is an authority that spends 210 per cent. more than the Government's guideline requires. That authority happens to be Mole Valley, the constituency of the chairman of the Conservative party.

I do not think that Conservative Members should be too quick to tell people, in the months ahead, that their local authority has disbarred them from help that they were promised. The offer of such help was illusory so it is no wonder the former Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), has moved to pastures new: Suffolk, Coastal spends 36 per cent. more than the guideline, and it will take more than irradiation to make the poll tax palatable in the right hon. Gentleman's area.

Even if the authorities conform to the Government's guidelines, however, few ratepayers will find themselves eligible for the new transitional help—those who are currently ratepayers, that is, as opposed to those receiving special help. The reason is simple: entitlement to it is dependent on a very low rateable value.

The Secretary of State said that our hearts should go out to pensioners. Mine does: it goes out to pensioners in areas such as Pendle, where a rate bill would have to be as low as £12·74 a year—not a week—to entitle them to relief. In Hyndburn, it would have to be as low as £19·92 for a single pensioner; in Barrow-in-Furness, it would have to be £41·57. In the same areas, a couple would have to have a rate bill as low as £181·48, £195·84 and £239·14 respectively.

There will be major problems in regard to pensioners and the disabled—categories who are to be offered special help—who are not ratepayers, and who are therefore clearly living with a primary ratepayer. Apart from the administrative problems, clumsiness and costliness involved in trying to sort out who is eligible and who is not, it will be difficult to identify the primary ratepayer. Although it would be easy enough to look at the list to find out who paid the bill, in many households the primary ratepayer—the person whose name appears on the list—is not necessarily the person who pays the bill.

As we have tried to point out, other members of the household effectively pay rates, in that they contribute to household expenses. Thus many people entitled to special help because of age or disability will be better off than the primary ratepayer, who will find that he is entitled to no help. People living in the same household, on the same income, will be paying different amounts of poll tax, and one householder may be entitled to help while his poorer next-door neighbour is not. People will ask each other why their poll tax bills are different. That was exactly the accusation made against the rating system by Conservative Members when they introduced the poll tax: that a pensioner could be living alone in a house next door to people who were earning and better off but could end up paying the same bill. That is exactly what will happen under the transitional arrangements. A primary ratepayer who is a pensioner living alone next door to someone who is entitled to special help will find that he or she is a great deal worse off. I can see neither the fairness nor the justice of that. That is why we reject the scheme.

The cost will be enormous. That money ought to be spent on helping to cushion the effects of the poll tax. I do not know what the word "reasonable" will mean when it comes to the administrative costs that the Government have agreed to bear. They have said that they will meet all reasonable costs. The last time those words were used, the Association of District Councils suggested that the cost of implementing the poll tax would be £200 million short of what was required. That expense will have to be met by poll tax payers and by cuts in services. There will be confusion and concern about that.

The poll tax will have a great impact on community care. We have already referred to the fact that the poll tax will hit families hard. We are worried about the transitional help that is to be made available. I hope that the Secretary of State will deal with the point—I do not believe that it divides us politically—that if 28 February is used as the cut-off date we shall disfranchise people who move house and deal a blow to people who move from one type of property to another—for example, from a hostel or a nurses' home. They will not be entitled to any help because they are not primary ratepayers; they are secondary ratepayers.

We shall also disfranchise those who are discharged from hospitals and hostels for the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped for rehabilitation in the community. All hon. Members would be horrified to find after 1 April that people who were being rehabilitated and reintegrated into the community were to be disqualified from special help because 28 February was the cut-off date. I ask the Secretary of State to examine that point again. He may not have much sympathy for those who live in houses of multiple occupation, who are not primary ratepayers and who will not get help. He may also not be worried about those who move from one household to another. However, I believe that every hon. Member will be concerned about the impact of the cut-off date on community care policies.

We welcome the additional exemptions to cover those who suffer from senile dementia, but I hope that the Secretary of State will put it on record that all sufferers from senile dementia, not just those suffering from Alzheimer's disease, will be exempted.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes.

Mr. Blunkett: I welcome that commitment unreservedly. I believe that it is a wise and sensible move. I wish that it had been made a long time ago. My Scottish colleagues will have a word or two to say about it and other issues —that steps could have been taken to help the people of Scotland but were not.

Those who cease to be exempt under any category will find that they are not entitled to relief. Given the present position—and we would not dream of starting from here —a rebate system would make much more sense than the transitional relief proposal. It would be fair, understandable and workable. Furthermore, it would be administratively simple and it could easily be implemented by 1 April. It would help those who are just outside rebate entitlement.

People are often hit by the means test which disqualifies them from obtaining any help. By changing the taper from 15p to 10p, we could bring within the rebate scheme as many as 2 million people, 500,000 of whom would be pensioners. We should help those who need help most. We should do what most people believe to be fair—help those in need. We should base help on ability to pay and we should target that help. There are excellent precedents for doing that, with which Conservative Members would agree. I rarely agree with the new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry but I have to say, although it comes hard to put it on record, that I agree with what he said in the House on 18 Aprl 1988. He said that the Government had made their rebate system more generous, and that they had targeted it very much better. He said:

> "I can think of no scheme more closely attuned to ability to pay."—[*Official Report*, 18 April 1988; Vol. 131, c. 591.]

That cannot be faulted. A rebate scheme—improved and extended by the £300 million that the then Secretary of State did not have—would help millions of people who, without that help, will be unable to meet their poll tax bills. That is why, in an effort to be constructive—not to carp and to be critical—we have tabled amendment (f) to Lords amendment No. 330.

It is important to examine again the operation of safety nets. As a result of phasing out the relief and safety net system, people such as pensioners, through no fault of their own or of the local authority, will be hit hard during the move from the first year to the second year. How can it be fair for a pensioner in, say, Guildford to make a gain of 28 per cent. in the second year of poll tax whereas a pensioner in Lewisham will lose by 69 per cent.? That is both unfair and unjust and it will be thought to be so when the scheme is implemented.

[Mr. Blunkett]

The non-domestic rate is another major bone of contention. Many of us in the north and the midlands are very concerned, not about the fact that people in the south will receive help during the transitional period but because the hard-pressed industrial and manufacturing sectors will have to bear the cost of the transition rather than the country as a whole. We believe that the transitional costs for the non-domestic sector should be met by the Government, just as they have agreed to meet the costs of personal poll tax payers during the transitional period. The 400,000 businesses that ought to gain from the revaluation changes should be allowed to enjoy the boost that they would give to economic and employment prospects, at a time when the single European market will be posing a major threat to jobs and manufacturing industry in those areas.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): The hon. Gentleman says glibly that the Government should meet those costs. Will he explain why the presonal taxpayer should meet the costs of bringing relief faster to businesses in areas that will benefit from the changes that this Government are introducing? The Labour Government never did that.

Mr. Blunkett: It is quite wrong that the unemployed, the low paid and deprived people in the north, the midlands and Wales should be made to pay for the phasing-in process. Why should industry be put at a disadvantage? Why should the relief not be made available to both personal poll tax payers and businesses? Why are the Government not prepared over a five-year period to find £2 billion to make that a reality? It would be a substantial help to those industries in the manufacturing sector. Our balance of trade might be improved if their opportunities were increased and the funds they had available for investment were increased by a reduction in rates. They shouted hard enough at me when I was the leader of a major city council. I want industries now to put the same pressure on the Government to make sure that they receive the gains to which we all agree they are entitled.

8.30 pm

At the end of the day it does not matter what we do to the transitional arrangements for personal poll tax or the national business rate, tinkering about at the edges with safety nets which allow big fish through but catch the small fish as we attempt to protect people from the worst unfairnesses of the tax. The truth is that we cannot get rid of the anomalies, the disadvantages and the dangers unless we get rid of the tax. It is no good kidding ourselves that people will be helped and assuring them that they will not feel the pain of the poll tax. In the end the tinkering will fail and people will realise what the poll tax means to them and to their families.

In one sense the answer is a little like the answer to the problems surrounding Sir Alan Walters and the former Chancellor. Tory Back Benchers have been saying, "Get rid of this tax or it will get rid of us." Our answer is the same as it was for the former Chancellor and the Prime Minister's adviser. When one goes, both will go. When the poll tax goes, it will go because we get rid of the Back Benchers who trooped throught the Lobbies and voted it in. The answer for the electorate is clear. If they want to get rid of the poll tax, they should get rid of the Government who imposed it.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): It may assist the House if I refer to the Scottish amendments which were alluded to earlier, although I shall also refer to the comments of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett).

Lords amendment No. 260 relates to the standard community charge. The Government are responding to the concerns that have been expressed in Scotland over some of the effects of the present standard community charge arrangements. I should make it quite clear at the start that many of the grievances that have been brought to our attention can be attributed directly to the decisions by local authorities. Under the present arrangements, they have had the discretion to set their standard community charge at between one and two times the personal charge. It is therefore regrettable that, with the exception of the Shetlands and the Western Isles, all Scottish local authorities set their charges at the maximum this year.

Mr. Maxton: When the Minister and the Secretary of State were establishing the level of revenue support grant to local authorities in Scotland, what multiple did they consider the local authorities would use?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Obviously the maximum which local authorities might set has to be taken into account, but we have taken that into account and we shall consider possible changes with regard to this year.

We accordingly decided that we had to alleviate the problem caused by high charges. The new proposals are designed to focus specifically on areas of hardship, leaving intact the basic principle of a flat-rate charge. They give the Secretary of State power to prescribe certain classes of property for which he will set the maximum multiplier. While we are still considering the extent to which that power should be used, we do not expect to make widespread use of it. Local authorities are very well placed to identify problem areas, and for that reason we are providing them with the power to prescribe their own classes, for which they will be able to set their own multipliers. That power will be limited by regulations, but our intention is only to restrict its use so that it does not become a means of reintroducing a form of tax based on the physical characteristics of a property.

The new powers will allow levying authorities to set different multipliers for classes in different districts in their areas—a power requested by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities with which we had a useful exchange of views. Finally, authorities are being given powers to set their multipliers at nought, a half, one and a half or two. That is in line with the powers available to authorities in England and Wales.

I should like to refer specifically to amendment No. 260 which allows the Secretary of State to prescribe certain classes of property for which he will lay down a maximum standard charge multiplier. It will also allow local authorities to determine their own classes for which they will be able to set their own multipliers. I am glad that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is in his place as he raised this matter in the summer, along with his colleagues who represent rural constituencies.

Although we have not reached a final decision on which classes should be prescribed, premises which attract a standard charge because the person who was living there has to live elsewhere either to be looked after because of age or infirmity or as a carer looking after someone else who is old and infirm will attract a multiplier of nought. Empty manses will attract a multiplier of nought, homes of prisoners will attract a multiplier of nought, and homes of full-time students who live elsewhere during term time will attract a multiplier of nought for the duration of the course. Properties which attract a standard charge because of the occupant's death will attract a multiplier of nought for six months after the death. Properties used as trial flats for housing associations will attract a multiplier of nought. That will leave scope for authorities to determine other classes. For example, they may wish to determine a class comprising properties which attract the standard charge because their owners are obliged to live elsewhere under the terms of their employment. It will be for each regional or islands authority to determine within certain prescribed limitations what additional classes will be appropriate for the circumstances of their area and what the multiplier should be for those classes.

A particular query concerns prisoners. We are proposing to use the new standard charge provisions to prescribe a class of property comprising the homes of prisoners for which a maximum standard charge multiplier of nought will be prescribed so that people in prison will not have to pay the standard charge on their former home, although they might have to continue paying in respect of a second home.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) raised the matter of rebates. The take-up has been approximately in line with expectations, with more than 1 million people, or almost one in three adults, not having to pay the full community charge. He also mentioned the feasibility of implementing the scheme in Scotland. Discussions with local authorities so far have not revealed insuperable difficulties in introducing the community charge transitional relief scheme, even in the context of a scheme which will allow retrospection for the current year. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has undertaken to reimburse local authorities for reasonable administrative costs incurred in introducing and operating the scheme. Discussions with COSLA are certainly continuing and we hope to be able to announce in the near future the details of a fair and workable scheme.

Mr. Douglas: What is on the table? What figure do the Government have in mind as a reasonable cost? What sums are they putting on the table in response to COSLA?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Obviously the exact amount that it will cost for the local authorities to carry it out is a matter for negotiation between the local authorities and the Scottish Office. But the actual costs of the scheme will be between £20 million and £30 million for this year and the next two years. I look forward to hearing the hon. Gentleman's speech later.

As for the transitional relief scheme, the hon. Member for Brightside was not fighting the principle of relief, but wanted to apply it differently. The Government recognise that the transition from domestic rates to the community charge led to significant increases in bills for some people. The proposed amendments will enable the scheme to be introduced which will provide transitional relief for former ratepayers, pensioners and the disabled whose community charge bills are significantly higher than their former rate bills.

The first amendment provides a regulation-making power which allows the Secretary of State for Scotland to provide that, where prescribed conditions are fulfilled, a person's liability to pay a personal community charge may be reduced by an amount in accordance with prescribed rules. The clause has been drafted widely so as not to prejudice the formulation of the scheme most appropriate to Scotland. It will allow comparison to be made between people's rates bills and their community charge bills, and will allow for special arrangements to be made for pensioners and disabled people. It has been drafted specifically to allow the scheme to be made retrospective in Scotland and thus be applied in respect of the financial year 1989-90. Discussions are continuing on the practicality of doing that.

We intend to use the powers to prescribe a scheme under which former ratepayers and their partners will, in the first year, lose no more than £3 a week, or £156 a year, as a result of the change from rates to the community charge, provided local authorities spend in line with the Government's assumptions. As the relief will be limited to the additional costs borne by two chargepayers, we intend to make special provision for pensioners and disabled people who would not be eligible for relief as former ratepayers or partners of former ratepayers. They will be able to apply for relief to ensure that they pay no more than £3 a week in community charge, with the same proviso. We have been discussing the precise details of the scheme with local authorities and full details will be announced as quickly as possible.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The Minister is giving the House important information that, although not ideal, will be welcomed. Will he make it clear whether he is speaking of individuals or households? Four adults paying £100 in rates may have to pay over £1,000. Will the household receive the cumulative amount or only the individual?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The point about multi-person households has already been raised. No final decision has been reached about the treatment of such households in Scotland. The hon. Member should remember that the scheme is intended to be targeted at former ratepayers. The change in their liability is not intended to provide universal relief. However, the rebate scheme will continue to link directly the community charge with the ability to pay. In most cases, the rateable value of households with three or more adults is too high to qualify its residents for relief.

The second amendment on transitional relief allows for the payment of a grant to local authorities in respect of the relief scheme. The grant may cover the revenue forgone by authorities as a result of community charges having been reduced by the relief scheme and the administrative costs to the authorities of administering and setting up the scheme. We have met with COSLA, and discussions are continuing to ensure that a fair and workable scheme is developed as quickly as possible. I hold the strong conviction that there is the will to make the scheme work and to get the funds to those concerned as quickly as possible. *[Interruption.]*

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) laughs, but about 500,000 people may benefit from such funds in Scotland. It is therefore important that it is done as quickly as possible.

The hon. Member for Brightside mentioned people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who wrote on 12 October to say that he was very relieved that we have been able to make a concession. Hon. Members will be aware of the Government's decision to extend the exemption from the community charge for people who are severely mentally impaired to include people who are impaired as a result of a degenerative brain disorder or mental illness. The changes necessary to implement the proposals will be made by regulations under existing legislation.

Mr. Douglas: Given the importance of this issue, will the hon. Gentleman say what the Government are doing to overcome some of the difficulties that occurred when previous exemptions for the severely mentally impaired were made? Will he give an undertaking that if the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped produces a leaflet to publicise the exemption, the Scottish Office will assist with its financing? What publicity does the Minister envisage to bring to the attention of the public the exemptions that will be made?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member raises a different point, about which I shall write to him. I met the chairman of the Alzheimer's Disease Society, who welcomed the steps that we are taking and asked for them to be back-dated. I am glad that we have been able to respond to that request.

Under the new definition, we are extending the definition of "severely mentally impaired", because the only people included under the current definition are people who are severely mentally impaired as a result of a brain injury or a congenital handicap. In future, others who are impaired because of a degenerative brain disorder or because of a mental illness will be included. It took some time to widen the definition of "severely mentally impaired" and to adopt a formula that would be effective and would stand the test of time. To qualify, a person must be severely mentally impaired and meet one of the qualifying conditions, such as entitlement to constant attendance allowance or severe disabled allowance. COSLA has welcomed these changes most warmly, and I hope that it has been of some assistance to report them to the House.

8.45 pm

Mr. Maxton: I do not intend to enter into the argument about whether the domesic rating system was good or not, but, whatever its faults, it was an awful lot better than the scheme that the Government came up with to replace it.

The Secretary of State attacked the domestic rating system, and whenever anyone does I put on the record a quotation that says:

> "The Government recognises that rates are far from being an ideal or popular tax. But they do have advantages. They are highly perceptible to ratepayers and they promote accountability. They are well understood, cheap to collect and very difficult to evade. They act as an incentive to the most efficient use of property. No property tax can be directly related to the ability to pay; but rate rebates, now incorporated in housing benefit, together with Supplementary Benefit, have been designed to reduce hardship. The Government have concluded and announced to Parliament that rates should remain for the foreseeable future the main source of local revenue for local government."

That quotation is from the Government's 1983 White Paper on local government financing. I hasten to add that that was after the 1983 election.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman will realise, as does every Scot, that despite what was said in 1983, the revaluation between 1983 and 1987 produced the most appalling problems for many people in Scotland. No Government, of whatever colour or complexion, could have allowed that to continue.

Mr. Maxton: Past revaluations did not cause any outcry, but there were two reasons why there was an outcry about the last revaluation. First, the Government were cutting rate support grant and, therefore, placing an increased burden on domestic rates, and, secondly, the Government gave instructions that the burden was to be switched from business rates to domestic rates. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has never understood that fact, but there are many things that the hon. Gentleman fails to understands.

When the Government got the scheme off the ground in Scotland, the Secretary of State for Scotland said, "It is almost perfect; we are almost there. The scheme will last, and it is a good scheme." A quarter of the English Bill was taken up with changes to the Scottish Act. Now, these amendments are being shoved into an English Bill that again refers to the Scottish system. The Government realise that the poll tax in Scotland is a shambles. It is not working and is an administrative mess. The computer cannot cope with the 4,000 daily changes as a result of people moving. Rebate applications made on 1 April have still received no response. People have not received the rebates to which they are entitled and the 25 per cent. in Scotland to which the Secretary of State referred has not materialised. He said that the bills would be sent out with ease. Perhaps he should speak to Bill Aitken, one of the four Conservative councillors on Glasgow district council. He has written letter after letter to Strathclyde regional council asking it to send him a bill for his poll tax. He may be daft but he wants to pay it. However, it has not sent him a bill and there are many other examples of bills that had not been sent out even by the end of October.

Some people are receiving final demand notices for the poll tax when they have not received the original bill. The system is a shambles. The unfairness of it is shown in the enormous number of people who cannot afford to pay and who have not paid even though it is now November. Therefore, the Government have been forced to rethink their attitude to the way in which the poll tax will operate in Scotland. The transitional payment recognises that the poll tax is basically an unfair tax. By introducing it, the Government have admitted that.

I shall give a short history lesson because some hon. Members may not be aware that in 1986, when the Government introduced the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Bill, there was a transitional arrangement within it. Under the Bill the rating system would be phased out at the same time as the poll tax was phased in. Rightly, the local authorities said that that administrative scheme was a nightmare and that they did not believe it could work. They said that the new scheme was difficult enough but to have to run the two side by side would be absurd. So the Government accepted the amendments that I and others tabled and on Report they withdrew the transitional arrangement.

Having talked about the abolition of the original transitional scheme, the local authorities wrote to all members of the House of Lords. In a letter dated 24 April 1987 they said:

> "This suggests the need for some form of special transitional arrangement to limit the increased payment being sought in the first year; while such a broad-brush approach should provide rather rough justice, there is a precedent for it in the arrangements which were introduced in response to the special difficulties of those rate bills which rose . . . in 1985."

The Government rejected that. It was two and a half years ago that the transitional arrangement was first suggested to the Government as a means of ensuring that payments would not be massive for those who could least afford them. It has taken the Government two and a half years to accept that it might work. The Secretary of State described COSLA as the vehicle for Labour party policy in Scotland, but it was COSLA which first suggested that scheme. Now the Government are suggesting to COSLA that it should implement it. However, it is too late. It will cause enormous administrative problems and will not be anything like as generous as the Government think.

I accept the Government's commitment that any outstanding payments will be backdated to 1 April 1989 and that anybody entitled to them will receive them. However, they will probably not receive them until after 1 April 1990. The local authorities have made it clear to the Minister that, with all their other administrative shambles, they will find it impossible to cope with this scheme as well. We will have the absurdity of final demand notices being sent out to people who after 1 April next year will have a large part of that poll tax repaid to them.

In some of the regions dominated by the absent Scottish National party—Grampian——

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Dominated?

Mr. Maxton: Some of its members are still part of the administration. That area will use warrant sales. People will have the poll tax taken off them by the sale of their property. I have never heard anything so absurd as people having their property sold around them in order to pay a bill that will be repaid to them six months later. It is nonsense and the Government know it. They should have introduced the scheme long ago.

As has been pointed out, the Secretary of State and his Ministers plucked the notional poll tax figures out of the air during the months prior to the scheme's implementation in Scotland. No one in Scotland, from finance officers or elected local government personnel, has ever managed to work out exactly how they came up with the figures, but those are the figures upon which the transitional payment will be based. Let us suppose that one receives £156 more relief than under last year's rates. In Aberdeen the notional poll tax figure is £201 but the actual figure is £301, so one must immediately add on £100. The people will not receive anything like the generous benefit that Ministers are claiming. We welcome any relief but it ought to have been introduced two and a half years ago when it was first suggested, as it would now be in operation.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Maxton: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that I am sitting down, he is in for a slightly rude shock as I have one or two other things to say.

On the standard poll tax, we welcome the changes that take out of the system elderly people who are forced to live with relatives because they are no longer capable of looking after themselves for short or long periods. They may have been pushed into having to pay a standard community charge on their house that could have been a multiple of two and upon which no rebates were allowable. We also welcome the other changes. However, they fail to recognise the basic unfairness of the tax.

In my constituency an old age pensioner couple wrote to me saying that some years ago they had been left a holiday flat in Millport on the island of Cumbrae. It has no toilet or bathroom and they have to share a toilet with the rest of the flats. In 1988-89 they paid £56 in rates. This year they are paying £540 in poll tax. They cannot afford to keep the flat on. Even if the local authority had used a multiple of one rather than two, that couple still would have had an increase in their local government bill from £56 to £270 —a massive increase, although not as large as if they had paid the poll tax.

The nonsense of the poll tax is shown by the fact that the Duke of Argyll who has a home in London can designate Inveraray castle as a holiday home and will pay the same rates as a poor person with a holiday flat in Millport or Dunoon. The same unfairness applies to the standard poll tax as to the personal poll tax. It does not take account of people's ability to pay. The Government's obsession with the poll tax has forced them to introduce a standard community charge rather than leaving second properties in the rating system, which would have made much more sense than the present proposal.

The Government have exempted those suffering from Alzheimer's disease and other degenerative disorders. It is about time that happened and we are grateful to the Government for doing that. I am sorry that the Minister of State—the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang)—is not present. On six occasions in one Scottish Question Time in February the hon. Gentleman said that it was impossible to bring these people into the system. Perhaps the generosity of the new Secretary of State for the Environment or a change in advice—I notice that there is now a new chief medical officer—have led to the exemption.

9 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) was extremely keen to achieve this change, but he believed that it had to be an effective change that would stand the test of time? We believe that we have achieved such a change.

Mr. Douglas: The Minister said that it could not be done.

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend is right. On six separate occasions in one Question Time the Minister said that it could not be done. Of course we are grateful to him and are delighted at the news. I hope that the Secretary of State will spell out the numbers involved. There seems to be a discrepancy between the press release that the Secretary of

[Mr. Maxton]

State issued in Scotland and the number of people whom we estimate suffer from Alzheimer's disease and other mental disorders.

We welcome these concessions, but there are no concessions that will get rid of the basic unfairness of the poll tax and the resulting bureaucratic nightmare in Scotland. There is only one way that we can do that—by getting rid of the poll tax completely and returning to another system. That cannot happen under the present Government. They will not give way. They are obsessed with the poll tax. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) was right when he said that the only way to get rid of the poll tax was to get rid of the Government. That will happen at the next general election, and we all look forward to it.

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State touched briefly on amendment No. 372 and amendments (a), (b) and (c) thereto, which I tabled. I hope that the brevity of my remarks will not detract from their importance. Amendments (a) and (b) are intended to extend the transitional protection to businesses paying rates before 1 April 1990 even if they move premises after that date. The Government rightly support initiative, enterprise and expansion, but this proposal is a deterrent to all three.

Denying transitional protection to businesses that move will slow the natural progress of successful smaller businesses that are seeking to move to larger premises. In turn, this will leave fewer smaller units available for new businesses wishing to start up. It is important to stress that point. I should like my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to pass on my thanks to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, who has written to me today on this subject. I hope that attention will be drawn to this in the wind-up to the debate. I urge my hon. Friend to reflect on that point. The Government state that they want to support small businesses, which are going through a difficult period. The extension of transitional protection to those who wish to move will be an important safeguard for small businesses during this period.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I am the vice-chairman of the Conservative Back-Bench smaller businesses committee. My hon. Friend may know that we produced a pamphlet last year on this very subject and we feel that in the prevailing economic circumstances, with high interest rates and so on, there is a strong case for my hon. Friend's point to be taken into consideration. I support him in his view.

Mr. Thornton: High interest rates are the type of difficulties to which I referred and are likely to be with us for some little time to come. It is important that the Government take that on board.

Amendment (c) deals with the permitted increase. The Government say that it should be 15 per cent. plus inflation. That means an increase of up to 23 per cent. in real terms, which is a massive increase for any small business to face. My amendment would limit it to 10 per cent., and would have a salutary effect.

Many people in small businesses can give examples which demonstrate clearly that an increase of 23 per cent. would force them out of business. One such example was given to me by a man who owns a butcher's shop in Stanmore in Middlesex. He paid rates of £2,305·18 in 1988-89. He currently expects a rent review after which, if the property next door is to be used as a guide, he will pay £1,666. His bill, plus the uniform business rate poundage of 36p, will amount to £4,199·76. That is an increase of £1,894·58 or 82 per cent. He has been in business for a long time and has already moved premises, so he will probably go out of business. He will be forced to move and, in moving, will lose any benefits from the transitional protection provisions. That is a double blow.

The Government rightly recognise that small businesses are central to the growth of our economy. They have introduced many small measures during their time in office to assist small businesses in many different ways. I, and the many small business men who have made representations to me and my hon. Friends, feel that the Government could take the small step suggested in my amendment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said, small businesses will face a particularly difficult time in the coming year or so. I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his colleagues to accept this relatively minor amendment and give small businesses the extra help and protection that are vital for their continuing health and growth.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Many good changes were made in the House of Lords, not least some of those that we are discussing now. However, I have listened to the debate with the slight feeling that all this could have been avoided had Ministers listened to some of the points made in Committee on the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Committee members, including myself, raised then the difficulties that the Government are only now starting to tackle. It might have been possible to avoid people in Scotland having to pay the poll tax without these changes having been implemented, and many people who look forward to paying the poll tax in the new year would not have the worries they have even now had the Government listened to the advice given earlier.

Only now, in a series of amendments—and the Secretary of State himself accepts that it is unfortunate to bring in such changes at the tail end of the Bill—are we starting to receive some response. I hope that in part it is a result of the new Secretary of State assuming office. I say that not only because I wish him well in his new job, but because I hope that it marks a change of direction. It may be politically in the Opposition's interest for him to continue along the path of the previous Secretary of State, but for those whom we seek to protect and represent it is better that there should be a fundamental change away from that. If this debate has been sparked off partly as a result of such a change, it is to be welcomed.

Yet, as we have already debated, people's expectations about the introduction of transitional relief will not be met in practice. When I have travelled around my own area and other parts of the country, people—and especially the elderly—say to me that they do not believe that they can afford even the extra £3 a week which they have been told is the maximum extra they will have to pay. I can understand why they are so concerned in view of the low level of pension and benefits that many people receive. However, those people are operating under a delusion. Many will be paying more than an extra £3 a week and they do not understand that it is a notional figure based wholly on the Government's set of figures of what local authorities should be spending, not on what is happening in their own area. Their worries are based not on what will happen to them, but on the best that may happen to them. In reality, people will have to pay more than that in district after district. Whatever the background arguments—and we could debate indefinitely the politics of why those figures are higher—those people will find it impossible to pay the extra sums without hardship, and some of them may not pay at all.

Mr. David Nicholson: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that many of those who will benefit from transitional protection are living in low-valued properties at present? If we had kept domestic rates, there would have been a revaluation and they would have had to pay more anyway. The Government's concession takes account of that as well.

Mr. Taylor: The process of revaluation is not as straightforward as that. I am no defender of rates, and I am proud to say that I represent the only party that has argued consistently for a local income tax.

9.15 pm

People are being sold the poll tax and are planning for it on the basis of the misapprehension that the Government have guaranteed increases of no more than £3 a week. That will not happen; the figure is purely notional, and it will not do. In fact, more than 90 per cent. of districts are spending over the Government's target, so the figure is not even a half truth. It is not even a quarter truth.

Moreover, in houses in multiple occupation, only two people will be eligible for relief. That is ridiculous. Earlier, when I told the Secretary of State that he could not defend that ridiculous state of affairs I thought that he would at least admit that the principle was wrong, whether or not he had found a solution. I listened with interest, but the right hon. Gentleman would not even say that. It seems to me obvious that no one can go to a group of people sharing a house and say to them, "We have to pick a couple of you. Which two of you want relief and who wants to pay more?" It does not work like that. People will not be receptive to that idea.

The hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) raised some important points concerning the effect on small businesses of the changes in non-domestic rating. In areas that have enjoyed low rates in the past, many small businesses are set to suffer badly, especially in deprived parts of the country with low wages. In Cornwall, for example, local authorities have gone out of their way to keep rates down, and businesses will face large increases. The Government have provided transitional arrangements to allow for 20 per cent. or 15 per cent. increases plus inflation. If Conservative Members are honest, they will admit that such increases will be extremely difficult for small businesses to meet. They will find the burden insufferable. Many small shopkeepers have no alternative source of income from which to find the extra money at a time when living standards are becoming increasingly tight, when mortgage interest rates are increasing and when small businesses have precious little opportunity to expand.

What makes all that harder to bear is that small businesses know that the extra money will go not to improve local services but to maintain a higher level of service elsewhere. Elsewhere the rates will be cut but the services will continue to be provided. They know that their fiercest competitors—the national retailers with a shop on every street corner—will be able to spread the burden. It will be nothing like as difficult for them as for the small businesses which do not have the option to move from their village or town.

Acceptance of the proposal to ensure a maximum increase of 10 per cent. in one year is the very minimum that people should expect from a Government who claim to understand the difficulties of small businesses. If that is not forthcoming, small business people will draw their own conclusions on the basis of their bank balance and the experience of their national competitors who will benefit from the changes in the years to come.

The changes that the Government are introducing almost monthly in both the poll tax and non-domestic rating arrangements are extremely complicated and far-reaching. It is almost as if the Government tear up the proposals and start again every time they look at the figures. I do not believe that when Ministers first started to debate the changes they understood the difficulties that the proposals would cause for the Government, for the local authorities which would have to implement them, and for the people who would have to pay the charge.

Your best course of action would be to rethink the proposals and admit that the poll tax arrangements do not work as you originally expected them to. However, I accept that you are unlikely to accept that until the ballot box announces its verdict in future.

The Government should recognise the complications that they are causing for the local authorities which must implement this proposal. Even those authorities that are most willing and most supportive of what you are trying to do—and there are some authorities like that—are finding it virtually impossible to keep up with the pace of change that the Government are trying to impose on them in an attempt to meet some of the difficulties that they have finally recognised. At the very least, you would be wise to delay the implementation of the poll tax in England for a year to allow the changes to be properly absorbed and to allow the poll tax to be introduced, if not fairly, at least in an administratively clean way.

Mr. Bill Walker: It is not surprising that we have just heard a Mickey Mouse-type speech. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) was actually addressing you, Mr. Speaker, when he thought that he was addressing the Government Front Bench. He therefore expected the Chair to make the changes that he really believed should be made by the Government. That is not surprising because the hon. Gentleman's speech was of a Mickey Mouse character and that is why it contained Mickey Mouse information.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has left the Chamber and I can well understand why. He referred to a Government White Paper from 1983. The hon. Member and his colleagues always fail to draw attention to the fact that housing benefit was rightly referred to in that White Paper because it runs into hundreds of millions of pounds in Scotland. When they refer to the alleged reduction in public or taxpayers' support for local government, the Opposition somehow forget the massive amounts going to the housing coffers as public support money.

Mr. McAllion: I was interested to hear the hon. Gentleman say that housing benefit makes up for any losses incurred through the poll tax. When the

[Mr. McAllion]

Government introduced their latest changes in housing benefit in Scotland, why were 2,500 people taken out of housing benefit?

Mr. Walker: I never have any difficulty supporting the reasons why I vote or do not vote for things. I hope that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) will be able to look back and say, "When it was required, I at least voted the way that my conscience dictated."

We welcome the transitional relief arrangements in Scotland. Contrary to the noises from the Opposition Benches, many Conservative Members have been lobbying from the outset for such measures.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Not very successfully.

Mr. Walker: Oh, yes, indeed. If the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues believe that they can ever persuade Governments to change their minds, they are wrong.

Mr. Wallace: The standard community charge amendments which were tabled by the Government in the other place and which are for approval this evening are substantially the same as those that I moved on Report. If the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has been lobbying for the changes in the transitional arrangements since the poll tax was first introduced in Scotland, why has he been so singularly unsuccessful until his English colleagues started bleating?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman should know that I am the last chap that he should take on when talking about a unitary Parliament. I support the unitary Parliament. Through my hon. Friends in English constituencies, it is right and proper that I should bring pressure to bear on the Government in whatever way that I want to bring it. I have no hesitation in saying that I do that all the time because I believe that the unitary Parliament is a protection that we all enjoy. It is important that we can look at different aspects of our legislative system and enjoy the benefits. That is what the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and his colleagues are prepared to throw away with their nonsensical ideas about breaking up this unitary Parliament and have small Mickey Mouse assemblies in different parts of the country which will take Mickey Mouse decisions of a kind that we have just heard described by the hon. Member for Truro.

It is important to Scots that we are to backdate these changes. One wonders what Scottish National party-controlled Angus district council will do. It has been nasty to people who are not paying the community charge, although it is party policy not to pay it. The council has been nasty to individuals who are entitled to rebates but who, because of difficulties, are paying only a certain amount. Those with rebates will now be able to pay, and the Scottish National party will again find itself facing two or three directions at once.

I welcome the changes to the standard community charge. In a large rural constituency such as mine, many people will be able to enjoy the benefits that are brought about by the multipliers. Contrary to some of the noises from the Opposition, these changes will be welcomed, and I am delighted that the Government have responded quickly to hon. Members' requests.

Mr. Douglas: I do not agree with the remarks of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). One of the changes announced by the Government proves that non-payment works. Scottish hon. Members pressed amendments in respect of Alzheimer's disease, and we were told by the Government that they could not be accepted. We pressed for transitional arrangements, but we were told that they could not be made, and the Scots proceeded to pay—some of them did—on 1 April 1989. All the "concessions" have been achieved by English Back-Bench Members who are frightened for their seats, and they have not yet paid a penny. Non-payment works.

The Secretay of State alluded to registration in Scotland. In one authority it is 106 per cent. The Secretary of State should not be taken in by that percentage. Enormous registration anomalies always take place. The threatened non-registration penalty was severe. If one did not register, one was fined, and the fine could be repeated. One of my constituents received five forms. He did not register, but he is on the register. I have never registered, Mrs. Douglas has never registered, and my daughter has never registered, but we are all on the register. Poll tax registration officers are very efficient.

In Fife, there is a zealous poll tax registration officer named Mr. Thompson. He has registered people who have not completed registration forms. If the Secretary of State does not discuss these matters with anybody else in Scotland, through the good offices of the Secretary of State for Scotland he should speak to the poll tax registration officer in Fife. He described the tax as crazy. In a report to Fife regional council, he said that the tax will collapse because of its internal contradictions. It will be the duty of all hon. Members to pursue those internal contradictions. That is why I may not be too gracious this evening. I welcome these changes. The more changes there are, the more absurd the tax becomes.

Let us consider the changes in relation to Alzheimer's disease and to the severely mentally impaired. How can it be fair to take people from homes where, at present, they are exempt from making a payment and bring them into the community without wanting to establish the same basis for exemption? Those concerned will have to go through the humiliation of declaring an individual to be severely mentally impaired. We must ask what the Government are trying to do in this task. The Government are bringing many people into the tax bracket who were not in it before by taking people out of homes, where they were not paying the tax, and bringing them into the community. In my view, it is an obnoxious and nauseating——

9.30 pm

Mr. Chris Patten: I was interested in what the hon. Gentleman was saying because as a constituency Member of Parliament, I have been involved—I am sure that this is true of the hon. Gentleman also—for a number of years with local organisations working with those suffering from senile dementia. I have taken up cases of people suffering from senile dementia who have been paying rates year in and year out, yet although that issue was around for decade after decade, I do not remember it creating much concern anywhere in the House, including among Opposition Members. The change that we are making regarding those suffering from senile dementia—I use that phrase deliberately rather than saying "Alzheimer's disease"—is extremely important.

Mr. Douglas: I accept that the Secretary of State is a humane man, but, with great respect to him, I do not think that he is grasping the nature of the point that I am trying to make. I am not excusing the fact that people might have paid rates and that that might have placed a burden on a particular individual; I am simply trying to illustrate to the Secretary of State that to avail themselves of this exemption, a husband, wife or parent will have to declare that their spouse or offspring is severely mentally impaired. Perhaps the Secretary of State cannot grasp the significance of that, but, as a parent, I can.

Mr. David Hunt: That is a matter for a general practitioner.

Mr. Douglas: The Minister mentions doctors, but there are several gateways to this. Not only does a doctor have to be consulted, but the individual concerned has to be in receipt of certain benefits. Naturally, I welcome the extension, but, as I have argued before, if we are to extend the provisions, why not take the fact that an individual is in receipt of benefit as being the relevant factor, instead of the relatives having to go through the procedure of declaring somebody severely mentally impaired? Moreover, why do we not illustrate that fact on the public record by removing that person from the register?

If the Secretary of State cannot accept that, so be it, but I have another illustration for him. If the individual concerned were to remain in a nursing home, he or she would be exempt from the charge and would not have to pay the poll tax. However, if that person is brought into the community, the procedure that I have described must be gone through. I rest my case there.

My basic argument is that the more the legislation is changed, the more absurd it will become. The Government are now moving away from their basic contention in relation to the standard community charge, which was that the poll tax should be a charge for services rendered, because the changes that they are making in the standard community charge make it a tax on property——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Not enough.

Mr. Douglas: My hon. Friend says, "Not enough", and I shall return to that point because I want to face the argument about the Labour party's policy changes. I do not know what they are and—thankfully or otherwise—I am not responsible for them.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Who is?

Mr. Douglas: The hon. Lady asks, "Who is?". I would argue forcibly that if we are to have a multi-based system of taxation, we should not exempt property. Although that is what the Government are trying to do, they have partially failed. All the arguments that they have advanced about old widows living in big houses and paying rates on those big houses, while inhabitants of a local authority house where three or four adults are working may find themselves absolved from paying rates, fall down on examination. That individual is heir to a gain which could be liquidated but the person in the local authority house is not.

In certain areas, there has been a transfer of title from one section of the community to another because of poll tax. Property values in Edinburgh have soared because the burden on the house has been reduced. Can anyone in their senses suggest that that is fair?

In my constituency, the Tories in the village of Saline argued that they ought to have the rates burden reduced because the village was remote. They achieved that. Now people in Saline, where property values are high, pay the same poll tax as my folk in Steelend, who cannot get proper roads.

The argument that it is a charge for services rendered —like the television licence—falls down. Generally, one hopes that television reception is the same throughout Britain. Sometimes we hope not, in view of some of the programmes we see.

Mr. Bill Walker: It is nonsense to say that television reception is the same throughout Britain. Anyone who represents a rural Highland constituency knows that because parts of the constituency do not receive some programmes. The hon. Gentleman mentioned an old lady living in a large house, but it could have been a rented house.

Mr. Douglas: It may have been a rented house. Most of the examples given of unfairness relate to property, and many relate to properties whose value had been enhanced and now have been further enhanced by the poll tax.

I shall not argue about television reception. If it is not the same, the hon. Gentleman will no doubt kick up like billy—and say that we deserve the same if we are paying the same licence fee.

My folk in Dunfermline and north-east Fife want the same services throughout the Fife region but there are differences in poll tax levels. Services in Auchtermuchty, where I live, are not as good as they are in St. Andrews. How will that anomaly be cleared up by the poll tax? Instead of starting from a level base, we are starting with a system that has numerous anomalies, which is illustrated by the attempts at safety nets and transitional arrangements.

I hope that there will be a Labour Government and that my colleagues will be in it but I must tell them that, after the promises the Labour party has made, if they come to power on Thursday, by the following Monday there will be very few payers of the poll tax in Scotland. Anyone who doubts that should look at the situation now. The number of non-payers may be between 500,000 and 700,000. Many of us will go to Hampden next week. I hope that there will be 60,000 people there. We former Govanites are extremely flexible when it comes to football matters. If there are 60,000 people in the bowl there, four times that number will certainly not be paying poll tax. If that is not a mass movement, I do not know what is. My hon. Friends have been looking for a mass movement to lead. It is there in Scotland and it is not necessarily being led.

The Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State ignore that movement at their peril. Dislike of the tax in Scotland is enormous. We are supposedly paying that tax, but we see the concessions that the English have already got by non-payment and, therefore, the feelings of dislike towards that tax will increase. That feeling is felt across the political spectrum and is not confined to Labour party supporters.

The tax is disliked because it is unfair, unjust and undemocratic. I was not at the Labour party conference, but I read a report in *The Times* which recounted how my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) said that our fundamental disagreement with the tax was that it was immoral. It is immoral to use the state

[Mr. Douglas]

apparatus to take from those who do not have and give to those who do. It is immoral to take from a couple aged 92 and 89 who live in my constituency. Because that couple have £6,000 in the bank, they must pay the full whack —the same as the Earl of Elgin. That is immoral. If the Government do not understand that, it is clear that, having sown the wind, they will reap the whirlwind at the next general election.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, last year, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) was reported in the *Glasgow Herald* as saying that all responsible politicians have now rejected the case for a mass campaign of non-payment? What is the hon. Gentleman's message to his own Front Bench?

Mr. Douglas: I do not believe that my hon. Friends would welcome any great message from me on this occasion. I have made my position clear. I do not want to break the law, but if someone asked me the most effective way in which to stop the tax I would cite the English example and tell them not to pay it. Ministers may murmur as much as they like, but if Conservative Back Benchers had meekly taken the Government at their word and accepted that the tax was perfect and wonderful, the concessions given tonight would never have been achieved. We tried to get those concessions, but because we did not have the political arm-twisting necessary——

Mr. Bill Walker: Nonsense.

Mr. Douglas: Those concessions have been achieved because the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) and a former Minister at the Northern Ireland Office—both of whom are absent now—strongly suggested to the Secretary of State that if such concessions were not given they would lose their seats at the next election. They did not say that they would not administer that tax or that they would not necessarily pay it, but, because of their representations, concessions have been made in England and Wales before a penny piece of the poll tax has been paid. I wish those hon. Members well in their campaign.

I must tell the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, however, that there ain't enough sheriff officers in Scotland to collect from the non-payers. No one should try to get a warrant sale in Dunfermline, West—don't anybody try that. They will need a lot more than the police force of Fife to carry out that procedure. There will be massive opposition to the poll tax because its fundamental flaw is its immorality.

Mr. David Nicholson: I listened to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) with care and with particular enjoyment when he pronounced so loudly that "non-payment works." As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State suggested, he should convey that sentiment to the Leader of the Opposition, perhaps through the medium of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who seems to have his own unauthorised programme on a variety of matters.

I welcome the transitional proposals that have been announced by my right hon. Friend. During the past few months the feedback that I have received from my constituents—no doubt my hon. Friends have had a similar experience, has not, surprisingly, been opposition to what is the most significant change to the domestic local government finance system—the extension of liability to pay to the third or fourth working adult in a family. Most people accept that that is a just change and it is the counterpart to the example of the widow who lives in a fairly large house and who pays a large rate bill. The complaint has partly been about people on low incomes, but I shall refer to that when I talk about rebates.

The main problem which I have encountered—I think that my hon. Friends have encountered similar ones—is the result of the out-of-date system of values in relation to local government finance which we have in this country. The rateable system is 16 years out of date, which means that anomalies have occurred in all sorts of constituencies. People on relatively modest incomes in one sort of property pay up to £700 in rates a year in my constituency. People on similarly modest incomes, who live in different sorts of property, find that because of the vagaries of valuation they pay only £170 or £180 on rates, without rebates.

9.45 pm

It was necessary for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his colleagues to respond to this difficulty. Certainly, those of us who have lived in London know that revaluations took place on an ad hoc basis. My house was revalued some years ago. When we started living in it, it was a building site and when we left it three years ago it was still a building site, but its rateable value had doubled because someone from the Inland Revenue decided that we should pay higher rates.

I tabled a question to my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities and he replied:

> "Since the last general revaluation . . . rateable values . . . have been altered most commonly because of a change in the physical state of the property or in its environment. I estimate that some 3,200,000 alterations have been made to the rateable values of domestic property in England since 1982."—[*Official Report*, 3 Nov. 1989; Vol. 159, c.*275*.]

A certain amount of ad hoc revaluation has taken place all over the country, and so it was right for us to take the measures which we have.

As I said in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), those who complain about the change in their bills as a result of a move from rates on low value properties to the community charge must bear in mind that if domestic rates had been kept —particularly for those living in terraced houses in urban areas where there is strong pressure for occupation or cottages in tourist-favoured areas such as I have in my constituency—their rates would have increased under the old system.

I wish to welcome my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's concessions on the disabled. I am sure that he will confirm that the Alzheimer's disease concession will be extended to those with senile dementia. There has been some concern about that, and my right hon. Friend made a telling intervention in an earlier speech.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) made an important point about advertising. It is right that my hon. Friends and Ministers in other Departments should get right the advertising of this changeover. The television advertising of the water authorities has not entirely been a standard to follow. I hope that we shall learn from that. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West made the point that it is important that those entitled to rebates should apply for them. The rebate system is more generous than Opposition Members concede and many of our constituents are aware.

I tabled a question to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard)—the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security. It was answered on 1 November. She revealed that next year, on a community charge of £250, a pensioner couple aged 60 to 74 who were not working would obtain the minimum rebate up to an income of £123 a week—which is quite a way up the income scale for pensioners. She said that a couple with two children under 11, who were working, would, on a community charge of £250, obtain a minimum rebate on an income of up to £147-£148 a week. She said that for a community charge of £300, the income for the pensioner couple would be £134 a week and the income for the couple with two children would be £158. Those are useful figures.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for picking up my earlier point. The Opposition have no argument with advertising that points out what rebates are available. We do not like the poll tax, but we want people to have all the rebates that are available. We do not want an advertising campaign that tries to sell this immoral tax as something that is as good as sliced bread and in the interests of the people. The Government must stick to telling people what benefits are available. If they try to sell the political concept of the poll tax, that would be objectionable.

Mr. Nicholson: I am sure that my right hon. Friend and his colleagues are aware of the rules and conventions that apply to Government advertising.

I welcome the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton), who dealt with business rates. There is a problem for small businesses that will be encountered throughout the southern constituencies, but I must emphasise that it is not caused by the uniform business rate. Again, we come back to the issue of revaluation. In Somerset, had the uniform business rate been introduced on present rateable values, it would be 4p or 5p lower than the current rate set by the party of the hon. Member for Truro—the Liberals, the SLD or whatever it calls itself. The rateable value is 16 years out of date. There will be difficulties, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will carefully consider what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby.

Nevertheless, in the long term there will be advantages for business and industry throughout the country. They will operate on up-to-date values and, most important, on a single national rate. The current system is quite ridiculous—as the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) must know—with businesses taking off, relocating and reinvesting so that they can avoid the very high rates in Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester, and parts of the midlands.

There is strong justice and fairness in the reform of the business rates that acts as a convoy for the introduction of the community charge, which itself is more controversial. However, as my right hon. Friend knows, I have consistently supported the Government in their proposals for the community charge.

Mr. Pike: We are discussing important amendments. I felt sorry for the Secretary of State when he opened the debate, because he has been saddled with a difficult job. It is rare for me to feel sorry for a Conservative Minister, but the right hon. Gentleman has been left with a Bill that he did not begin and that has been changed several times during its passage, especially during its stages in another place. The right hon. Gentleman not only has to defend all that; he has also to defend the poll tax, even though it was introduced by his predecessor. He is like a man trying to walk with his shoe laces tied together. The simple fact is that, although the transitional arrangements are an improvement, they cannot overcome the basic fault of the poll tax, which is the failure to base it on fairness and on the ability to pay.

Some of the amendments relate to matters that we tried to impress upon the Government during the many hours that we spent in Committee a year ago, but the then Secretary of State was not prepared to concede any of them. I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) and the Secretary of State both refer to revaluation. The Government have a cheek to refer to the fact that there has not been a revaluation for 16 years, because their first action when they were elected in 1979 was to cancel the proposed revaluation in England.

Mr. Chris Patten: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House who cancelled the revaluation that was due after 1963?

Mr. Pike: It goes back further even than 1963. The Government have been in office for 10 years. They know of the problems that arose in Scotland, and their cancellation of revaluation in England led to the problem that now confronts us, with valuations that are 16 years out of date. It is incredible that the Government want to keep turning the clock back. They will soon start talking about the actions of a Labour Government in 1929. The Government's cancellation of revaluation in their first week of office in 1979 created the current problems.

The Secretary of State asked whether any right hon. or hon. Member wholly agrees with the present rating system. I admit that it creates problems and anomalies, but it is no use replacing a flawed system with one that is even worse.

Many different issues are covered by the amendments before us, and I appreciate your difficulty, Mr. Speaker, in selecting amendments for debate. As to the likely business rate that was announced this afternoon, we shall not really know what it will be until revaluation. When business rates are finally revealed, they are likely to be met by uproar in many parts of the country. Also, although the Government promise that there will be consultations between local authorities and businesses, they will come to regret the fact that a locally fixed rate is to be replaced by one that is determined by central Government. That will serve to sever many of the valuable links and relationships between local authorities and the businesses in their areas.

Exempt categories were debated at length in Committee and on Report, but the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor was unwilling to move further on them. We welcome the additional exemption categories and hope that the Secretary of State will continue to exhibit more thoughtfulness and concern than did his predecessor—and will, as time goes on, and as he becomes even more aware of the difficulties created by the poll tax, increase their number.

I acknowledge also the right hon. Gentleman's statement that those receiving benefit will, by the nature of the taper, have only 15p in the pound deducted rather than

[Mr. Pike]

the present figure of 20p. We welcome that improvement, but I still believe that it is only half the story. People have yet to be told how much they will receive, and how much they will have left. There is an element of "kidology" involved, and people should not leap with joy until they know the full story.

Protection for property of a lower rateable value is of concern not only to Burnley but to north-east Lancashire as a whole. The Secretary of State surely recognises that property there has the lowest rateable values of the whole of England. Pendle is the lowest rated and Burnley the third lowest, with an average rateable value of only £103.

Mr. Winnick: Is my hon. Friend up to date with the latest information? Interviewed on the BBC's Nine o'clock News, the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) made it clear that the poll tax would cause tremendous difficulties, and would be of acute disadvantage to his constituents.

Mr. Pike: I thank my hon. Friend for that information. I did not know that the hon. Gentleman had been on television, although he asked a question about the issue earlier this afternoon. That is one reason why he left ministerial office: he recognises that the poll tax will lose him his seat. His constituency is adjacent to mine, and he will be faced with considerable problems next year——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Lords amendments to the Local Government and Housing Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Lords amendments again considered.

Question again proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) is clearly very concerned about the issue of rateable value, and rightly so. It is a pity that a year ago he kept trooping through the Lobbies and voting for the measure.

Hon. Members have mentioned the fact that only two people in a property will receive protection, and the problem of determining which two it should be. The Minister must tell us how that will be dealt with, as it will cause considerable friction. I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, will be interested to hear his response.

The amendments that the Government will push through tonight will not solve the problem of the poll tax legislation. The very fact that the arrangements are transitional makes that certain—and, as the Secretary of State has said himself, the Government cannot legislate for permanent protection. Of course they cannot; if they did, they would be admitting that the legislation that they forced through last year was nonsense. The fact that they are having to do the same thing now shows the folly of their policy. As the temporary arrangements are phased out, people will find themselves faced with the full unfairness and inequity of the legislation.

The real reason for the Lords amendments—the reason why we are debating them today and why they were forced through the other House—is not that the Government wish to be fairer, but that they want to gerrymander and, if possible, help some Conservative Back Benchers to save their seats in a couple of years, before the poll tax is fully payable. The Government have not really made a generous concession; they are trying to con the people. They will fail, however, and the poll tax legislation will be repealed as soon as the Labour party takes office.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I wish to respond briefly to the points raised by the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. We welcome the concessions that have been introduced, especially those relating to the standard charge. The Government amendment is very similar to new clause 1, moved on 14 June by my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). On that occasion the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), said that the new clause was

"based on a misconception that there are significant differences between the positions north and south of the border and that the English and Welsh arrangements are more flexible. That is not so as I shall seek to explain."—[*Official Report,* 14 June 1989; Vol. 154, c. 1021.]

That debate revolved around the fact that we believed that it was so, and that changes were needed. At that time the Government said that the new clause was not necessary and resisted it. We welcome the fact that our arguments have now prevailed, and that the Government have recognised their strength, producing an amendment that gives much wider powers to both the local authorities and the Secretary of State than are contained in the guidelines given to us by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary. I am grateful for the Minister's guidelines, but they raise a few questions that I hope he will address in his reply.

He distinguished between categories that would be zero rated as of right and categories that would be zero rated at the local authority's discretion. Into which categories are student nurses and doctors who work in hospitals likely to fall? Student nurses are incensed at not having been treated as students on the ground that they receive an allowance, although it is very low. Therefore, they will be forced to pay the full charge out of their very low allowance. That will represent a real cut in the allowance. Student nurses have understandably become cynical over the years. Every time that an allowance is reviewed they usually find that the cost of, say, meals has increased by more than the allowance and that the real value of the allowance is eroded year by year. Student nurses will be significantly worse off under the proposals. I think that the Minister implied that local authorities will have discretions, but the Government ought to make the position clear.

The same applies to hospital doctors. They have made representations to me and, I am sure, to other hon. Members about the implication, which they resent, that they may have to pay the poll tax on their home and also on their residence in hospital if they are resident there for more than half the time. Therefore, they would have to pay the poll tax twice. That would be an injustice and would amount to double taxation, to which they should not be subjected. I think that the Minister also implied that that would be left to the discretion of local authorities. If local authorities decided to exercise their discretion, the cost would have to be met by all the other poll tax payers. Local authorities would therefore be under pressure to resist discretionary reductions of that kind. As the cost of the National Health Service is met by the Government, they ought to agree to fund that concession.

The Minister did not refer to second homes and holiday homes, about which there has been much correspondence and many representations from both sides of the House. His omission leads me to think that the Government will not address the issue. If Barratts or any other large organisation runs a time share operation, it does not pay poll tax on its property; it is assessed at the commercial rate. However, an individual with a modest holiday home —perhaps a cottage with a couple of bedrooms that is very low rated—has to pay the standard charge. Similarly, a farmer who wishes to supplement his farm income may let a few cottages on his farm to tourists. He will be squeezed out of a profitable business by having to absorb the standard charge.

Will the Minister clarify whether local authorities will be able to exercise discretion? That would be an improvement. If they can, will that fact be taken into account when calculating revenue support grant? I hope that I am right in assuming that local authorities will have that discretion. I see that the Minister is nodding, and I am grateful to him. If it is a modest property, it is reasonable that local authorities should be able to set a ceiling so that the standard charge does not have to be paid twice. The letting of a few cottages may be an important supplement to a farmer's business. The same discretion ought to apply to him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) has already referred to the fact that the £3 a week rebate is certainly an improvement, although very late in the day, and that it is based on the Government's assessment of what the poll tax in any given authority ought to be rather than on the actual outturn. If that is the case, it is a cheat because the Government know perfectly well that those targets were unrealistic and that virtually no authority, including those controlled by the Conservative party, has been able to achieve them. The rebate should be based on the average poll tax rate rather than on Government targets which were never realistic.

The Minister made no reference to the safety net in Scotland. As a Member for a constituency in Grampian region, I feel very strongly that Grampian region poll tax payers have had to pay between £46 and £54 per head, according to where they live, towards the cost of the safety net for Glasgow and Strathclyde. I fully accept that the needs of Glasgow and Strathclyde justify that degree of safety netting, but I do not accept that the burden should fall on Grampian region poll tax payers rather than on the general taxpayer.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can give the hon. Gentleman some reassurance on that point. The safety net, in its present form, will be phased out over three years. That means that those authorities which contributed to the self-financing safety net this year will receive their revenue support grant entitlement in full for 1990-91. Areas such as Glasgow which have benefited from the safety net will receive protection for a further three years, with the cost being met by the Exchequer.

Mr. Bruce: I thank the Minister for that helpful information. I still have slight reservations as to whether we will get the full amount back, but I accept the Minister's assurance in good faith.

I do not wish to be sour as we have had some effect and my colleagues and I who have campaigned consistently and promoted amendments have been vindicated. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) does democracy a great disservice when he says that Opposition Members are wasting their time as the Government never accept suggestions from them. I do not believe that is the case. However, politics being what it is, Conservative Members respond only when they see their majorities being whittled away. But they have responded, and most of the Government's concessions today are those that we pressed for a year ago. I do not believe that the Government will recover any ground in Scotland because people in Scotland know that the Government care not a docken for the plight of the Scots who have to face the imposition of the poll tax and that the Government were prepared to act only when the English majority was threatened. I am quite sure that Scottish voters will not return to the fold with any gratitude.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I shall speak on my amendment opposing Lords amendments Nos. 332, 347 and 421. However, before doing so I should like to use some of the leeway that you, Mr. Speaker, have allowed hon. Members who did not get in on the statement on the poll tax by saying that we would be able to catch your eye and raise those points in tonight's debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I said, with ingenuity.

Mr. Cohen: I am using the best of my ingenuity.

The figures provided by the Secretary of State for the Environment in his statement this afternoon show a lot of sleight of hand. He was not comparing like with like. Table 2 was supposed to be comparing the rates with the community charge, but the rates figure included the local spending discretion—the amount that the local authority was spending on local needs. That figure was not in strict compliance with the Government's targets, but the community charge or poll tax level is strictly in compliance with Government policy. The Government's level of spending for local authorities is absurdly unreal and would mean massive cutbacks in my authority of Waltham Forest, for example. The Government have allowed only 4 per cent. for inflation, which is ludicrous. Under the safety net, Waltham Forest is having to pay £46 per person, thereby subsidising Tory-controlled Wandsworth.

All summer, Conservative Members bleated that the purpose of the safety net was to subsidise overspenders. Let us hear no talk of Waltham Forest being an overspender, because we are being penalised by having to pay into the safety net. The figures announced in the statement show that needs in inner-London boroughs are still not being properly recognised. There is still gross unfairness, because some boroughs are paying half the amount that their neighbouring boroughs are paying, purely at the flick of the Minister's pen.

10.15 pm

I oppose Lords amendments Nos. 332, 347 and 421, which relate to privacy. The disclosure of information is the thin end of the wedge, yet under those amendments, which the Government slipped through in the other place, disclosure will be allowed. This is the first case in which the Government have allowed data unconnected with the poll tax to be disclosed. Why should poll tax data be used for purposes other than the poll tax? The Minister should explain why, under this gaping hole in the legislation, virtually unrestricted access to information will be allowed.

Lords amendment Nos. 332 and 347 to schedule 5, which relate to the poll tax in England and Wales, and Lords amendment No. 421 to schedule 6, which applies to the poll tax in Scotland, should be rejected because they do not guarantee that anonymity will be preserved. The use of

[Mr. Cohen]

the words "registration officer" in the amendment means that when the registration officer discloses information the recipient will be able to gain access to other lists in the possession of the registration officer and obtain personal information about an individual. The poll tax officer could disclose that three people live at 55 Acacia avenue. Two of those people could be exempted from payment because they are in prison or because they have Alzheimer's disease. The poll tax officer cannot supply the names of those people, but the recipient can check the electoral registers, telephone lists and other public lists to discover the names of the people listed. He can even use the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which introduced the poll tax, and check the entry in the extract of the poll tax register for 55 Acacia avenue to discover who lives there. Anonymous information goes to the wall. The fact that someone's name does not appear on the register can also be useful intelligence. The position under Lords amendment No. 421 is even worse, because the poll tax register can be photocopied as well as inspected.

The Lords amendments should be rejected because there is no guarantee that the Secretary of State will not use his powers to obtain anonymous information from other sources available to him, such as social security records. He can reconstitute personal information relating directly to people. He may misuse that information. He may withhold the social security benefit to which a person is entitled in order to punish him for being behind in his poll tax payments. There is no limitation on the availability and subsequent use—or perhaps misuse—of this sensitive information. The Government do not seem to care about protecting this sensitive information which can easily be handed over and get into the wrong hands.

There is no guarantee that anonymous information will not be copied on to the data bases of the police, immigration service, security service, credit reference agencies and other organisations with long lists of addresses. Again, big brother rides under the poll tax rules.

The Lords amendments are deficient in that there is no attempt to stop the recipient of the information attempting to reconstitute it to identify individuals. There is no attempt to stop any linking of anonymous information to the personalised information that a recipient already has. The reason that the Government advanced in the Lords for favouring these measures is bogus. They said that the information could be used for planning purposes. Local authorities can already use section 6 of the Census Act 1980 and call upon the staff of the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys to use the census data for planning purposes. The Minister can also call upon OPSC staff for statistics. Using the Census Act has several advantages over using poll tax data for planning—information is kept anonymous because it is protected by OPCS staff who are alert to the privacy issues involved in handling it. By contrast, local authorities seem to have been hauled up before the data protection authorities on a number of privacy issues involving the poll tax register. Under the Lords amendments, there is virtually no privacy restraint on local authorities.

The Lords amendments could lead to the back-door selling of poll tax data in the same way as information on the electoral register is sold. As with the electoral register, the so-called Government of choice do not give the individual the opportunity to object to disclosure of information about himself. The poll tax rides a coach and horses through personal privacy. It is a bailiff's and snooper's joy and a computer voyeur's delight. The Lords amendments are yet another example of individual privacy being sacrificed to expedite the implementation of this repressive, inefficient and unpopular poll tax.

Mr. McAllion: Amendment No. 261 deals with the rate at which the standard community charge can now be levied. In dealing with it, the Under-Secretary of State listed a series of properties that would as of right be zero rated. He mentioned empty mansions, and the homes of prisoners, full-time students at university and college and those who had died. He went on to describe a second category, whereby a local authority would have discretion to designate properties that should be zero rated and included those properties where the owners' employment required them to be away from home for a long period.

I should like to ask the Minister about another category of properties—local authority houses where the tenant is a long-term hospital patient but wishes to retain the tenancy and keep the house furnished while he is in hospital. In February this year, the Scottish Office wrote to the Tayside poll tax registration officer, saying that in these cases

> "the liability to pay the standard charge would fall on the local authority as owner of the property since council houses are let on short, renewable leases."

How will such a property be affected by the changes that the Minister has described tonight? Will he or his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State give us a specific explanation? Will local authorities be allowed to zero-rate at their discretion local authority houses whose tenants are long-term patients in hospital, but who wish to keep their houses furnished and to keep the tenancy during that period?

The transitional proposals are supposed to protect groups of people who are affected by the poll tax. It is alleged protection because, as the Minister said, the limit of £3 will be applied only when the local authority imposes a poll tax that is in line with the Government's assumptions. In the case of my own district council of Dundee, the Government assumed that the poll tax should be £274 in the current year. In reality, the council was forced to levy £324—£50 or 18 per cent. above the Government's assumption. Will the Minister say that when the transitional arrangements are in place in Dundee everyone will be entitled to the limit of no more than £3 irrespective of the level of poll tax levied by the district council—even though that figure is higher than the Government's assumptions about the poll tax for Dundee?

We are expected to believe that we are dealing with a genuine, if sudden, conversion by the Government or with a sudden concern for those who are worst off. I use the word "sudden" advisedly. In Scotland, we have been dealing with the poll tax for a long time—longer than any other part of this allegedly unitary British state. We have a long track record on the poll tax and I have been in correspondence with Ministers for some time on the poll tax rebate schemes in particular.

About 18 months ago, I wrote to the Minister of State, who was then responsible for the rebate scheme. His reply gave me a series of assurances about the rebate scheme. He wrote:

> "we have taken full account of the need to ensure that payment of the community charge is not an unacceptable burden for those with low incomes".

He went further and said that the Government had taken full account of those on low incomes, whether or not they were in employment. The Minister had unlimited confidence in the virtue of the rebate scheme for people in Scotland such as the unemployed, the disabled, the handicapped, the low paid, single parents and pensioners.

Six months later, I received another letter from the same Minister on the same subject. His confidence in the rebate scheme in Scotland was still completely undiminished. He wrote:

"Overall, I do not accept that the community charge will represent a significant shift of the tax burden from the rich to the poor."

He told me that the winning and losing households would be roughly equal and that for half of all those affected, the difference would be less than £1 a week. He also told me that there would be substantial benefits for those who were least well off. He singled out two groups and said that 90 per cent. of single pensioners and 85 per cent. of single adult households would be better off.

Yet in the debate tonight both the Secretary of State and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), have referred repeatedly to single pensioners as a group who will especially benefit from the transitional arrangements. It is passing strange that, according to the Minister who had previous responsibility for the poll tax, there was no need for any transitional protection because they would all be better off, yet we are now told that they will be better off as a result of the transitional arrangements which have been introduced a year after the Minister made that claim.

The last sentence of the letter sent to me a year ago sums up the Government's confidence in their rebate scheme. The Minister wrote:

"In all cases—

and I emphasise the word "all"—

"the rebate scheme will ensure that nobody is called upon to pay an unreasonable amount."

That letter was sent in October 1988. Why is it that a full year later we need a whole poll tax package of further concessions? Are the Government saying that the Minister was lying to me a year ago when he said that the rebate scheme then available would ensure that nobody would be called on to pay an unreasonable amount?—*[Interruption.]* I never alleged anything of the kind. I am merely asking whether that is what the Government say now. At that time, the Minister told me that the rebate scheme would ensure that nobody would be called upon to pay an unreasonable amount——

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that the hon. Gentleman was heard clearly by those of us on the Conservative Benches to have said that the Minister was lying.

Mr. Speaker: I certainly did not hear that.

Mr. McAllion: I said no such thing, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman did allege that, I am sure that he would wish to withdraw, but I did not hear him say it.

Mr. McAllion: I would certainly have wished to withdraw, but I never said anything of the kind. I was merely trying to explain to Conservative Members that Ministers are now telling the House the exact opposite of what Scottish Ministers were telling me a year ago. The House deserves some explanation of that discrepancy. If no one was being asked to pay an unreasonable amount a year ago, why do we now need a package of concessions and transitional protection for those who are, indeed, expected to pay an unreasonable amount? That is a serious matter

10.30 pm

I have talked about what happened 18 months and a year ago. Six months ago we received from the Department of Social Security a so-called short paper dealing with poll tax rebates. We were told that from 1990 onwards the arrangements in England and Wales would be virtually identical to those in Scotland. Tonight we have been told that from now on the arrangements in Scotland will be virtually the same as those in England and Wales. In six months the Government have turned the whole thing round. They now tell us that what was happening in Scotland six months ago was unsatisfactory and that the arrangements will have to be changed to bring them into line with those for England and Wales.

The Department of Social Security paper contained a nice table showing a poll tax figure of £300, by which the Government sought to illustrate their point. As it turned out, that was a very convenient figure from the Government's point of view. With poll tax at £300, those on income support—which has been increased by £1·15 for a single person under 25, £1·30 for single people over 25 and £2·30 for couples—will be no worse or better off. It was, therefore, convenient for the Government to use the £300 figure in the tables illustrating the Department's paper.

In the real world, however, authorities are not levying poll taxes of £300. They are levying poll taxes well in excess of £300. In my constituency, for example, the figure is £324. Conservative Members may say that that will mean that those on income support will be only marginally worse off. How can they justify a system that makes those on income support marginally worse off and Scottish Office Ministers £1,100 a year better off? No system that does that can be justified.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that had we retained a Conservative administration at Tayside the community charge would have been about £120 a year less?

Mr. McAllion: At the last budget meeting, the Conservative opposition on Tayside regional council suggested a reduction of 0·75 per cent. in expenditure. That would make very little difference to the poll tax; the poll tax might even be bigger as a result of that opposition's activities.

I am trying to drag home to the House the fact that for 18 months I was repeatedly told by Scottish Ministers that there was no cause for concern—that everything was fine and that the rebate scheme was marvellous. Suddenly after the Tory party conference in Blackpool everything changed. All bets are off. Everything must change in Scotland and Scotland must be brought into line with England and Wales. Have the Government suddenly come to their senses? No; Conservative Back Benchers representing marginal seats have suddenly come to their senses. *[Interruption.]* There are very few Scottish Tory

[Mr. McAllion]

Back Benchers, and it is most unlikely that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has come to his senses.

In December 1988 Alzheimer's Scotland wrote a letter to every hon. Member in Scotland and I am sure that the hon. Member for Tayside, North received a copy. It wrote:

> "It seems, however, that people with degenerative brain disorders such as dementia will not qualify. In the latter stages of dementia, a sufferer may lose the power of speech, may appear to understand almost nothing, may fail to recognise close family members and may be doubly incontinent. It is both illogical and unfair to attempt to differentiate between such people and others with conditions causing a similar degree of mental impairment."

The director of Alzheimer's Scotland wrote to me:

> "Alzheimer's Scotland have drawn the attention of the Secretary of State for Scotland to this . . . . state of affairs."

The Minister of State, Scottish Office wrote to me in February 1989:

> "This is clearly a difficult question, but I can assure you it is one to which the Government gave considerable thought before deciding that people with dementia should not be exempt from paying the community charge."

That is what the Minister of State, Scottish Office, called excessive keenness on the Government's part. After considerable thought, they decided that they were not going to exempt sufferers from Alzheimer's disease and other degenerative brain disorders. Only as a result of pressure from public opinion in Scotland and from Government Back Benchers did the Government make any concessions.

The Government are running scared now, but not because they have lost the argument. They lost the argument a long time ago. Now for the first time they can see the implications of losing the argument in the House and in England and Wales, where they will lose many marginal seats. The Government are papering over the cracks in an unjust and unworkable system of local government finance. No one wants it, especially not in Scotland where we have experienced it.

I have decided that I will not willingly pay the poll tax and it will have to be taken from me. I have received threatening letters from my local regional council stating that I had better pay up in 14 days or else. However, other people in my street have not yet even received their poll tax payment books. That is the kind of administrative chaos facing regional councils. If the system will not work in Scotland it will not work elsewhere. The poll tax has degenerated into unsustainable chaos and the legislation will have to be repealed.

We have heard that the cost of the poll tax is enormous. Nearly £1 million was spent on propaganda in Scotland trying to sell the poll tax to the Scottish people. Does the Secretary of State for the Environment believe that that money was well spent? Was it cost effective? After spending £1 million on propaganda, 80 per cent. of the Scottish people rejected the propaganda and the poll tax with it. Perhaps the local government auditors should have a close look at the Government Departments that are wasting money in that way. Already millions have been wasted on computers and in administrative costs. Other huge costs will be incurred in rejigging the scheme to bring it into line with the transitional arrangements.

The Minister wrote to me and told me that he believed that all the costs were worth paying because the system increased accountability in Scottish local government. It is a sheer nerve for a Tory Minister responsible for Scotland to say that he wanted to see increased accountability in local government in Scotland. When are we going to have increased accountability in central Government in Scotland? Only 20 per cent. of the Scottish people voted for the Government who are now imposing their will on Scotland. We cannot hold the Government accountable and we are denied the right to hold them accountable, but we are told that accountability is good for us in local government in Scotland.

The Minister also justified the costs and disruption that the poll tax would bring about with the idea that it was a fairer method of collecting local government finance. If a poll tax of £350 is levied in a local authority, someone on £62·47 a week will be expected to pay the full poll tax. He will pay £6·73 in poll tax—10·8 per cent. of his income. Someone in the same area earning £300 a week will also pay £6·73 a week in poll tax, but that is 2·5 per cent. of his income. How can it be fairer for the poor to pay four times as much as the rich in their contributions to local government finance? The whole tax is immoral. It is only a matter of time, not until the poll tax is repealed, but until the Government are defeated. Then the poll tax will be repealed.

Mr. Tony Banks: I congratulate the Secretary of State on inserting a Treasury tag into the Government's bulky document. It makes it very convenient to hang it on a nail. I assure him that I will put every single page to good use.

An annex to the document relates to special grants which will be paid to inner London local authorities. I do not resent that—many local authorities are getting fresh grants. However, why is the London borough of Newham not qualified to receive special grants? I am sure that the Secretary of State understands that, although the London borough of Newham is an outer London borough, it has the same problems as inner London boroughs. If its two next-door boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Hackney are to receive special grants, I should like to know precisely why Newham is not to receive them and what they are all about.

It is grotesquely unfair that the poll tax payers of Newham will contribute to the safety net, whereas outer London Tory boroughs such as Bexley will get a safety net contribution. Why should the poll tax payers of Newham subsidise leafy Tory boroughs such as Bexley? I hope that the Secretary of State will tell me something that will make some sense to the people of Newham when they consider what was announced this afternoon.

Mr. Winnick: The Government have enough advisers.

Mr. Banks: I notice that the Box is now so crowded that they must double-park. It comes ill for the Government to start talking about special advisers and chairs' assistants in local authorities. They must carry a great weight of responsibility and they thoroughly deserve all the assistance they can possibly get.

The Secretary of State spoke about publicity for rebates and transitional relief. I saw the Minister, who is undoubtedly one of the most acceptable faces of extremism that we have seen on the Government Front Bench, nodding his head in grave agreement with my points. I want the Secretary of State himself to make a statement. I understand that the major poll tax advertising campaign will also involve television, and I trust that emphasis will be placed on rebates and transitional relief.

Opposition Members will support anything that points out how people can avoid the more iniquitous aspects of this invidious tax. If there are rebates and benefits, they must know what they are and how they can get them as speedily as possible. If that is what the advertising campaign is to be about, we will not object. We have seen enough of the Government's information campaigns to know that they usually amount to nothing more than crude Tory Government propaganda.

The Secretary of State did not respond to me earlier, so I ask him again. If he is genuine in saying that the advertising campaign will be about rebates and benefits that poll tax payers can receive, will he consult local authority associations on the terms of the advertising campaign to make sure that we are all in broad agreement before we start? If not, I suspect that there will be much disagreement and a lot of mud will be flung around.

Mr. Winnick: Does it not prove that the Prime Minister has a sense of humour, if only an odd one, that she appointed a Secretary of State who was known to be opposed to the poll tax and who, as a Tory Back-Bench Member, made several wet speeches, and gave him the job of justifying this totally unfair tax?

Mr. Banks: I do not recognise the Prime Minister as having a sense of humour——

Mr. Winnick: A perverse one.

Mr. Banks: I was about to say that it must be a perverse one. Indeed, when the Prime Minister develops a sense of humour, I will cross the House to join Conservative Members, but I do not think that there is much danger of that happening in the foreseeable future—or, indeed, in the unforeseeable future.

I ask the Secretary of State yet again, since his Minister of State has made it plain that the campaign on the poll tax will be about rebates and transitional reliefs, whether he will give the undertaking that I have requested and seek early discussions with the local authority associations on the terms of the advertising campaign that is to be inflicted on us in the winter.

10.45 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I intend to be brief. I begin by apologising to the Minister of State, Scottish Office and to his Opposition counterpart for not being present for their opening speeches. They, more than most, will appreciate the difficulties of trying to be in several places at one time and they know that I listen with great interest to their words on numerous occasions.

You will have noticed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that many of the hon. Members who have participated in the discussion on these amendments represent Scottish constituencies. If at times Opposition Members sound less than gracious when concessions are made by the Government, it is perhaps because, having consistently voted and worked against the community charge in Scotland, all of us are well aware of the implications of the implementation of that legislation in Scotland and of all its drawbacks.

I advise Conservative Members who represent English constituencies that if they think that their mailbags are heavy or that their constituency clinics are particularly busy, they have seen nothing yet. As the community charge comes closer in England and Wales, those Conservative Members will find out what we are finding out in Scotland, which is that the vast majority of people are opposed to this tax on grounds of principle. They will face many difficulties in trying to persuade their constituents that the legislation should go through. If all the Opposition Members representing Scottish seats were to bring into the Chamber and to read chapter and verse all the letters relating to the individual cases with which they have had to deal over the past 18 months, they could keep the House sitting for many a long hour, well beyond the normal rules and regulations. I give that as a clear warning because many individuals in other parts of the country will now experience the difficulties that we have experienced.

However, having said that, I welcome the flexibility that is now—belatedly—to be offered to the Scottish regional councils when deciding on the standard community charge. It is only right to mention that one of the strongest campaigners on this issue has been the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), whom we all wish well and hope that he will soon be recovered and back with us. Along with others of us in Grampian region, the right hon. Gentleman raised the point that people were being described as having "holiday homes" and were being subjected to a standard community charge of £522 for a little property, sometimes merely a wooden shack with no running water or electricity, for which in previous years they had paid perhaps £20, £30, or £40 in rates.

The fact that such people were being asked to pay the standard charge was against the interests of the tourist trade in our area, which is important in keeping small village shops open. That shop is often also the post office, where the pensioners collect their pensions, and it plays a significant role. We are talking not about people who live in mansions and have lots of money, but about individuals with a tiny cottage in which they can spend weekends or a fortnight in the summer, having a family holiday. This point has caused a great deal of upset. I therefore hope that the Secretary of State will tell us the implications of what has happened in the financial year 1989-90 for these people who have already been asked to pay such substantial charges for their small properties.

I wonder whether the Secretary of State wishes to comment also on what he has built into his calculations in respect of the bureaucracy of the charge. Regional councils in Scotland have suggested to me that, whereas the collection of rates constituted 2 per cent. of their income, a more accurate figure for the collection of the community charge is 8 or 9 per cent. That is a substantial increase. There are still warrants to be issued and people to be pursued who, like me, have had 14-day and seven-day warnings. There are still others who have not paid for whatever reason. We still do not know the financial implications of that. There must be some calculation of the bureaucratic implications of collecting the charge.

I welcome the concession about the sole or main residence for the purpose of employment. The Minister from the Scottish Office will remember the individual cases that I have sent him. Are there any implications for people who work abroad and use local services for only a few weeks of the year? A constituent who lives in Lossiemouth works in Dubai. Because of the nature of his work, he spends 12 weeks abroad and is then at home for three. In any financial year, therefore, he spends a minimum of nine weeks and a maximum of 10 weeks in the community, yet he is expected to pay the full charge.

I am disappointed that there is no reference here to what happens if people die. I do not want to repeat the problems experienced by fishermen's widows who were issued with community charge requests for £3 or £4 for the two or three days of a month when their husbands were alive. I thought that was appalling. Some regional authorities have decided that £5 is the minimum bill for which they will send out a claim, but I should like a clear ruling from the Government that no community charge payment will be required retrospectively for the month in which a community charge payer dies. Such requests demonstrated one of the most despicable attitudes in the implementation of the charge, and the heartbreak that it caused to widows and widowers in my constituency was horrendous.

I welcome the concession regarding Alzheimer's disease, but it has been a hard long struggle, and we are still not 100 per cent. sure what the implications are for others who suffer similar conditions, such as senile dementia, which the Secretary of State mentioned.

The Department of Social Security has announced that there is to be a substantial review of how payments and allowances are made to disabled people. The community charge must be considered clearly and sincerely in that review, because if we are to have emphasis on community care, the implications of the community charge are substantial for families who want to give independence to relatives with some form of disabling disease. The Department of the Environment and the Department of Social Security must take that on board.

We have experienced many other problems during the past year. If we in Scotland sometimes sound a little grudging about the concessions that are made, it is because we feel that we have been used as guinea pigs for this legislation. We have had the bureaucracy, the problems of constituents having eight pages to fill in to claim a rebate and local authorities saying that rebate forms have not reached them.

The few concessions that have been made do not in any way measure up to the anger, resentment and bitterness that many people feel about this charge in principle—not just because of the administrative chaos.

Those who seek to represent people must search their consciences. I believe that fundamental principles are at stake because of the community charge. I have searched my conscience and I know that I have not found it easy to become a non-payer. I do not find it particularly easy to break the civil laws of my country. Until those who seek to lead and to represent are prepared to take on leadership responsibilities, however, one cannot argue for changes in the law.

I believe that the non-payment campaign has helped to cause the small amendments to be made. I believe that non-payment can still help to defeat the poll tax. Its replacement with a local income tax would mean the introduction of a fairer tax which takes account of ability to pay. The community charge is destined to failure because it is based on a simple flaw.

Mr. Kirkwood: I do not wish to detain the House for long, but the group of amendments that we are considering are complicated and make changes in Scottish law which is entirely different from the English legal system. I accept that there can only be one wind-up speech, but obviously the English Minister will reply. That means that some of the legitimate points that have been raised by Members representing Scotland will not be answered.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall certainly write to all Members if all the relevant issues are not dealt with. Many of the points raised by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) were dealt with in my speech, but she was not present at the time.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Minister would be less than his usual courteous self if he did not write to hon. Members, but, with respect, that is not the point. If we are having debates, they should truly be debates.

Earlier today English Members heard a ministerial statement on local government finance, which meant that hon. Members representing English constituences had the opportunity to raise constituency issues. Instead of writing to Scots Members the Minister should consider the alternative of making a statement of his own at some date as that would enable us to ask specific questions. Will the orders that flow from the legislation that we are enacting be negative, or affirmative orders? If they are negative, hon. Members must pray against them. If they are affirmative, hon. Members are guaranteed a debate albeit limited to one and a half hours. We now have the broad framework of the legislation, but the orders are important as they provide the important detail.

The statements that the Secretary of State has made in the debate have been helpful and I believe that they represent a move in the right direction. We must see the fine print, however, before we can make final judgments. But it is important that the orders that introduce the legislative details are affirmative so that we can discuss them here as of right.

Today, on such issues as exemptions for Alzheimer's disease and discretion over the standard community charge, Ministers have adopted a different tone from previous discussions. They now say that things can be done that could not be done a year ago when the Scottish legislation went through. If such changes can be made suddenly, why is it not possible to consider introducing a system of local government that relates people's local government taxation to their ability to pay. That is the fundamental flaw in the poll tax legislation.

The Secretary of State made great play about retaining local government accountability in the amendments. The best way to achieve such accountability is by adopting the political solution of a system of proportional representation. That makes the electorate the judge and jury on levels of tax rather than Ministers sitting in Whitehall.

I am concerned about levels of business rates. My constituency has a low-rated rural base and I cannot see how local small businesses or high street shops will be better off in the long run as a result of the uniform business rate, whether it is based on a unified Scottish or United Kingdom rate. I have never had a convincing answer to that. I have not had one tonight, and it is something to which the Government must address themselves. I understand that transitional protection is built in, and I welcome that. However, in the longer term, small businesses and shopkeepers in high streets in constituencies such as mine will inevitably suffer.

I welcome the fact that the transitional protection will be retrospective. I also understand that substantial moves are being made to encourage people to apply for community charge rebates. If, in the course of the advertising campaign, people in Scotland are found to be eligible for rebate on their poll tax, will the rebate be paid in retrospect as well? Will the rebate system as well as the transitional protection be retrospective in Scotland? That is an important question, and one to which I hope the Minister will address himself.

11 pm

I wish to ask about what will happen when local authorities take advantage of the new discretion to zero rate people's individual standard community charge. When people's contracts of employment require them to live outside their home, and a local authority allows their income to be zero rated, will central Government make good the losses to the local authority's revenue support grant? That is an important point.

Will the Government look carefully at a problem which has arisen in my constituency where, because of a computer programme failure, 18-year-olds have been missed off the register and have only just started receiving their original bills in the past few weeks? My local authority, which has the legal power summarily to insist that the full amount be paid forthwith, has given them to the end of the financial year to pay these arrears. That doubles the weekly and monthly charge which they are required to pay. Will the Government look at the possibility of extending the period available to extinguish arrears in such cases, where the fault for the arrears did not lie with the community charge payer, but was due to a local authority administrative hiccup? Such people deserve more time in which to pay the amount owed.

The concession which has been made on senile dementia is welcome, but the Secretary of State will not be able to allow the exemption to rest there. The category of exemption will have to be expanded to cope adequately with the present position in Scotland. Apart from anything else, the legislation drives a coach and horses through the Government's policy of trying to promote care in the community if individuals can be charged outside institutions within which they are exempt.

The Government have a long way to go. The changes announced tonight are warmly welcomed as far as they go, but they do not go nearly far enough.

Mr. Wallace: I endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and wish to mention the unsatisfactory nature of trying to mix a Scottish debate with an English and Welsh debate. As the Secretary of State explained on a point of order, it was agreed between the usual channels, and no doubt Opposition Front Bench spokesmen work in a mysterious way to put the Scottish Office on the hop by allowing it to get away with a reply from the Secretary of State for the Environment, who is not responsible for the Scottish operation of the poll tax, despite his great talents in many other respects.

I also wish to congratulate the Government on bringing forward an amendment dealing with the standard community charge which is, in many respects, similar to that which I moved on Report. I well recall the occasion, not least because of the absence and silence of the other two Opposition parties in Scotland. The Government have done a complete U-turn from the position which they then held.

I also wish to congratulate and thank the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) for implementing an undertaking which he gave on that occasion in relation to another new clause which I tabled about evidence on appeals arising out of the poll tax. That is dealt with in Lords amendment No. 419, and I acknowledge that it will improve matters.

Although the rebate scheme has been presented as a generous measure—and it is far better than nothing—it will still leave many people considerably worse off. In my constituency, because the poll tax does not amount to £150 per annum, or £3 per week, per person, no one will derive any benefit. It is clear from letters from my constituents that many of them find themselves worse off under the poll tax, but this rebate scheme will not bring them any benefits.

It is important to put it on record that, although the amendments will bring some relief to some people, it by no means makes the poll tax a good tax; it makes it only a little less rotten.

Mr. Chris Patten: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply, albeit briefly, to a number of the points that have been raised. I shall not detain the House for an inordinate length of time.

I thank the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) for his warm and charming welcome to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), who has joined my Department. I thought that at one point the hon. Gentleman was about to suggest that there was nothing in life that anyone could want more than a berth in Marsham street. My hon. Friend is a welcome member of the team.

The hon. Gentleman and I must have felt at times as though we were intervening in a Scottish debate, but it was helpful to have such a wealth of experience brought to bear on a number of the Government's proposals for smoothing the introduction of the community charge.

I want to take up three points that the hon. Gentleman raised. First, he referred to community care, and especially to those leaving care homes and going into the community after 31 March next year. Those in the position he described will have all the protection already built into the community charge system. If they have low incomes they will be entitled to rebates. It is important to recognise that the transitional relief is in addition to the existing protection, so it is misleading to suggest that those who do not qualify for relief are being deprived of protection.

The hon. Gentleman made a number of points about senile dementia. The Scottish amendments deal with that and apply new definitions retrospectively. We have also announced that we shall change the provisions that exempt from the community charge those who are severely mentally impaired. As was made clear, that will allow the exemption to cover people whose mental impairment arises from degenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's disease or mental illness. The change in the definition in England will be made by order and no new primary legislation will be necessary. It will be done by adding attendance allowance and constant attendance allowance to the list of qualifying benefits and removing the requirement that the impairment must have arisen from a congenital or childhood condition or injury to the brain. Any person who is in receipt of a qualifying allowance and has a certificate from his doctor confirming that his intelligence and social functioning are severely impaired will be entitled to the exemption.

As there has been some misunderstanding on that point, I must make it clear that we will not be specifying by name the conditions that will qualify people for exemption. I think that that was the point which most concerned the hon. Gentleman. That aspect is important, given recent press reports on the difficulties of diagnosing Alzheimer's disease. Anyone suffering from any disorder that is severe enough to warrant the award of the attendance allowance or any of the existing qualifying benefits will be exempted if his doctor certifies that his impairment is a mental one.

The hon. Member for Brightside pressed his amendment and suggested that rather than spending the money that we have made available for the interim relief scheme we should be spending it on rebates, thereby making the existing system of rebates more generous. The hon. Gentleman will know that next year in Britain as a whole about £2 billion will be paid out in rebates, plus another £500 million in income support to help pay community charge bills.

There are two principal problems with the Opposition's amendment. First, it would be wrong to provide yet more permanent help through rebates. That would undermine the accountability which is so central to the working of the new system. Secondly, I doubt whether the Opposition would wish that those on average earnings should lose more than £3 a week next year and receive no help. No conceivable increase in rebates would help that group. It is right, therefore, to target help directly at those who stand to lose the most, and to provide such help on a transitional basis only. Most of the help is likely to go to those on relatively modest incomes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) made a powerful speech in supporting small businesses and the transitional problems that some of them will face. I know that he is extremely knowledgeable on the subject and has been a good friend to small businesses. He referred to the transitional arrangements for phasing in the uniform business rate, revaluation and the impact on small businesses. We have taken the view that protection against increases in bills should apply to existing occupiers only. New occupiers of both new and existing property should not, in our view, qualify for protection in the same way, because when taking on a new property they will know what their new rate liability will be. I understand my hon. Friend's concern, but it must be remembered that the protection for losers under the new system is to be paid for by the gainers, who will have to wait for their full gains. The amendment would postpone further the point at which businesses that are expecting reductions, predominantly in the north and the midlands —this was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson)—will be able to enjoy them.

We must strike a balance between the need to protect losers and the need to complete the transitional process as quickly as possible to secure the benefits of the new system. We think that we have struck the right balance, but I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby had to say. I would be pleased to talk to him further to ascertain whether there is anything else that we can do to meet the problem to which he pointed.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred to the usefulness of some of the documentation that we have provided for the House today. I should tell him that the type does come off some of the documents. The hon. Gentleman asked why Newham does not qualify for the ILEA special grant. The reason is that Newham is not in ILEA.

Mr. Tony Banks: The special grant is available to other local authorities outside London that have nothing to do with ILEA. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain that?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman drew special attention to the ILEA grant. I think that he is referring beyond that to support for additional education needs. If the hon. Gentleman and I are unable to agree tonight, I shall write to him. The grant that is dealt with on the specific page to which he referred is the ILEA one.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West talked about advertising and the campaign that he read about in the newspapers. I want to confirm what was said earlier in the debate, what we intimated by winks and nods and what we intimated orally. We intend through advertising to try to encourage the maximum take-up of rebates and the maximum take-up of interim relief. That is the purpose of the advertising.

Mr. Blunkett: I should like to press the Secretary of State on that point, because it is important to the House. Do the Government intend to use television advertising? If so, do they intend to refer to their transitional scheme, or to rebates that the right hon. Gentleman has just mentioned?

Mr. Patten: We certainly intend to use television for part of the advertising. We have not decided precisely how to allocate advertising for the interim relief scheme or the rebates, but I think that we must ensure that we advertise both schemes as effectively and comprehensively as possible. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are well aware of the parameters for advertising, about which he and some of his hon. Friends have shown such priestly concern.

11.15 pm

Mr. Maxton: Should not the Government give more money to the local authorities—which are much better able to identify those who need rebates—rather than leaving the task to centrally funded television and national newspaper advertising schemes, which, as the Scottish experience has shown, do not really work?

Mr. Patten: I think that national advertising is probably the best way to deal with what are, after all, national issues. I do not, however, rule out the possibility —although not necessarily in this instance—of occasionally using local authorities to get such important messages across, and also using voluntary organisations.

If I have been unable to deal with any points during my brief remarks, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland or I will try to deal with them in correspondence.

This has been a useful debate. It has given us a chance to cover a number of the important changes that we are making to the community charge. By and large, both sides of the House have been able to agree—with one or two honourable exceptions—that the domestic rating system is inequitable and should go. We have put forward our proposals for its replacement. We are still not entirely clear about the Opposition's proposals: they seem as mysterious as Zsa Zsa Gabor's age. When we find out what they are, however, we shall want to provide exemplification so that the public know precisely what the consequences would be. In the meantime, until the Opposition produce their next policy, we will get on with the job of governing the country.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos 256 to 264 and 328 and 329 agreed to.[Some with Special Entry.]

Schedule 5

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1988: AMENDMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 330, in page 162, line 6, at end insert—

"2C. The following section shall be inserted after section 13—

"*Reduced liability*

13A.—(1) The Secretary of State may make regulations as regards any case where—

(a) a person is liable to pay an amount to an authority in respect of a personal community charge as it has effect for any chargeable financial year which is prescribed, and

(b) prescribed conditions are fulfilled.

(2) The regulations may provide that the amount he is liable to pay shall be an amount which—

(a) is less than the amount it would be apart from the regulations, and

(b) is found in accordance with prescribed rules.

(3) This section applies whether the liability to pay the amount mentioned in subsection (1) above arises under

section 12 above or arises under that section read with section 13 above.

(4) The conditions mentioned in subsection (1) above may be prescribed by reference to such factors as the Secretary of State sees fit; and in particular such factors may include all or any of the following—

(a) rates for a period before 1 April 1990;

(b) the circumstances of, or other matters relating to, the person concerned;

(c) an amount relating to the authority concerned and specified, or to be specified, for the purposes of the regulations in a report laid, or to be laid, before the House of Commons;

(d) such other amounts as may be prescribed or arrived at in a prescribed manner;

(e) the making of an application by the person concerned.

(5) The rules mentioned in subsection (2) above may be prescribed by reference to such factors as the Secretary of State sees fit; and in particular such factors may include all or any of the factors mentioned in subsection (4)(a) to (d) above.

(6) Without prejudice to the generality of section 143(2) below, regulations under this section may include—

(a) provision requiring the Secretary of State to specify in a report, for the purposes of the regulations, an amount in relation to each charging authority;

(b) provision requiring him to lay the report before the House of Commons;

(c) provision for the review of any prescribed decision of a charging authority relating to the application or operation of the regulations;

(d) provision that no appeal may be made to a valuation and community charge tribunal in respect of such a decision, notwithstanding section 23(2) below.

(7) To the extent that he would not have power to do so apart from this subsection, the Secretary of State may—

(a) include in regulations under this section such amendments of any social security instrument as he thinks expedient in consequence of the regulations under this section;

(b) include in any social security instrument such provision as he thinks expedient in consequence of regulations under this section.

(8) In subsection (7) above "social security instrument" means an order or regulations made, or falling to be made, by the Secretary of State under the Social Security Act 1986."

"2D. In section 16 (joint and several liability: spouses) in subsection (1)(b) for "(read with section 13 above, where it is appropriate)" there shall be substituted "(or that section read with section 13 or 13A above, or both)"."

Read a Second time.

Amendment proposed to the Lords amendment: (f), in *line 66*, at end insert—

'13B—(1) The Secretary of State may make regulations which—

(a) quantify the aggregate amount of reduced liabilities calculated under a proposed scheme of reduced liability on an individual basis under Section 13A above.

(b) amend any regulations made under Section 135 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to distribute the amount calculated under (a) above by way of increased community charge benefit.

(2) Before deciding whether to make regulations under this section or under Section 13A above the Secretary of State shall consult such bodies representing local government, families with children and old age pensioners as appear to him to be concerned,'.—*[Mr. Blunkett.]*

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 202, Noes 278.

Division No. 365] **[11.18 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob

Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert

Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony

Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger

Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendments Nos. 330 to 399 agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Lords amendment: No.400, in page 173, line 35, leave out "In Schedule 11, in" and insert—

"Schedule 11 (tribunals) shall be amended as follows.
(2) In paragraph 2 (jurisdiction) the following paragraph shall be inserted at the end—
"(c) paragraph 5 of Schedule 4A above,"
(3) In"

Read a Second time.

Amendment made to the Lords amendment: (a), in line 5, leave out '5' and insert '4'.—*[Mr. Chris Patten.]*

Lords amendment No. 400, as amended, agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 401 to 424 agreed to.

Clause 34

GUIDANCE AND CONSULTATION ABOUT PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Lords amendment: No. 13, in page 40, line 46, after "available" insert—

"(i) to such bodies as are representative of commercial or industrial undertakings in their area;
(ii)"

11.30 pm

Mr. David Hunt: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 14 to 19, 309 and 310.

Mr. Hunt: These amendments bring us to part III of the Bill, which is concerned primarily with providing a new economic development power for local authorities and tidying up the scope of their existing discretionary spending power under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Amendments Nos. 13 and 14 relate to the consultation required for local authorities which wish to undertake economic development under the new power. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce argued that where there was a chamber of Commerce, it should be consulted. The amendment will ensure that it is the local authority's duty to do so. It will, of course, remain a matter for the local authority's discretion what other persons or organisations should also be consulted.

Amendments Nos. 15 to 17 provide a power by which the Secretary of State will be able to set out in regulations how the relevant population for section 137 is to be calculated.

Amendment No. 18 will raise from £500 to £2,000 the level of grant provided under section 137 below which a local authority is not required to insist on a report from a voluntary organisation on how the grant was used. Spokesmen for voluntary organisations argued that that would be an appropriate figure, and we are happy to accept that advice.

Amendment No. 19 introduces a new power for local authorities to fund advice agencies. We are glad to accept the suggestion of Baroness Strange, speaking in another place for a number of advice organisations, for an amendment to provide a new general power for local authorities to assist advice agencies. This is done by extending the provisions of section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972, which currently only provides for a power for local authorities to make or assist in the making of arrangements for the provision of information. The fact that local citizens advice bureaux are no longer just providing information but are giving good advice to local people demonstrates how far they have gone with their expertise and experience.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): The Opposition generally welcome the amendments on economic development, especially in so far as they affect voluntary organisations and advice services. We are worried because all these changes can come into effect only if the Secretary of State does not use all the powers that are enshrined in the Bill. Clause 33 in particular gives the Secretary of State extremely wide powers under which he can cap economic development expenditure. The clause effectively says that areas with unemployment above the national average will be unable to use economic development power for financial assistance purposes. We believe that this obscures local pockets of unemployment.

We hope that the Government will announce that the regulations will be used flexibly in future years and will be subject to the widest possible consultations with local authorities and the private sector. This is especially the case on amendments Nos. 13 and 14 where local commercial interests are to be consulted. I should be grateful for the Minister's comments.

Mr. David Mudd (Falmouth and Camborne): Although the Bill has gone a long way towards improving answerability to ratepayers about discretionary spending, it still does not seem to cover a worrying anomaly. The Government, in their response to the Widdicombe report, reaffirmed their faith in the local ombudsman system of answerability and referred in paragraph 6.20 to

> "exploiting the strengths of the current arrangements rather than making fundamental changes which may weaken the system as a whole."

However, one of the weaknesses of the present system is that it can sometimes, by denying ratepayers a chance to argue their complaints, equally deny a local authority the opportunity to clear itself against allegations. In December 1984 and January 1985, Carrick district council passed a minute—No. 1218—which agreed:

> "as a matter of principle the Council support an officer's legal costs in any libellous or slandrous actions taken; and that the chief excecutive, in consultation with the chairman and vice-chairman of the council, be authorised to approve such actions where the actions arose from the pursuance of an officer of his official duties".

Between this controversial minute being passed by the committee in December 1984 and the whole council in January 1985, the words

> "the council support an officer's legal costs"

were strengthened to

> "the council finance an officer's legal costs".

In effect, a council official could merrily proceed with litigation in the knowledge that the ratepayers would have to foot the bill. This possibility led to the unusually high number of cases which were subsequently initiated and which, the then district auditor noted, clearly gave "cause for concern".

Despite repeated submissions from the ratepayers about the legality of minute 1218, the council maintained its faith in it for four and a half years. I do not know how many times it was triggered, although I am advised that when one Cornish newspaper published a reader's letter which was mildly critical of Carrick district council, both the newspaper and the letter writer received letters from the council's legal department suggesting that correspondence should now cease.

In July 1987, a group of ratepayers approached me to complain about certain alleged financial and other irregularities involving the council. I was then asked to request my right hon. Friends the then Home Secretary and the then Secretary of State for the Environment to investigate, as the complainants feared that proceedings would be initiated against them under minute 1218 if they persevered with their complaints by using usual channels.

I established that Devon and Cornwall constabulary was already investigating these matters and that since the creation of the local ombudsman service in 1974 the Secretary of State for the Environment seemingly no longer had powers of independent investigation.

In 1987, the complainants, believing that they could present prima facie evidence of malpractice, found themselves in an impotent, nightmarish and frustrating Catch 22 of monumental proportions. There was no way in which they could go public through Ministers or the media due to the existence of minute 1218. As manifestations of alleged maladministration affected all, as opposed to a few, of Carrick's ratepayers, the local ombudsman could not act. As the allegations of financial malpractice were being investigated and processed by the police, they in turn had become sub judice.

At Truro Crown court in April 1989, the Crown Prosecution Service offered no evidence when a district council official appeared charged with financial offences. It was not until July 1989—four and a half years after accepting minute 1218—that Carrick district council sought and accepted the opinion of leading counsel that the minute was ultra vires and should not be invoked further.

It was estimated that this exercise had cost the ratepayers £2,437. However, it is suspected that that item of discretionary spending may refer only to specific legal advice to officers as opposed to the internal administration charges of the council at various stages of pre-litigation.

As it was clearly a matter of discretionary spending, the complainants tried to persuade the Audit Commission to re-examine Carrick's books for the disputed years. But the commission then declined to reopen accounts after an audit had been completed.

The so-called strengths of the current system for investigation and remedy, so warmly supported in the Government's response to Widdicombe, are of dubious value when we consider this experience of ratepayers challenging discretionary expenditure. An ultra vires minute kept a council's officers and a critical public on an unequal basis for four and a half years. Members of the public were thus prevented from defending themselves against attack from the council chamber by or on behalf of council officers.

The existence of the minute inhibited certain persons from making statements to the police. The district auditor was unwilling to investigate because of the passage of time since the completion of the most recent financial year. The local ombudsman would not investigate because all, rather than individual, ratepayers were potential sufferers from this action. When matters had dragged on for several years, the Audit Commission found itself unable or unwilling to reinvestigate.

I am aware that an ability to challenge such discretionary expenditure exists under section 22(2) of the

[Mr. David Mudd]

Local Government Finance Act 1982, under which the Secretary of State may require an extraordinary audit. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will, on this occasion, exceptionally agree to receive and consider a submission from the complainants. In the meantime, under the existing tried, trusted and strong local government ombudsman system, vilification—rather than vindication—will continue to sour the air of Carrick. The complainants will go unheard and, above all, the council will be denied the clearance from the outstanding accusations that it believes it deserves.

11.45 pm

Mr. David Hunt: I have always been immensely impressed by the diligence and vigour with which my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd) has represented his constituents' views. I have listened carefully to what he has said, and I am aware that he has raised a number of serious issues. As he has already said, the question whether expenditure is lawfully incurred is a matter for the Audit Commission, and it is not for me to intervene in the commission's decisions. The case that my hon. Friend has cited shows that electors who are concerned about any item of local authority expenditure should act promptly.

I ought to preface my remarks by saying that I am certain that most local authorities are scrupulous about the propriety and legality of their expenditure. Where illegality is suspected, there is a perfectly adequate regulatory system. Electors can draw to the local authority auditor's attention any item of expenditure which, in their opinion, has been incurred unlawfully by their council. The auditor can choose to look at any such item brought to his attention and can rule it to be unlawful expenditure under part II of the Local Government Finance Act 1982. If the expenditure is unlawful, the auditor can seek a declaration from the court to that effect and the court may surcharge the expenditure on those who authorised it.

My hon. Friend has raised matters that go back some considerable time. I therefore propose to ask the Audit Commission to let me have a report on the case and if my hon. Friend will agree to it I shall come back to him when I have made further inquiries.

The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) asked about the capping reserve power. Clause 33 permits the capping of economic development, but we have made it clear that the power to cap such expenditure is very much a reserve power. We have made it absolutely clear that at present there are no cases in which we would regard it as reasonable to use the power. On the question of flexibility, I remind the House that we have issued a consultation paper. We have received many comments and we are now studying them. We have every intention of using the powers conferred in the Bill flexibly within the overall aim of ensuring that resources are concentrated on the areas that most need assistance. I hope that that reassures Opposition Members.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 14 to 19 agreed to, one with Special Entry.

Lords amendments Nos. 309 and 310 agreed to.

Clause 64

APPLICATION OF, AND ORDERS UNDER, PART V

Lords amendment: No. 81, in page 70, leave out lines 43 to 45.

Mr. David Hunt: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 82 to 111.

Mr. Hunt: These amendments were agreed with the Opposition in another place to improve part V of the Bill which deals with the interests of local authorities in companies. It is our intention to introduce an order setting out the rules for those local authority companies. We have invited responses to the consultation by early December and it is our intention to draft the regulation as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr. O'Brien: As the Minister explained, part V of the Bill deals with companies in which local authorities have an interest. In Committee and in the other place questions were put to Ministers about issues that are not on the face of the Bill. Part V has consequences for the operations of local authorities which are encouraged by the Government to enter into company organisations for economic development, trusts, charitable trusts, housing associations and for recreation and leisure. Many companies are formed through the co-operation of local authorities and private organisations. Part V raises questions which must be answered.

We are worried about the influence of the Secretary of State on part V through regulations. In this House and in the other place the Government did not bring forward any substantial evidence of abuse by local authorities and the companies with which they are involved.

According to part V, companies that fall within the control or influence of a local authority will count against a local authority's capital allocations and thereby raise substantial obstacles to working with the private sector to promote economic regeneration and to conserve local employment. We would like to see part V withdrawn.

We have noted that the Minister referred to the fact that some agreement has been reached, so I hope that he will be able to respond to some points that I want to make now. In Committee I referred to a company that might be formed in west Yorkshire in relation to the mining museum established by the local authorities in Wakefield, Kirklees and the former South Yorkshire county council and the West Yorkshire county council. We asked how the Bill would affect the company that has been formed to run that mining museum, and the Minister replied:

> "Our officials at the Department of the Environment are ready, willing and waiting to give advice on the structure of the trust. At present I do not know what it is. That is nobody's fault. Perhaps the hon. Member for Normanton will ask the secretary of the trust to outline it in a letter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, or to me, and we shall do whatever we can to help. We are also prepared to meet representatives of the trust."—*[Official Report, Standing Committee G,* 11 April 1989; c. 767.]

The representations were made and we were advised that the trust should move from being an involved company to an arms-length company—or one that would not include local authorities to the extent that it had previously.

In the House of Lords, Lord Hesketh was asked about the difference between a controlled company and an influenced company. Officers of the Department advised the trust to which I referred to move from being a controlled company to being an influenced company. What are the benefits of that change?

In the House of Lords, the Minister was asked:

> "Can the Minister give more information about the difference between a controlled company and an influenced company? The exact difference is not made clear in the Bill. I particularly have in mind the Yorkshire mining museum which at present is a controlled company but has already been advised by the Minister in another place that it might be advisable to consider restructuring. But would restructuring mean for such a company that the restrictions and controls imposed upon it would relate only to the borrowing controls? Would all other financial controls be removed from such an influenced company?
>
> Would an influenced company still be eligible for a share of local authority provisions through the European Community? Would such a company be able to continue to take advantage of the services of a local authority such as specialised legal, financial, administrative and personnel services?"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 July 1989; Vol. 501, c. 1256.]

Those questions have been asked in this House and in the other place. Lord Hesketh promised that they would be answered in a consultative document which was issued last month. However, only one question was answered. Will the Minister now explain the real consequences of the change from a controlled company to an influenced company? It can affect many companies that are formed and influenced by local authorities. The answers to those questions will help local authorities to decide how to form their interest in certain companies.

I should like to probe many other issues, but, in view of the lateness of the hour, if the Minister is prepared to answer my questions we will at least obtain some satisfaction.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I should like the Minister to consider the question of building preservation trusts—an issue which was fully and effectively raised by Lord Montagu of Beaulieu in another place. Building preservation trusts represent valuable self-help in the preservation of our architectural heritage. In my constituency, the Berwick preservation trust is one of the pioneering bodies in this matter. Most are known as revolving trusts, which carry out a project, sell the resultant improved building, and use the capital on another project, thereby ensuring that many historic buildings in historic towns are saved and that capital continues to be used for further restoration work. That is a million miles from the Government's various anxieties to which the Bill is directed. Leaving aside for a moment whether those anxieties are justified—I seriously doubt it—how will the Minister ensure that building preservation trusts' work is not impaired by provisions which were conceived without reference to their problems and which bore no relation to the world in which they operate?

My greatest fear is about borrowing powers. Companies caught by the definition in part V of the Bill will be subject to the regulations in part IV affecting local authority borrowing. Many building preservation trusts have a close association with their local authorities, to which they look for practical help and often like to have a good representation of local authority people on them.

The end result of the provisions could be that borrowing by a controlled or influenced preservation trust from any third party, including the architectural heritage fund, would count against the relevant control total for the local authority. Therefore, the local authority will have to approve the building preservation trust's borrowing in advance and to have a degree of influence over it that the authority would never have sought in the first place. If the provisions are still in that form, and if the Minister cannot give me some fresh assurances, he will end up with local authorities exercising more influence rather than less and doing so in a way that they would not have sought. In addition, the work of preservation trusts in attracting new funds and capital into the projects will be impaired.

12 midnight

I know that the Minister in another place, Lord Hesketh, gave assurances that the matter should be discussed. Indeed, a meeting was held in August between the Department of the Environment, English Heritage and the various other bodies involved but, as far as I am aware, we are not a lot further forward except that we know that the Minister may make some kind of exemption under the powers that have already been referred to. However, it would have been much more satisfactory to have a class exemption, exempting the whole category of building preservation trusts. Anything less than that, which still leaves the borrowing powers under some threat of involvement with local authority borrowing in general, is not satisfactory. I am sure that the Minister does not want to harm the work of building preservation trusts, and I wish that he would make it absolutely clear that he will disentangle them from the Bill.

Mr. David Hunt: I reassure the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that I recognise the important work done by building preservation trusts. We have said that we shall exempt building preservation trusts that are registered with the architectural heritage fund from being influenced companies. I understand that the exemption has been accepted by English Heritage and the architectural heritage fund as removing any such problems for such companies. If the hon. Gentleman would like to raise any other points with me, perhaps he will get in touch with me after the debate.

I can advise the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) that I have the consultation paper with me. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman missed annex D, which sets out clearly the differences between influenced companies and controlled companies. There are eight points on influenced companies and five points on controlled companies operating at arms length, with a further four points on other controlled companies. If the hon. Gentleman will look at annex D, he will find that the provisions are set out simply. If he has any further queries, perhaps he will let me know. That would be better than my reading out the whole annex and putting it on the record.

I understand that my Department's officials had a meeting with the trust about the West Yorkshire mining museum. We understand that the trust is content with the position as explained to it. The Department did not, of course, advise on any particular action because it is for the company to make up its own mind, but the consultation paper that we issued clearly sets out the trust's position. A copy has been sent to the West Yorkshire trust.

I readily accept that these are technical matters. As the hour is late, I shall simply advise the hon. Member for Normanton that, if he would like to raise any further points, I should be glad to hear from him and perhaps we can deal with them at a later stage.

Mr. O'Brien: I am grateful to the Minister for taking the trouble to introduce the consultation document. I appreciate its reference to interpretation. However, two points are not made clear in the document. One is the question of the availability of EEC funds for charitable trusts, and in particular for the West Yorkshire mining museum. Secondly, would such bodies still be able to use the expert knowledge of local authority officials, such as their legal, personnel and financing people, without breaching any of the provisions of the Bill?

As the consultation document does not make those two points clear, I should be grateful if the Minister or his officials would take the time to consider them and to let me have their observations.

Mr. Hunt: I believe that it is clearly set out, but I shall write in more detail to the hon. Gentleman.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 82 to 111 agreed to.

Clause 37

APPLICATION OF PART IV

Lords amendment: No. 20, in page 44, line 32, at end insert—

"(bb) a trust to which, by virtue of an order under section 69 below, the provisions of section 66 below are applicable; or"

Mr. Hunt: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, we may discuss Lords amendments Nos. 21 to 45, 46 and amendment (a) thereto, 47 to 80 and 311 to 317.

Mr. Hunt: These are technical amendments. Part IV replaces a ramshackle collection of legislative provisions spread across 31 Acts of Parliament dating back to 1875.

Mr. Tony Banks: Aha! The last Labour Government.

Mr. Hunt: Part IV replaces the present capital control system which, in recent years, has served the interests of neither central nor local government.

The regulation-making powers concerning the reserved part of capital receipts have been widened. We intend to use them to give exemptions, by regulations, in the new system for what are known as in-and-out schemes in the present system. We are consulting on our proposals. We have also announced proposed exemptions that will help local authorities to dispose of land for subsidised rented housing.

We have taken a regulation-making power to allow local authorities that have set aside more than sufficient sums to repay all their debt to use the surplus for specified purposes. We intend to allow debt-free authorities generally to spend all their future receipts, with the exception of receipts from large-scale housing transfers or other housing sales that are not to sitting tenants. We hope to reach a decision on the treatment of such housing transfers shortly.

I believe that the new system of capital finance will ensure a much fairer and more rational distribution of capital resources between local authorities.

Mr. Murphy: I do not agree with the Minister's latter comments, but we welcome some of the changes that have been made in another place.

I shall concentrate on amendment (a) to the Lords amendment No. 46. The fact that my comments will be short and that we will not press the amendment to a Division does not indicate its significance. The amendment would reduce from 75 per cent. to 50 per cent. the reserved part of capital receipts. As a result, local authorities would be able to spend the money that they were responsible for creating. They built the houses. They provided the initiative and the houses that are being sold. It is clear to any sensible person that receipts from sales of those houses should go back to the local authority areas. The amendment asks the Government, yet again, to consider reducing the amount of capital receipts that is reserved, so that half of the money can be put back into the local authority area which generated it.

District councils in Wales recently highlighted the depressed level of provision for housing in Wales, which is at a very low £80 million net. We must also consider the problems of people who are waiting for houses. Some 70,000 people in Wales alone are waiting to be housed. Only this week it was announced that homelessness in the Principality has risen by some 20 per cent. The possibility of houses being built for the homeless, the disabled, single people and elderly people could be achieved at a stroke if these capital controls were altered.

Local authority associations are pressing the Government to allow them to retain the additional spending power of receipts as a major incentive to themselves. I agree. They also draw attention to the bad effects of restricting the use of receipts.

These arguments were well expressed in Committee, and they were highlighted again in the other place. This is the last time when we can tell the Government that the issue of capital receipts is by no means technical, but one that affects the lives of millions of people.

The Government have said that if the amount of spending power from receipts increases, the amount available for distribution through credit approvals, on the basis of needs, decreases. Thus, high need, low capital receipt authorities will be disadvantaged if the reserved part provisions are relaxed. Ministers have been quick to point out that local authority associations that represent those high need, low resources authorities have not been vociferous in their opposition to the Government's proposals. That is not the case. Local authority associations in general think that the aggregate provision is inadequate to deal with today's housing problems.

We believe that a reduction in the reserve part of housing capital receipts from 75 per cent. to 50 per cent. would generate £900 million spending power in one year. I believe that the Government would change their mind as quickly as possible if they considered what that sum of money could do to alleviate our housing problems.

The local government associations have voiced great concern about the timing of the introduction of the new capital control system in 1990-91. The Minister, and all hon. Members who have been involved with local government, would agree that one of the problems in the past has been the inability to plan for housing or any sort of capital provision over a number of years. Unless Parliament and Government give local authorities the opportunity to spend money in a planned programme, well in advance, nothing substantial will be achieved.

The Government should reconsider such changes so that local authorities in Wales and England can plan their housing provision for years to come.

Mr. Tony Banks: The sale of council houses and the way in which local authorities have been effectively conned by the Government is now becoming palpably clear even to the most myopic Conservative Members.

The policy was effectively sold on the ground that the money that local authorities got in capital receipts from the sale of council housing could then be applied to the building of further council housing. There was a certain symmetry in that argument that appealed to Conservative Members and even to some Labour Members. We now realise that that is no longer the case. Gradually the amount of money that can be applied in any given year has been steadily reduced, but, until the most recent changes, at least it still meant that 100 per cent. of capital receipts over a period of time could be used for further capital investment in council housing stock. That is no longer the case and tonight is the final twist in Government policy. Conservative Members used the Government's argument about the sale of council housing to justify accepting it hook, line, and sinker. I hope that they now realise that they have been conned by their Government.

A vigil is now being held outside No. 10 Downing street for homeless people in London. The plight of the homeless in London has now reached a crisis level that one could never have dreamt of in one's worst nightmares five years ago. The Government must realise that the situation in London is so dire that unless local authorities are allowed to go back to the full construction of council housing one trembles to think what London will be like in five years time.

Surely the Government must realise that their sale of council housing policy, linked to a refusal to allow local authorities to use capital receipts for further construction, is a disaster. It was a twist and a con from the start; now it has turned into a tragedy for millions of people who are desperately anxious for improved accommodation.

There are now hundreds of thousands of homeless in London and they will be pointing their fingers at the Government and blaming them for the housing crisis that now afflicts London and the nation.

Mr. David Hunt: It is a question of getting the balance right. Part IV of the Bill is designed to redress the balance between spending from allocations and receipts to ensure not only that needs are met, but that those authorities that generate receipts get a reasonable benefit from doing so.

The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) pointed out that my predecessors highlighted the fact that similar amendments in the past would have resulted in a cut of £900 million in credit approvals. That means that £900 million less would be targeted on the authorities that need to house the homeless. No doubt the answer would be simple to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)—let local authorities spend the receipts, but do not cut the credit approvals. That may be the Labour party's response, but it is not the response of any party which aspires to responsible control of public expenditure, and it certainly will not be this Government's response.

We have heard a lot about local authorities being unable to spend their own resources on their own priorities. Let us be plain about what those resources are. They are the proceeds of assets which the local authority has sold, the original purchase of which was mainly financed by borrowing. The cost of that borrowing has been, and often still is, supported by the national tax payer through housing subsidy, Government grant and the like. Why should that continue once the asset has been sold? We are not taking the resources away, but simply saying that it is right that some of them should be used to repay the authority's debt.

12.15 am

It is not as if we are stopping local authorities using any of their receipts for new capital expenditure, because next year local authorities will be able to spend nearly £4 billion from their receipts. That is a huge sum in anybody's terms.

Mr. Soley: Does the Minister realise that all his hon. Friends in the Association of District Councils which are Conservative controlled, as well as Lady Anson, who is a Conservative and chairs that organisation, think that he is totally wrong and that the Government should do what my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) suggests? Why does he say that all Conservative-controlled ADCs have got it so badly wrong and he is the only person to have it right?

Mr. Hunt: With due respect to the hon. Gentleman, his analysis is badly wrong. I am saying that the Government believe that what we are proposing represents the right balance between targeting resources on needs and having a proper incentive and reward for generating receipts, which is why I urge the House to resist the Opposition amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 82 to 111, 20 to 80 and 311 to 317 agreed to, one with Special Entry.

Further consideration of Lords amendments adjourned.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

To be further considered this day.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community Documents.)

DISCHARGE OF DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES TO WATER

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8337/88 and the Supplementary Memorandum submitted by the Department of the Environment on 10th July 1989 relating to the control of discharges of dangerous substances to water, and supports the Government's efforts to secure the future selection of substances for priority action according to clear, scientific criteria.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

Health Care, Hackney

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Sackville.]

11.18 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I wish to address the problems of the Health Service, specifically those in Hackney. The crisis faced by the Health Service is multi-dimensional. I do not intend to deal with every aspect, but I cannot let time pass without referring to the imminent and horrifying possibility, for those interested in patient care, of the Army being used as strike-breakers in an ambulance workers' dispute in which the ambulance workers have at no time threatened emergency care or services.

I wish to deal with three aspects of health care in Hackney: first, the cuts in the level of provision; secondly, the horror of free market principles being applied to the Health Service; and, thirdly, the future of St. Bartholemew's hospital. We hear a lot from the Government about their notion of themselves as the custodians of our Health Service. We have heard the Prime Minister say that the Health Service is safe in the Government's hands. We in Hackney are not aware of this. All that we have seen in the past is a series of savage cuts in the level of provision.

In the past few years in my part of London we have seen not one, but six, hospitals close down. We have lost the Mothers' hospital, most of the provision on the site of the Hackney hospital, the German hospital, St. Leonard's hospital and the Metropolitan hospital.

When the Mothers', Hackney and the German hospitals were closed, we were promised compensatory provisions at the new Homerton hospital. The promise of a new hospital dates back to 1976, and, although phase 1 was built, phase 2 has been delayed for almost a decade. The consequence is that a small group of some of the most pathetic patients—the elderly, the mentally ill and the psychogeriatric patients—remain in what is left of the site of the old Hackney hospital.

I challenge the Minister to visit that site, which is now almost wholly evacuated. It is like a ghost hospital. The buildings are more than 100 years old and they are a fire risk, yet it is there that some of the most pathetic and deprived clients of the Health Service are forced to live out their days. The conditions have been described by consultants as both unpleasant and inappropriate. Despite the superhuman efforts and dedication of the staff, many of my constituents—vulnerable, elderly and psychiatrically ill patients—are being forced to linger on in a derelict, virtually slum environment.

It appears that phase 2 of the Homerton hospital, which would save those psychiatrically ill patients from such conditions, may be postponed indefinitely. That shows a shocking lack of good faith by the health authority. Therefore, I have raised this matter this evening for one main reason—to urge a swift commitment from the appropriate authorities to end the years of delay and forthwith to set in train the building of phase 2. Hundreds and hundreds of pathetically ill, elderly and psychiatric patients are waiting for an answer to the problem.

There have been cuts in provision and the closure of local hospitals without any compensatory new facilities. Further cuts in provision have occurred because the health authorities are very short of money, through no fault of their own, because of the consequences of inflation, under-funded wage settlements, increasingly complex cases and the increasing price of drugs.

As a consequence of that under-funding and the shortage of money, the City and Hackney are suffering a series of bed closures. St. Bartholomew's hospital has a capacity for 850 beds, but it is funded for only 600 and currently it is virtually half empty. It is a flagship hospital —the oldest hospital in London—that has marvellous, purpose-built wards for cancer, geriatric and psychiatric patients, but they are mothballed and empty. If that is the operation of the free market, it is the economics of the madhouse. Week in and week out I receive letters from my constituents who for years wait in pain for surgery while Bart's is half empty because of the Government's refusal to make the funds available to enable the hospital to utilise all its beds.

During the past few weeks there has been an announcement that, because of chronic under-funding, 75 beds at Bart's are to be closed, 100 agency nurses are to go, cleaning and catering jobs are to be cut, and offices are to be cleaned only once a fortnight. General practitioners are complaining locally that it is far more difficult now to get acutely ill patients into hospital. Patients arrive and have to wait six hours for a bed. Bart's however, has been forced to stop using 75 beds.

How can the Government say that the Health Service is safe in their hands? Bart's is famed for its health care throughout the world. It is full of doctors, student doctors, nurses and ancillary workers who wish only to serve the public, and there is the poor community of Hackney with its pressing needs. I repeat the question: how can the Government say that the Health Service is safe in their hands? As a result of their failure to make the correct level of funding available, Bart's is having to close beds and mothball wards. The part of east London which I represent has had to face real cuts in provision.

A new and grotesque concept that the caring Clarke, the Secretary of State for Health, has presented to the Health Service is called acute sector productivity. What does that term mean? It is one of many euphemisms that have been presented to us over the years for cuts in provision. This so-called productivity means more patients using the same number of beds with the same number of staff, or fewer staff. Patient throughput might make sense in terms of a production line in industry, but when it is applied to health care it is grotesque and leads to real suffering.

One of my constituents, Mrs. Mann, lives on the Woodberry Down estate. She is 88 years of age and registered as blind. She has been treated for Parkinson's disease. She has high blood pressure and a heart condition. In June, she was admitted to the Whittington hospital. After a stay of about one month she was discharged because her bed was needed. Within 24 hours of discharge she was found collapsed on the floor of her flat. She was taken to the Homerton hospital the same evening but sent home again because no bed was available. In the end, because of the direct intervention of her GP, she was readmitted to the Whittington hospital, but only for three days. Once more, she was discharged. All that happened in the name of increased throughput. On Friday 8 September, when she was discharged, she found herself sitting in a chair day and night because she was unable to get herself in and out of bed. Eventually her home help became so concerned that she called the GP, who diagnosed a chest infection and hypothermia.

Ministers seem not to understand that increased patient throughput leads inevitably to an increased level of readmission. That is the result of patients being sent home far too early. In Hackney, there is poor housing and social services are overstretched. There is insufficient support for those who were hospital patients. A consultant at Bart's has said:

> "Consultants are already cutting corners in order to get patients out of hospital, in many cases before they are ready to cope in their home circumstances."

What sort of political and managerial philosophy lies behind the treatment of my constituent, Mrs. Mann? I believe that it stems from a balance sheet. It is based on figures and ignores patient care and the social and economic realities that face many of those who are dependent on the Health Service. It seems to me that the philosophy of the so-called "caring Mr. Clarke" will downgrade the traditional, solicitous in-patient care to the status of a hokey-cokey hospital service—in, out, in, out, shake them all about.

The notion that money can be saved in the Health Service by increasing throughput—particularly when applied to hospitals serving the kind of deprived constituency that I represent—although it may lead to increased patient throughput in the short term, will lead to increased patient misery in the medium term, along with a decrease in service and care, and a decline in the high standards that we have come to expect from our Health Service.

I want to talk about the future of St. Bartholomew's hospital, because it is a subject of great concern to the people of Hackney. They look to Bart's as the major teaching hospital with Hackney in its catchment area. Bart's is the oldest hospital in London: it was founded in 1123, and founded with a mission—I quote from the original draft—to

> "minister to the necessities of the poor gathered together in that place"

and to be a house for

> "the care of the sick poor".

What will the proposal for Bart's, the Homerton and the other hospital in the district to opt out as a self-governing trust mean to the necessities of the poor, and the care of the sick poor? I believe—and the people of Hackney believe—that it will inevitably mean that the needs and demands of the working class people in the vicinity of Bart's will be neglected in the drive for profit and profitable specialties.

We hear of plans involving sponsorship from Marks and Spencer and, for the first time, private wards at Bart's. That is an extraordinary falling-off from the original idealism of more than 800 years ago, and I suspect that St. Bartholomew is turning in his grave as our thoroughly modern Ministers, with their free-market slide rules, slowly demean a still great hospital to the production-line numbers game of a battery-hen factory.

The plan for Bart's—to open it up to private medicine so that it can minister to the yuppies of the City—can, I believe, be achieved only at the expense of health care for the immediate community. If that is not the case—if Ministers are convinced that for such a hospital to opt out will mean no dropping-off in service, and possibly even an improvement—I challenge them to allow the local community to have a say in whether their local teaching hospital should be allowed to opt out. I suspect that they will not be allowed it, for at no point in the documentation issued on the matter are local people or patients given any say in whether their hospitals opt out.

The future of Bart's, that great old teaching hospital —that great old centre of learning, teaching and care, in the words of its founders, "for the sick poor"—is, I feel, a paradigm for the future of the Health Service. The market is to be all; the local community and patients are not to be allowed a say. It will all be reduced to the managerial philosophy of the accountant, of the balance sheet, of making the figures match.

We know from talking to consultants, doctors, nurses and ancillary workers at Bart's that, although the majority have been prepared to declare an interest in the proposal, that majority also feel that they have no option. If they had a free choice, they undoubtedly would not choose to opt out.

Inner London, particularly my district of Hackney in east London, will face a Health Service crisis at Christmas. If we have a severe winter and a rise in the number of people using the accident and emergency unit, the number of bed closures will mean that we shall be unable to cope. Due to the Government's arid balance sheet manipulation, due to their failure to fulfil promises about new build in the district, and, above all, due to their mindless espousal of market forces as opposed to the humanitarian and caring impulses of the founders of hospitals such as Bart's, the people of Hackney are facing a health care crisis as never before.

I challenge the Minister to dispute that fact. I challenge him to say that he will make money available so that Bart's can fill its beds instead of being obliged to have closed wards. I challenge him to say that he will make money available so that Bart's will be able to make good the 100 or so agency nurses that it has had to get rid of. Above all, I challenge the Minister to say that the Government will make a reality of their boast about the National Health Service and that they will face up to the real meaning of market place ethics when they are applied to health care.

I challenge the Government to commit themselves to making available money for the building of phase 2 of the Homerton hospital. Finally, I challenge them to admit here what the founders of Bart's knew 800 years ago: that when it comes to the care of the sick, when it comes to the needs of the sick poor, when it comes to

> "waiting upon the sick with diligence"

the ethics and thinking of the market place have no real place. Even at this late hour and at this late stage, I challenge the Government to reconsider their far-reaching proposals for the Health Service, to think about the damage that they are wreaking, and to reflect upon the health care crisis that is facing the inner cities.

12.37 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I share the great concern of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) for the wellbeing of the citizens who live in the catchment area of the district health authority. I part company, however, with her analysis of the district health authority's problems and her prescriptions for the future. I do not share her view that it is an arid exercise to consider resource implications. Governments of whatever political persuasion have to consider the proper allocation of

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

resources so as to ensure that the money allocated to district health authorities is used in the most efficient way possible.

The hon. Lady knows that by professional background and training I am an accountant. I do not believe that the application of sound financial management and practice is inhumanitarian. The reverse is the case. The most humanitarian way to run the National Health Service is always to be concerned about using scarce resources in the most efficient way. She knows that in 1989-90 the City and Hackney district health authority has been allocated just over £100 million. She also knows that there have been no cuts in that district. Gross revenue expenditure by the City and Hackney district health authority rose from some £70 million in 1982-83 to just over £100 million in the current financial year. That represents a very significant increase in cash terms and in real terms. I find the hon. Lady's reference to cuts in the district difficult to comprehend.

Ms. Abbott: Is it not the case that Bart's has recently had to close 75 beds?

Mr. Freeman: If the hon. Lady will permit me, I shall be happy to deal with that in the eight minutes left of this Adjournment debate.

Before I do so, I should like to tell the hon. Lady that I visited Hackney earlier this year to look at the community psychiatric services. I know that the hon. Lady will join me in congratulating the district health authority on its organisation of those excellent services. I visited the community psychiatric research unit which is based at the hospital. The unit was funded originally through the generosity of David Sainsbury and is now funded by the district health authority. I met the directors, Dr. Turner and Mr. Adrian Lovet, and I visited two people who were living in their own flats with support from the district health authority, having left psychiatric care at the hospital. I also visited two group homes, one at Clapton common which is run by the local mental health association and one in E8 run by a local voluntary organisation called Vanguard Housing. I was very impressed by what I saw. I have reached the conclusion that community psychiatric care is working in Hackney and I congratulate all those involved.

The hon. Lady referred to patient throughput. I remind the House that the discharge of patients from hospital is a matter of clinical responsibility. Doctors, not hospital administrators, take decisions about when people are discharged. The national trend in Britain, together with many other western European countries, is that the average stay in hospital is getting shorter. That is to be welcomed. Patients generally prefer to leave hospital as quickly as possible after they have been medically treated. I am advised that in the City and Hackney district health authority, day surgery increased by 22 per cent. between 1982 and 1986. That is excellent.

The Labour party's common belief that the quantity, though not necessarily the quality, of health care in the National Health Service can be measured by the number of beds available is misleading. What counts is not the number of beds but the number of patients treated. Patient throughput in the City and Hackney area has gone up, and that is the best measure of health care.

The hon. Lady might be interested in the 1987-88 Körner Health Service indicators for the City and Hackney. I hope that she has studied them, but if she has not had the chance to do so I should be happy to send her the statistics. The document states:

> "Throughput values ranged from the high values for Ophthalmology and Gynaecology to the low values for Trauma and Orthopaedics and General Surgery/Urology. Lengths of stay for patients over 65 years were high or very high for all specialties except Ophthalmology. For patients age 16-64 years they were mostly mid range except for very high value for General Surgery/Urology. They were also very high for Paediatrics. Day case rates were mainly mid range except for the high values for Ophthalmology and Gynaecology."

Therefore, patient throughput needs to be examined by specialty.

The hon. Lady asked me to comment on the situation at Bart's and I am happy to do so. Three wards have been closed temporarily. The hon. Lady knows that two have been closed for operational reasons of maintenance and fire safety and one has been closed for financial reasons. The hon. Lady mentioned the financial difficulties not only for Bart's, but for the entire health district. North East Thames regional health authority recognises the position of the City and Hackney and is in discussion with the district about what can be done to ameliorate the present situation.

One of the main causes of the potential overspend in City and Hackney health authority is due to the increased numbers of cases being referred to St. Bartholomew's hospital from outside the district requiring complex and intensive nursing care. As a result, the authority has had to use additional agency nurses and ask nurses to work increased overtime.

The hon. Lady will know, if she has studied the White Paper "Working for Patients", that that document carries an excellent message of hope for Bart's, a major teaching hospital, and I trust that she will join me in hoping that legislation, if presented, will receive a swift passage, since it will bring hope to her constituents and represents an excellent message for the medical staff at St. Bartholomew's.

That will be the position because money will follow the patient. The hon. Lady will know that only about 30 per cent. of patients treated at Bart's live in the district. About 70 per cent. come from outwith the district. Thus, our proposal that money should follow the patient will mean that, through the mechanism of contracts, resources will flow from surrounding districts to Bart's in those specialties in which, as the hon. Lady rightly said, Bart's has an outstanding reputation.

We shall end the efficiency trap by which consultants and doctors who work hard eat up the fixed resources in their budgets more quickly and then, halfway or two thirds of the way through the year, find themselves having exhausted their budgets and having to curtail their activities. We do not want that to happen in future. We want greater flexibility in the funding of the NHS, and the Government's White Paper, presented earlier this year, foreshadowing legislation, will be of great assistance, not only to the hon. Lady's constituents but to the NHS in general.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fourteen minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 7 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PENZANCE ALBERT PIER EXTENSION BILL

Motion made,

That so much of the Lords Message (2nd November) as relates to the Penzance Albert Pier Extension Bill be now considered.

That the Promoters of the Penzance Albert Pier Extension Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first, second and third time and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 9 November at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

West Midlands (Resources)

1. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has assessed the extent to which the formula for funding of the regional health authorities adequately reflects the needs of the West Midlands regional health authority.

2. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the allocation of National Health Service resources for the west midlands.

5. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the future funding of the West Midlands regional health authority.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The new regional allocation formula reflects the relative need for health services of west midlands residents by taking account of the size, age structure, and health of the region's population. I have received several letters about allocations to west midlands region, including a number from hon. Members and one from the chairman of the regional health authority.

Mr. Shepherd: I am grateful for my right hon. and learned Friend's reply. Is he aware that there is considerable concern in the west midlands that the resource allocation does not reflect regional needs? Is he aware further that Herefordshire is one of the fastest growing areas in the region in terms both of population size and of age? Because of that, even now, the health authority is finding it difficult to sustain the level of service that the Government expect from it. Can we look forward to future resourcing which will properly and accurately reflect demographic trends and the full implications of patients from Wales going to Herefordshire for treatment?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is concern in the region at the moment. That concern stems largely from a debate that has arisen on the technical planning guidelines that we have given this year. I ask everybody in the west midlands to wait until allocations of funds are made to the west midlands, which will be after the Autumn Statement has been announced. I remind everyone in the west midlands that under this Government the allocation to the west midlands has increased dramatically. It is now up by 37 per cent. in real terms since we took power. That compares with a 30 per cent. increase to health authorities across the country.

Hereford has particular problems because of the age structure of its population and the other factors that my hon. Friend has described. The region will be expected to take them into account when making allocations to the district, just as we shall take all west midlands population features into account when we make eventual allocations to the region.

Mrs. Hicks: I acknowledge the welcome overall increases for the National Health Service in the forthcoming year, but will my right hon. and learned

Friend take on board the obvious anxiety of three west midlands hon. Members who are asking three of the first five questions today and who are naturally genuinely concerned about any talk of reductions? Obviously, from what my right hon. and learned Friend is saying, we do not have cause for concern. May I therefore take that message back to Wolverhampton health authority, which has done a splendid job in managing its resources, and may I tell it that its efforts will be rewarded and not penalised?

Mr. Clarke: It seems to me—I only guess—that three Conservative Members from the west midlands have acted promptly after a letter was sent to all west midlands Members by the chairman of the regional health authority. I commend to my hon. Friend a reply that I sent to the chairman of the health authority, pointing out that no cuts of any kind are proposed and also pointing out our excellent record in increasing resources to the west midlands. I am sure that when the regional chairman gets the eventual allocations he will seek to reflect my hon. Friend's concern by allocating further growth money to the Wolverhampton health authority.

Mr. Gill: I am grateful for my right hon. and learned Friend's answers. When he considers the allocation of funds, will he use his best offices to ensure that demographic and geographic factors in Shropshire, as opposed to other parts of the west midlands, are truly reflected? Will my right hon. and learned Friend care to consider for one moment that the allocation of funds generally has been more generous to health authorities in Wales, which adjoins my constituency?

Mr. Clarke: I certainly give that undertaking to my hon. Friend. Shropshire has certainly done well in recent years. It has a new district general hospital, which now gives the county two extremely good district general hospitals and, in addition, one of the best orthopaedic units in the country, at Oswestry. The district has done very well in the allocation of funds in recent years. The region was able to give an additional £7 million, or a 9·1 per cent. increase, to Shropshire in this year alone. That is a rise of 206 per cent. in cash terms, or 32 per cent. in real terms, since the Government took office. That does not include £0·75 million that the district received in waiting list initiative money. I am sure that when the allocations of cash are made this year when the results of the autumn spending round are announced, the region will make a proper allocation to Shropshire to reflect all the demographic features of that county.

Mr. Fisher: Is the Secretary of State aware of the recent university of Leeds survey on health in north Staffordshire, which shows that 50 per cent. of men in Stoke-on-Trent die before they reach pensionable age and that in one part of my constituency the life expectancy for men is less than 62 years? How, therefore, can he justify re-weighting the mortality rates, which has led to the shift in resources of £56 million over the next three years from the west midlands to the rich south-east?

Mr. Clarke: I am aware of the study, which underlined the great need to improve the health status of the population of the Potteries. I suspect that historically the health status of people living in that industrial area has not been so good as that of the rest of the country. As I said in my first supplementary answer, since we came to power we have given a much bigger increase in funds to the west midlands than to the rest of the country—and certainly greater than we have given to the south-east. Our new arrangements for distributing money are simpler than those that we had before. They reflect the comparative needs of the regions and still contemplate a comparative shift of resources away from London to other parts of the country.

However, whatever formula one comes up with, it is possible to make a case in favour of each and every one of the 190 districts in the country. The formula we are using is the fairest, taking account of all the competing health needs of the different districts.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Secretary of State make it clear whether next year under his new formula he expects the west midlands to get more or less money than this year? Is he aware that the North Birmingham health authority, with the Good Hope hospital in Sutton Coldfield, is currently £500,000 overspent and faces having to close wards and beds and to cut services? What is the Secretary of State going to do about that?

Mr. Clarke: I expect the West Midlands regional health authority to get more money next year, as it has every year during the lifetime of this Government. The exact amount will become clear when we make the allocations to the regions after the Chancellor has announced the results of the Autumn Statement, which will be shortly. The West Midlands regional health authority has never had so much money at its disposal for the National Health Service as it has at the moment. It is greatly increasing its patient care and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's district health authority is treating more patients this year than it ever has in the history of the National Health Service. It is a weakness of the management of the Health Service that even when more money is poured into it it has mid-year crises because the management cannot match the expansion of services with the money—*[Interruption.]* The reason for reforming the service is to improve control over that money so that we can have steady and sustained growth instead of the checks to growth that the hon. Gentleman has just described.

Mr. George: If the Secretary of State is still talking to Sir James Ackers—I am not sure that he will be after the right hon. and learned Gentleman's intemperate letter of 24 October—will he guarantee to hon. Members representing Walsall that the final tranche of the £2·4 million to allow the new district general hospital to open on time will actually be made?

Mr. Clarke: Sir James Ackers is one of my oldest personal friends—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] He is also one of the very best chairmen of regional health authorities in this country. It is an experience of life that when extremely good and competent people are running things there are sometimes fairly robust exchanges between them. My exchange corrected his letter, but he and I remain on excellent terms. When I next meet him I will take up with him the question that the hon. Gentleman has asked because I realise how important it is that we open this new and important facility at the earliest possible moment.

Dame Jill Knight: Could my right hon. and learned Friend shortly inform his great friend the chairman of the west midlands authority that when dealing with the new basket of money he should bear in mind that to both the public and to Conservative Members it is totally unacceptable that women who have reason to suppose that they may have breast cancer should have to wait many months to be sure about it because of the shortage of money, or that a man who has kidney stones, when there is a lithotripter available, cannot have his condition alleviated because of lack of money? That point worries many of us.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend has made strong representations recently to Sir James and to myself about proposed changes at the Birmingham women's hospital and she was able to ensure that no reduction of service was planned there. I am sure that Sir James is aware of the shortcomings of the service to which she has referred, and as we put more money into the West Midlands regional health authority, I trust that he and the region will ensure that the district health authorities are put in a position to tackle them.

Mr. Robin Cook: Perhaps I can help the Secretary of State in his difficulties with his Back Benchers. Why does he not tell them that their dissatisfaction with funding is evenly spread across the country? Did he see last week's survey by NAHA, the National Association of Health Authorities, which concluded that all health authorities face financial pressure and that nine out of 10 are having to make cash savings in this financial year? Does he recall describing last year's Autumn Statement, which left those health authorities in the red, as a "quite spectacular boost" in health spending? Is he really asking the House to believe that that spectacular boost was all frittered away by bad management? Or is the truth the fact that no health authority got the cash it needed to meet the real rate of inflation?

Mr. Clarke: That is quite absurd. The Health Service as a whole is spending more than £2 billion over and above what it was spending a year ago. That is an increase—taking a pessimistic view of inflation—of about 4 per cent. in real terms over and above inflation. The hon. Gentleman should do his homework and stop making wild assertions about the increase being below the level of inflation. The NAHA report is therefore against the background of the health authorities having more money to spend than they have ever had before, a quite spectacular rate of growth in their resources this year and every health authority throughout the country treating more patients this year than it treated last year and expanding its services. Only the hon. Gentleman thinks that there are no shortcomings in management revealed by the fact that they still get themselves into short-term crises towards the end of the year when they have had such a huge influx of funds. It is essential that we tackle those management weaknesses, because then we can get even more out of the enormous increases in funding that the Government are putting into the service.

"Working for Patients"

3. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the implications of the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" for education and training.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): The Government are committed to maintaining the quantity and quality of education and training by and for the National Health Service. Our proposals in respect of medical and dental education were set out in "Self-Governing Hospitals: An Initial Guide" in June. Our proposals for the education and training of key non-medical staff groups are set out in working paper 10 published last month.

Mr. Porter: Can my hon. Friend confirm that under these proposals NHS hospital trusts will play a full and proper part in education in the Health Service and that regional health authorities which, after all, have a natural and proper role, will also play a part in continuing education in the NHS?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can strongly confirm the points made by my hon. Friend. The NHS trusts not only will play their full part in promoting education, but they will want to do so; they will want to be seen as centres of excellence committed to the NHS, of which they are a full part. The role of the regions has been further clarified in the recent working paper to which I referred, and not only in securing but in funding education and training, not only in assisting in medical education but in the training of the important non-medical groups which play an important part in the Health Service.

Mr. Kennedy: Does the Minister agree that, as well as the health professionals who are directly affected, the patients have a legitimate interest in what will happen to the education and training of those professionals if hospitals choose to opt out? That being the case, what proposals does the Minister have for the involvement, consultation and democratic rights of patients to have a say about a change in status of an NHS hospital?

Mrs. Bottomley: There is no question of any hospitals opting out of the NHS. The NHS trusts will be full members of the service. The whole purpose of the Government's proposals is to put patients first, and patients will benefit from having highly qualified, well-skilled staff looking after them in the NHS.

Mr. Paice: I welcome my hon. Friend to her first Question Time as Minister for Health. Is she aware that the proposals and new regulations for the training of hospital doctors have put in jeopardy the future of Newmarket general hospital, which services a large part of my constituency? Will she give an undertaking that if the proposals to downgrade that hospital, because of the new regulations, come to her or to her right hon. and learned Friend, they will be carefully examined bearing in mind that such downgrading would be to the serious detriment of all the patients in my constituency?

Mrs. Bottomley: The Government obviously take the training of doctors extremely seriously as they are fundamental to the future of our Health Service. There are now 14,000 more doctors than there were in 1979 and they are all well qualified and well skilled to meet health needs. I should be more than happy to meet my hon. Friend to discuss the hospital in his constituency in more detail and to review that matter carefully.

Perfusionists

4. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects the number of perfusionists employed by the National Health Service to reach its target.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): There is no national target for the number of perfusionists, who are staff who work the heart and lung machinery in cardiac surgery, to be employed in the National Health Service. It is for health authorities to arrange appropriate staffing levels in the light of local needs.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree that that is an unsatisfactory reply? He must know that it has been estimated that the NHS needs 200 perfusionists, but at present has only 90. Will he also accept from me that perfusionists not only operate the heart and lung machines in cardiac surgery but are vital in the treatment of lymph cancer? Until the Government recognise the new technique of limb perfusion for the treatment of lymph cancer and recompense those few excellent hospitals that seek to treat lymph cancer by limb perfusion for the high cost of that treatment, we will never reach a satisfactory solution to the present tug of war between the cardiac surgery departments and lymph cancer departments of every hospital that can offer limb perfusion? People are virtually begging for that treatment, which is vital.

Mr. Freeman: We are well on target to meet the 1990 aim of some 15,000 bypass graft operations for cardiac patients. With effect from 1 September we have introduced into the NHS a new flexible pay-grading structure for technicians. They have greatly welcomed that structure and it will help us to ensure that the 1990 target is met.

Mr. Sims: Does my hon. Friend agree that perfusionists play a key role in operations ranging from heart bypasses right through to complete organ transplants? Is he aware that 22 perfusionists left the NHS within the past 12 months and that perfusionists are not specified in the grading letter to which my hon. Friend referred? They feel unrecognised and inadequately rewarded. Will he consider their case seriously to see whether he can do something about their numbers because that is vital?

Mr. Freeman: I agree with my hon. Friend that perfusionists perform a vital task in cardiac surgery and elsewhere in our hospitals. I draw to his attention the fact that they have welcomed the new flexible pay-grading structure. I shall, however, certainly reflect on what my hon. Friend has said and I shall have a close look at the letter that we issued to the Health Service.

Mr. Ron Brown: I do not believe that any right hon. or hon. Member would disagree that the argument about perfusionists is important, but surely it is more important at this time that we resolve the ambulance drivers' dispute, which has been imposed on the people——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was a good try, but I am afraid it is miles wide of the question.

Capital Expenditure Plans

6. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make it his policy to remind chairmen of regional health authorities of previous ministerial assurances concerning capital expenditure plans.

Mr. Freeman: It is the responsibility of regional health authorities in conjunction with district health authorities to draw up plans for capital expenditure on hospital and community health services. Ministerial assurances that capital projects will go ahead are given in conjunction with regional health authorities and will be respected.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend remind the chairman of the North Western regional health authority that Ministers have made pledges on at least four occasions since 1983 that Bolton new hospital would start this year? We are still waiting despite the fact that more than 100 schemes have been commissioned in the north-west since 1979. Will my hon. Friend also ensure that no new formulas are used that would adversely affect the north-west because of a change in the way in which the standard mortality ratio is used?

Mr. Freeman: Perhaps I can re-emphasise to my hon. Friend and to my other colleagues from the north-west and other parts of the country where capital projects have been discussed—and I use my words advisedly—that where ministerial assurances have been given that capital projects will go ahead, those promises will be honoured.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister think that the present capital programme will overcome the difficulties facing patients in the west midlands who go to an optician for an eye test, discover that their sight is defective, and then require a referral to an eye hospital? Those patients have to visit their doctors, who then contact the Birmingham and Midland eye hospital, which is giving appointments 30 months hence. Is that not part and parcel of the problems that Sir James Ackers raised with the Secretary of State and was publicly humiliated for his endeavours?

Mr. Freeman: We need no lessons from the Labour party about capital expenditure plans. This Administration has increased capital expenditure to a total of £1·2 billion this year.

Self-governing Hospitals

8. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the implications for patient care of the proposals to allow hospitals to become self-governing National Health Service trusts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Self-governing NHS hospital trusts will remain firmly within the NHS, but they will have far more freedom to take their own decisions on the matters that affect them most without detailed supervision from my Department and the health authorities. This will give a better quality service and encourage other hospitals to raise the quality of their services.

Mr. Gale: Can my right hon. and learned Friend tell us what further steps his Department intends to take to rebut the black propaganda being peddled by the Opposition and ram home to the public the fact that the Health Service reforms, while they may not be welcomed by every leader of every Health Service union, are designed to improve patient care, which is what the Health Service is there for?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I will take every opportunity to do that. In fact, I am today launching a small newspaper advertising campaign to bring home to the public the improvements in the family doctor service that will result from the new general practitioner contract that the House has approved.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Secretary of State aware of the case of the Royal Scottish National hospital, which is home to about 800 mentally handicapped patients, where in a recent ballot of employees more than 95 per cent. rejected the management's proposal for opting out? How can the Government justify going ahead with such damaging proposals when they have been so resoundingly rejected by the overwhelming majority of staff involved in the front line of patient care? The only people who seem to support opting out are a few pen-pushing bureaucrats with no first-hand experience of patient care.

Mr. Clarke: Scotland has a fully devolved system of Government and that is a responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. *[Interruption.]* The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), is present and if it were in order I am sure that he would reply in connection with the hospital to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

I am familiar with other ballots that were organised in several English hospitals for which I am responsible. On the whole, at this stage, they are something of a waste of time. What usually happens is that the local council, the Labour party or the trade unions begin by giving a preposterous description of the proposals to the staff and then take a ballot in which the staff say they do not like that rather unpleasant description of the proposals. When we have proper applications for self governing status as hospital trusts, which I shall receive and welcome after the House has given assent to the necessary legislation next summer, there will be full public consultation about what is proposed for the hospital and the improvements in the services that the hospital can offer to the patients as a result of self government. At the moment, the political ballots are distracting attention from the real work of getting ahead with the preparations.

Mr. Pawsey: May I offer my right hon. and learned Friend my thanks for two things? [HON. MEMBERS: "Too many."] There would be more——

Mr. Speaker: Make it just one.

Mr. Pawsey: First, I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for approving additional consultants for the Rugby health authority and for giving the green light for self-governing status for St. Cross hospital. Does he accept that both those things are warmly welcomed and will do much to improve the quality of health care in the Rugby area?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I think that when people encounter what is happening to the Health Service nowadays they feel similar reactions to the new units opening across the country and to the expansion of patient services that is taking place. I contrast my hon. Friend's question with questions asked by Opposition Members who represent districts that have had huge increases of resources for their hospitals and huge increases in the number of patients treated yet who continue to raise obscure points which they claim show that the service is going into reverse.

Ms. Harman: If the right hon. and learned Gentleman believes that opting out is in the patients' interest and that patients should have a choice, why, as Secretary of State, has he not arranged that in each of the 79 areas patients should have a say through a ballot? Has he made arrangements for them to have a say in any of the 79 areas that are applying to opt out?

Mr. Clarke: I have repeatedly explained that we have no applications and we shall have no applications until the summer of next year. When the applications come in they will be worked up with details of what is proposed and the plans for the development of service that the sponsors propose. I have always said—indeed, the White Paper says —that at that stage there will be full public consultation. At the moment all that is being arranged is absurd political propaganda by the Labour party followed by local ballots asking selective and tendentious questions. There will be more serious public consultation when the applications come in.

NHS Reform

9. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any additional funds are being made available for the implementation of the Health Service reforms.

10. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to increase expenditure on accountants and statisticians in the National Health Service in preparation for his plans in the White Paper.

Mr. Freeman: We have made available the sum of £82 million for implementation work this year. This includes £12 million to strengthen the finance function in health authorities and hospitals. This funding will be over and above continued improvements in patient care.

Mr. French: I welcome that news, but will my hon. Friend undertake continuously to monitor the funding needed for implementing these reforms so that unavoidable and unforeseen extra expenditure can be taken into account without precipitating a crisis that will place the entire reform programme in jeopardy?

Mr. Freeman: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. Spending for this year, at £82 million, although a significant sum, still amounts to only 0·4 per cent. of the total budget for the NHS in England, a budget which is growing this year by about 10 per cent.

Mr. Bennett: Can the Minister explain how it is possible for the Government to find extra funding to put forward their doctrinaire plans yet not possible for them to find extra funding to settle the ambulance dispute, to reduce the hours of junior hospital doctors or to ensure that we have enough nurses? Have not the Government got their priorities wrong; do we not need the money to be spent on patients rather than on statisticians trying to prove that the Government are doing better than they are?

Mr. Freeman: No, Sir. The additional funds required to improve the management of the Health Service are designed to improve the control of expenditure of finite resources. Good financial management is necessary for better patient care.

Mr. Couchman: Can my hon. Friend reassure the House, as my right hon. and learned Friend reassured the BMA, that no patient will suffer for lack of medication, whatever the need or cost, as a result of the impact of his proposed indicative budgets?

Mr. Freeman: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. There are no proposals to cash-limit drug prescriptions by general practitioners.

Mr. Morley: Is not the Minister's preoccupation with accountants more to do with the fact that the Government propose to run hospitals more like grocery stores than as a service to the community? Would it not be better if he addressed himself to the fact that hospitals are run on team work and that many groups of workers—laboratory technicians, physiotherapists and X-ray technicians—feel that they do not have a career structure or salary that reflects their commitment to the communities in which they work?

Mr. Freeman: The NHS in the United Kingdom consumes £26,000 million. Surely the hon. Gentleman will therefore accept that we need the best possible methods of controlling that vast expenditure.

Mr. Latham: Will it be clearly understood by the accountants and statisticians that through extra efficiency they will be expected to recover more than the £12 million that it will cost to recruit them?

Mr. Freeman: Absolutely.

NHS Reform

11. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on his review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Excellent progress is being made on the implementation of the proposals set out in the White Paper "Working for Patients". I am confident that our proposals will lead to an even better service for patients.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Secretary of State take the opportunity of the Health Service review to review also the financial position of Project 2000 nurses who have to work under the fear that bursaries will be transferred to loans? Will he say something to allay the fears of those nurses?

Mr. Clarke: We have made wholly reasonable provision for the bursaries of Project 2000 nurses. I think that my proposals have been welcomed by the Royal College of Nursing. We have no intention of moving student nurses to the loans proposal and intend to continue to provide for them by bursaries. We are almost exclusively the sole employer of trained nurses and it makes no sense to introduce the loan scheme to student nurses in the National Health Service.

Mr. Yeo: Will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in condemning the British Medical Association and those of its members who are maliciously suggesting that they may run out of money when they have to prescribe drugs for their patients? The main objective of that campaign appears to be to frighten patients into opposing the Government's reforms.

Mr. Clarke: I very much hope that all GPs have now stopped doing that because I know that until recently some were saying that rather vigorously to their patients. The BMA has now accepted that there was never any question of refusing necessary treatment or drugs for patients. Obviously, it is quite wrong for individual patients to be frightened by people who still persist in that misunderstanding. No doubt in some cases it was merely misunderstanding.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Contrary to the Secretary of State's earlier statement, may I assure him that, unfortunately, we in Scotland do not have a devolved system of government? Is he aware that the Scottish Office, which has responsibility for the provision and administration of the Health Service in Scotland, has advised that there will be no separate legislation on the reforms? Who will take the decisions about the Health Service in Scotland? Will it be the Secretary of State for Health or the Scottish Office?

Mr. Clarke: If I might give the perspective of an English Minister, I can assure the hon. Lady that Scotland has a fully devolved Health Service. I have absolutely no responsibilities for Scotland and I take no decisions about the Scottish Health Service at any time. Those decisions are in the hands of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. He and I both need changes in the legislative framework before we can implement the reforms that have been put forward in the White Paper. The way in which the reforms are carried out in Scotland will be wholly the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: In the review of the National Health Service, from which my constituents will benefit substantially when money follows the patient, will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that in my constituency we have many elderly people and two very old mental deficiency hospitals for which more funds are required? Will he please see that enough money is pushed into the north-west so that we can have a generous allocation for those services?

Mr. Clarke: In my opinion all parts of the National Health Service will benefit from the new system because we will be matching resources more closely to the delivery of expanding services in the manner that my hon. Friend rightly described as money following the patient. Lancaster will benefit particularly because at the moment it draws in many patients from outside its district boundaries for which no adequate financial provision is made under our present arrangements. It will be important to distribute money to the district health authorities which will have to make decisions about where to put the money in order to get the service that they require in a way that reflects the make-up of the population, demographic trends and so on of each district. They should certainly bear in mind the age structure in Lancaster to which my hon. Friend refers.

Community Care

12. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he intends to ensure that standards of assessment for community care services are of a national minimum quality.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authorities will be responsible for carrying out assessment, in collaboration with medical, nursing and other interests. Further information on the procedures will be contained in our White Paper on community care, to be published shortly.

Mr. Griffiths: The Minister told the House on 17 October that the Government were committed to advocacy for the disabled, so why have they delayed shamefully the implementation of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1987? The Minister referred to local authorities, so why have the Government postponed meeting local authorities to discuss these matters, which are so critical to disabled people?

Mrs. Bottomley: The proposals in the White Paper will be a milestone in the provision of care for those who need to be cared for in the community. They will offer the opportunity of assessment and appropriate care rather than the perverse incentives that have taken place in the past. The provisions of the Disabled Persons Act will be reviewed in the light of the proposals once they have been announced.

Mr. Soames: Is my hon. Friend aware that now that so many beds are provided in the private sector for the care of the elderly, the generally held view is that there is not sufficient liaison between the private and public sectors for the care of the elderly? Is my hon. Friend satisfied, within the context of the report, that everything possible is being done to obtain that important information?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend addresses a key point. What matters to the elderly is that provision is available and there is a choice of provision. Our proposals for care in the community will allow for an equal playing field, which will in turn allow choice, variety and proper inspection. No more will either the public or the private sectors be disadvantaged.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Is the Minister aware that Sense, the organisation of and for blind-deaf persons has issued a clear statement in which it says that the tragic case of Beverley Lewis might not have taken place had the appropriate sections of the Disabled Persons Act been implemented? Will the Government accept that they have on the statute book the opportunity to prevent such dreadful cases from taking place, and will they make sure that this Act is implemented with all possible speed? Will the Minister also resume negotiations with the local authorities?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will know as well as I do of the danger of springing to too many conclusions on one tragic and appalling case. We are looking carefully at this case and will learn lessons as appropiate. I draw to the hon. Gentleman's attention the provision, recently announced by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, of further services and attention to the needs of the mentally ill.

Prescriptions

13. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of National Health Service prescriptions are free of charge; and what is the comparable figure for 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1988, 77·5 per cent. of prescriptions dispensed by pharmacies were dispensed free of charge. This compares with 60·9 per cent. in 1979.

Mr. Knapman: Is it not basic common sense that the one person in four who can readily afford to make such contributions should do so, thereby further expanding NHS services?

Mrs. Bottomley: Yes. The prescription charge is relatively modest and it is appropriate that the one in four who can reasonably pay should do so. The Government's responsibility is to put patients first—to ensure that resources are used effectively and efficiently—and the fact that there has been such a significant increase in the number of prescriptions given free of charge is a demonstration of the Government's commitment to patients.

Mr. Robin Cook: By what percentage have eye tests dropped since they stopped being free of charge? Will the Minister confirm that, on present trends, we are on course for 3 million fewer eye tests this year?

Last year, the Secretary of State told the House that he did not believe the optometrists when they warned that charges would deter people from having eye tests. Given the stark evidence of the dramatic drop in the number of eye tests, do Ministers believe that now?

Mrs. Bottomley: I will take no sermons from the hon. Gentleman about the provision of care. We intend to review the take-up of eye tests but it was, after all, the hon. Gentleman's party, when in office, which cut capital spending, nurses' pay and the NHS budget. This Government have increased nurses' pay, and allowed record spending on the Health Service, which has led to an extra 25,000 patients a week being treated. We have a record to be proud of.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that 92 per cent. of the cost of drugs is paid by the taxpayer? Does that and the wide variation in drugs prescribed by doctors not underline the case for indicative drug budgets?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has made his point well and I endorse it.

Finance

14. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to reassess the way in which the financial needs of the National Health Service are determined each year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The Government will continue to assess the financial needs of the NHS within the context of the annual public expenditure round.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Minister admit that talking about additional expenditure on the Health Service beyond the retail prices index is meaningless when costs within the Health Service rise ahead of the RPI, and the number of old people who need treatment means there is additional need for expenditure? Will the Minister take that into account during the next public expenditure review?

Mrs. Bottomley: It is not meaningless for the 70,000 extra nurses who have been employed by this Government. It is not meaningless for the 14,000 extra doctors who have been taken on. It is not meaningless for the nurses who have received a 45 per cent. increase in pay and it is not meaningless for the £4 billion hospital building programme.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, then I shall depart for the United States of America to address the United Nations General Assembly.

Mr. Cohen: Has the Prime Minister seen the statement by the chairman of the Police Federation, Alan Eastwood, in which he said that the police do not have the necessary paramedical expertise to man ambulances? The same is true of the Army. Why are the Government putting lives at risk by treating ambulance men and women as the latest enemy within? Have the Government put them on low pay because they think that saving lives is cheap?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman is correct in his underlying assumption that it would be far better if the ambulance men were to carry out their normal duties, bearing in mind the fact that most other people in the Health Service settled for 6·5 per cent., and that the London ambulance men have been offered well over 9 per cent., backdated to April. That is why it would be better if the ambulance men were all at their posts dealing with emergency services and with the nine out of 10 patients who are non-emergency but need to be conveyed to hospital.

Mr. Onslow: Does my right hon. Friend agree that elections in Britain are fought on issues of principle and policies, which must rule out an Opposition that have neither?

The Prime Minister: Yes. My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. I agree that the Opposition drop principles and policies when it is expedient, but this Government stick to both. It is that sticking to principles and policies, and passing out as many powers and responsibilities as possible—and enterprise—to people, that have enabled us to create more wealth than ever before, to spread it more widely than ever before and to have a higher standard of social services than ever before.

Mr. Kinnock: When the Prime Minister was asked why the Chancellor resigned, why did she not tell the truth?

The Prime Minister: If my right hon. Friend had wanted to resign on a point of policy, I could have understood that. Policy is a matter for Ministers. I find it totally incomprehensible that someone who has held the office of Chancellor with high standing for six years should want to resign over personality—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: Over personality, with such suddenness and haste.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister appears to be the only person left in the country who does not understand why the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer, resigned. Is it not the truth that the right hon. Gentleman said to the Prime Minister, "Either the adviser goes by the end of the year or I go now"? Why cannot she admit that truth?

The Prime Minister: Policy is a matter for Ministers, advice is not. I tried to persuade my right hon. Friend not to go but it was quite clear that he was determined to go, and go that day.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend take steps to ensure that the 1982 principles agreed by the United Nations Security Council, which stand part of resolution 435, are honoured and upheld in Namibia following the elections in that country which began today?

The Prime Minister: I know that my hon. Friend takes a special interest in these matters and that she is aware that resolution 435 lays down that there should be elections to a constitutional convention. She will be aware also that if the winning party gains only a simple majority, the matter remains for the United Nations representative. It it gains 66 per cent., the winning party can draft the constitutional convention. We do not know what will happen. I have absolute faith in Mr. Ahtisaari, the United Nations special representative, who will decide on all the evidence whether the elections have been free and fair. That is a matter for him, and only him, to decide. We put our whole trust and confidence in him in making the correct decision.

Q2. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thompson: Is the Prime Minister aware of the widespread anger and consternation in mining areas that has been expressed by miners and private mine owners about the importation of foreign, subsidised, slave-labour coal? Is she aware also that British mines have increased their productivity by 90 per cent. and profit by 30 per cent? Is not this a case for buying British?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the enormous sums of investment that have been put into the mining industry during the lifetime of the Government—about £2 million for every working day over the past 10 years. That should enable the mining industry to be highly competitive and, therefore, to compete with other coal which could otherwise come in, which would be subject to transport costs. I hope that the industry will be competitive, but we cannot long continue in Britain having people who, when they go shopping themselves, expect to have the benefit of competition and when they produce themselves to expect to have the benefit of protection.

Mr. Lord: Does my right hon. Friend agree that haemophiliacs who have been accidentally infected with the AIDS virus have a unique case both for the sympathy of the nation and the full support of the House? Will she today instruct those who have the managing of these affairs to have done with their legal wrangling and allow these people the compensation and the peace of mind that they surely deserve?

The Prime Minister: I have a good deal of sympathy with what my hon. Friend says. He will know that a considerable sum has been given to a trust that has been set up for the benefit of these people. It is very similar to trusts which have been set up in other countries. My hon. Friend will be aware, as his supplementary question suggested, that there is a legal case pending. I think that we must wait for the result of that. In the meantime, I make the point that the trust provides about the same amount as has been available to these people, who have suffered so much, in other countries.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kennedy: Does the Prime Minister feel that her diminishing credibility in the office of Prime Minister would be somewhat salvaged were she to follow yesterday's advice which was offered her by her dear friend Sir Edward du Cann, who suggested that a leadership challenge would clear the air? In the event of such a development, does the right hon. Lady think that her position would be unassailable?

The Prime Minister: The comment from behind me was that a party that cannot decide its own name is hardly in a position to criticise anyone.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the London borough of Barnet on the fact, admitted in *The Sunday Times*, that the best exam results were obtained in that borough? Does she agree that it is no coincidence that the best school exam results come from Conservative boroughs and the worst from Labour boroughs?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I gladly join my hon. Friend in congratulating Barnet. We both represent constituencies in the borough of Barnet. Its educational results are quite the best and it has some good Members of Parliament too.

Q4. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clelland: Does the Prime Minister recall telling the nation on television just a week ago, that she did not know why the Chancellor had resigned? Can she explain why someone whom she described as, "Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant", was unable to explain clearly to her that he would have stayed if Alan Walters had gone?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman must have prepared his question carefully before he heard my previous reply. I have nothing further to add.

Q5. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Porter: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what fresh steps she can take to protect and promote Britain's interests with a fair and even-handed allocation and enforcement of quotas, restrictions, rules and regulations within the EC?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, we scrutinise draft directives carefully. Frequently, they are perhaps not best suited to the conditions in this country. Directives are also scrutinised by the House. I entirely agree with him that we must watch them extremely carefully, and, bearing in mind that he comes from a fishing area, that we must be careful that the fishing quotas are not undermined by the Community.

Miss Hoey: What advice would the Prime Minister give to a young person sleeping on the streets in my constituency tonight who cannot get a home because he cannot get a job and cannot get a job because he cannot get a home?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady will be aware that a great deal of extra money has been allocated to homelessness, particularly to building through the Housing Corporation—some £815 million this year. She will also be aware that there are now 100,000 more vacancies on youth training schemes than people taking them up, that income support is available for young people and that housing benefit is available to 16 and 17-year-olds in great need at the same rate at which it is paid to older applicants. A great deal has been done and I am sure that she will bear in mind all those matters when she takes up cases.

Q6. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hannam: Tomorrow, when my right hon. Friend speaks on the environment at the United Nations, will she point out that the most effective way of protecting the environment is through energy efficiency, in which Britain has a superb record,—having achieved a 33 per cent. reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from electricity generation—and that our level of energy efficiency is twice the average for countries in the European Community?

The Prime Minister: Yes. My hon. Friend has delivered Britain's excellent record on energy efficiency. It is very good, indeed it is better than that of many of our competitors. He will also be aware that since 1973 we have increased output by about 26 per cent. That was achieved with a reduction in energy usage of 4 per cent. That is a good record which augurs well for the future. It is extremely important for the environment that we continue to be a keen and active supporter of greater energy efficiency.

Q7. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Eadie: As many people are wondering whether the Government team in office this week will be the Government team in office next week, I wish to ask the Prime Minister an easy question. Does she feel entirely happy when her Foreign Secretary—[HON. MEMBERS: "Which one?"] Yes, which one? Does she feel entirely happy when he goes to the United Nations? Does she feel wholly happy that he will be sitting next to a representative of the Pol Pot regime?

The Prime Minister: On the hon. Gentleman's point about changes, I have the impression that the Opposition Front Bench has changed recently and that there are now rather more CND people on it than there were before.

Clapham Junction Accident (Report)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the results of the inquiry into the Clapham junction rail disaster of December 1988.

I am publishing today, as a Command Paper, the report by Sir Anthony Hidden on his investigation under the Regulation of Railways Act 1871 into the causes and circumstances of the accident.

I know that I speak for the whole House in expressing my deepest sympathy for the relatives and friends of the 35 people who died as a result of the accident. Our sympathies go, too, to the many people who were injured, some of them seriously and some of whom are permanently disabled; and to the many others, both passengers and rescuers, who bear the mental scars of that harrowing day.

Equally, I speak for the whole House in paying tribute to the many people who gave unstintingly of their skills, courage and kindness that day; policemen, ambulance men and firemen, doctors and nurses, railwaymen and local authority staff, and, not least, members of the public. As Sir Anthony Hidden comments, a deep debt of gratitude is owed to them all.

Sir Anthony Hidden concludes that the accident was caused by faulty wiring work carried out on Sunday 27 November 1988 during a major investment programme to modernise signalling on the lines into Waterloo. That faulty work could and should have been discovered through routine checks, but the wiring was not checked and the fault was not found.

During later resignalling work on Sunday 11 December a wire that should have been removed two weeks before was accidentally moved. That made an electrical connection into the Clapham junction signal box that passed false messages to one of the signals on the main line into Waterloo.

The investigation has revealed major defects in the way in which British Rail's southern region signalling and telecommunications department organised resignalling work and supervised and tested completed wiring. The report makes 93 recommendations. Some are directed towards preventing a recurrence of an accident of that type; others are addressed to securing improvements in British Rail's management and organisational systems for safety. Others are directed to the emergency services, and some to the Government.

I am asking BR to deal promptly with all the recommendations addressed to it, and to report to me on their implementation within three months. Many of the recommendations are based on BR's suggestions or on the conclusions of BR's own internal inquiry. BR has already taken action to implement those, although in some cases Sir Anthony Hidden recommends faster implementation. In particular, BR is already committed to two important new developments—automatic train protection, and the installation of cab radios.

BR has anticipated some of the additional cost of implementing the report in its current spending plans. I have endorsed that provision in full. BR will need to consider what further expenditure will be required. I can assure the House that finance will not stand in the way of the implementation of the report.

I have today written to the chairmen of London Regional Transport and the passenger transport executives asking them, where appropriate, to consider their own systems carefully in the light of the report, and to report to me on their proposals for implementing the relevant recommendations within three months.

While the inquiry was sitting, two further railway accidents took place—at Purley on 4 March 1989, and at Bellgrove two days later. Separate inquiries into those two accidents have been carried out by the railway inspectorate and the reports will be published in due course. At my predecessor's request, Sir Anthony Hidden and his team considered whether there were any common issues between the accidents. His report does not suggest that there was any single underlying cause. His wider recommendations were made in the light of all three accidents.

As I have said, some of Sir Anthony Hidden's recommendations are addressed to the Government. The report recommends that railway legislation should be reviewed, and the powers of the railway inspectorate widened and clarified. We shall introduce the necessary legislation as soon as an opportunity arises. Meanwhile, most of the changes can be implemented by administrative action. Where this has not already been done, I have asked that action should be taken urgently by both my Department and BR.

The report asks me to ensure that the railway inspectorate is adequately staffed to implement the report. Additional inspectors are being recruited and their numbers will be expanded as necessary.

The report recommends a thorough study of appraisal procedures for the safety elements of investment proposals. All investment submissions which come to me for approval already include a specific section on safety issues. My Department will discuss with British Rail what further improvements can be made.

The report asks the Government to ensure that British Rail is allocated sufficient frequencies to operate cab radios effectively. We have now allocated five new frequencies to British Rail and given it access to two others. That fully meets its requirements.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health has considered the recommendations addressed to his Department. He has already introduced a review of the health services' response to major incidents with a view to preparing revised guidelines. His Department has accepted the remaining recommendations which affect it.

I have considered Sir Anthony Hidden's recommendations on the costs of representation at the investigation and have accepted them in full.

Finally, I am very grateful to Sir Anthony Hidden and his assessors for their thorough investigation and their clear and constructive report. I know that Sir Robert Reid and his board are determined to make sure that the lessons of this tragedy are thoroughly learnt and properly implemented. The necessary action will have the Government's fullest support.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull): Our thoughts today are with the relatives and friends of the 35 people who died and those who were seriously injured in this terrible tragedy who will be looking to the House to learn all the lessons of Sir Anthony Hidden's report and to take immediate action. Therefore, we support all that has been said by the Secretary of State on that matter.

[Mr. John Prescott]

We welcome the Secretary of State's endorsement of the tributes to the work and courage of all those in the emergency services—the police, the fire and especially the ambulance services—who were on the scene within 10 minutes of the tragedy, and to the many others who were involved.

I am sure that the House will wish to share Sir Anthony Hidden's public condemnation of those few reporters who caused considerable distress by harassing relatives and their families, and support his call to those who have it in their power to prevent such practices in the future.

We congratulate Sir Anthony Hidden and his staff on their report, and on the professional and thorough way in which they carried out their task, producing a report which shows clearly that safety has suffered at the expense of financial and commercial considerations.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the report reveals starkly the dangers of policies that led to the presence of overworked, exhausted staff, many of whom lacked proper training, and who suffered from low pay and poor morale? That was due to a management that strove so hard to achieve tough financial and commercial targets set by the Government that basic safety concerns were lost. The report is thus a powerful indictment of both inadequate management and the Government's policy.

Surely the report demands a rethink by both the Government and British Rail's senior management of the policies adopted over the past 10 years. Does the Secretary of State now accept the need for an independent railway inspectorate, outside the influence of his Department, with more staff and greater powers and involved in every aspect of safety?

Sir Anthony Hidden recommends the introduction of automatic train protection systems, cab radios and black boxes. As the Secretary of State received the report in September, can he now tell the House how much such measures will cost, and give us an assurance that he is ready to give the go-ahead immediately for that vital investment—especially as British Rail's chairman told the inquiry that unless public funding was provided the Government must bear responsibility for the consequences?

Does the Secretary of State share my concern at the fact that one third of the signalling and telecommunications staff involved in the resignalling work had not had a day off for 13 weeks, and that another third had had only one in a fortnight? Does he also share Sir Anthony Hidden's concern about the cuts in staffing levels? Staff numbers in the permanent way, signals and telecommunications section have been cut by 18 per cent. in the past five years.

Is it not apparent to the Secretary of State that those cuts are a direct result of the 51 per cent. cut—a cut of more than £2 billion—in Government grants to British Rail over the same five-year period? Does he agree with Mr. Maurice Holmes, director of safety, who, in a letter to a colleague that is quoted in the report, expressed concern at the fact that a business-led approach to management was in danger of eroding safety standards in British Rail? Is it not clear from the report's recommendations that that is indeed the case?

When the Secretary of State issues a new set of objectives to the board, will he ensure—unlike his predecessors—that safety is seen as being as important as efficiency or cost-cutting? Will he comment on speculation that the report has been passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions? Does he agree that there has been a clear legal understanding that all transport operators, including British Rail, should have corporate responsibility for the safety of their operations?

Will the Secretary of State adopt a new approach to management, investment and revenue support so that never again do we see tired, overworked, demoralised staff make a fatal error on a dark, cold Sunday evening as they rush to finish the work before the Monday morning rush hour?

Mr. Parkinson: I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) for the gracious way in which he acknowledged the work done by the emergency services and by Sir Anthony Hidden.

Let me deal first with a central point to which the hon. Gentleman returned throughout his remarks—the suggestion that safety had been put at risk because of shortage of funds. British Rail made it clear in its evidence to the inquiry that its spending on safety had never been constrained by the shortage of funds. The hon. Member consistently fails to understand that British Rail's revenue has increased more quickly than the grant has decreased. Therefore, the cash resources available to British Rail for investment have been growing. British Rail is pursuing the biggest investment programme for 25 years.

The report makes it clear that even if there were constraints on investment expenditure in the late 1970s, when the hon. Gentleman's party was in government, and the early 1980s, those constraints have been eased and that a full investment programme is now being carried through. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should read the report a little more carefully, but it is a big document and I know that he has not had it for long.

Mr. Prescott: Two hours.

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman keeps on talking about management's contribution. Management does not shirk its responsibility, but I draw his attention to at least two occasions in the report when the unions' attitude is quoted by Sir Anthony. He says that unless the unions start to adopt a more flexible attitude and to negotiate more carefully with management, British Rail will continue to be short of the skilled staff that it needs. In other words, co-operation is needed between management and unions. That is spelt out very clearly in the report. It is mentioned twice as a constraint on the employment of skilled people.

As for investment in radios, the hon. Gentleman knows that the principal problem with the radios was to get the frequencies released. We have now released five frequencies, and have access to two others. For the first time the full range of frequencies is now available. British Rail, as I said in my statement, can spend whatever is necessary to inroduce radios into cabs.

I note what the hon. Gentleman said about Mr. Holmes. It is true that Mr. Holmes was becoming concerned. He said that at that time British Rail was still operating on the right side of the safety line but that he was becoming concerned. We have started to tackle the problem by a massive increase in the investment programme, which is now under way.

The hon. Gentleman asked me whether the report would be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The police are conducting their own investigation and will be making their report to the Director of Public Prosecutions. If he wishes to use the report for further evidence or investigation, it is open to him.

I conclude as I began by saying that the Government are absolutely committed to safety as a top priority. Funds will be made available to meet the standards that British Rail and the Government agree.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea) I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement. I endorse the sympathy that he expressed to all those affected and the tributes that he paid to the many people in and around my constituency who went to help on that occasion—not least the boys from Emanuel school who clambered down the bank to bring succour to those who were injured and, in many cases, dying and the police who both helped on the day and subsequently accompanied those who had been involved back to their homes to make sure that there were no long-term after effects.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his colleagues on their swift response to the recommendations. Sir Anthony Hidden's report seems to be very thorough, and we should congratulate him on it.

In the light of the comments by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), it is only right and fair to point out that Sir Anthony pays a considerable tribute to the chairman of British Rail for the emphasis he places on safety. I hope that the underlying message in the report is seen by the public as being that safety on British Rail is paramount. I hope that the travelling public will be reassured that safety on British Rail is of a very high quality and that the busiest stretch of rail in this country is also one of the safest.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in the light of the points made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, it is ironic that the incident occurred not as a result of cuts but as a result of investment? The investment in new signalling tragically led to the incident. Will my right hon. Friend reiterate his pledge that as much money as is necessary to carry out the recommendations on safety will be forthcoming?

Will my right hon. Friend examine one point which may not be in the report—overcrowding on trains—and consider whether any further measures need to be taken, not because of overcrowding on particular trains but because of the overcrowding that can occur on local commuter trains which are not subject to the same guidelines on overcrowding that apply to long-distance trains?

Mr. Parkinson: I join my hon. Friend in his tribute to the public, and especially to the boys at Emanuel school who did a tremendous job that horrific morning. I agree with him that the inspector mentions the chairman of British Rail in the report and compliments him on the sincerity of his commitment to total safety. He says that he had no doubt of Sir Robert Reid's absolute commitment to make safety the highest possible priority. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is ironic that such a terrible accident arose from the modernisation of the system. Investment in the modernisation of the signalling system produced that dreadful accident. I confirm that we have made it quite clear that money will be no obstacle to implementing the recommendations.

The report addresses the question of overcrowding, and concludes that it played no part in the number of casualties. It says that there is no evidence that those who were standing suffered any greater injuries than those who were sitting. But I agree with my hon. Friend that overcrowding should be avoided. That is why we are in the process of a massive programme of modernisation of Network SouthEast, the improvement of the rolling stock and the lengthening of stations to produce a better, safer system for the travelling public.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I associate my colleagues and myself with the expressions of sympathy and with the tributes to those who carried out the inquiry and produced the report and to all those members of the emergency services who attended the accident. Surely the summary of the lessons of the report is that there must be increasing emphasis on the need for safety investment and inspection.

With inspection in mind, given that the accident has now been shown to have been preventable, and given that there is an annual litany of preventable accidents on British Rail, will the Secretary of State consider the need substantially to increase the size and the power of the inspectorate? Will he consider whether it should be given the authority to act independently and at all times decide whether it needs more resources? A strong and effective inspectorate might have ensured that what went wrong before the Clapham incident was corrected before the disaster occurred. Perhaps that is the best lesson and the best tribute that the House could give to those who died and the bereaved.

Mr. Parkinson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for the tone and the content of his remarks. I entirely agree with him, and so does the entire board of British Rail, that there must be increasing emphasis on the need for safety and investment in safety. Bringing the thought and culture of safety into the minds of all British Rail employees is a prime objective. Ironically, a director of safety had been appointed one month before the accident, and his duty is to promote thinking about safety at all levels and at all stages of investment.

I note what the hon. Gentleman says about the inspectorate, but supervision of the day-to-day work of those carrying out difficult jobs is the key. Safety is not determined by the number of inspectors. It is important that they are available, but the main issue is the quality of the supervision on a day-to-day basis of the men doing the job. That is what failed in this instance. We have the highest number of inspectors that we have ever had. We are in the process of increasing their number by eight following the recommendation of the Fennell report and we will be increasing it by another four following this report. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that increased numbers are necessary.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Thousands of my constituents are among those using the Waterloo line every working day. They and everyone else will welcome what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said about safety and the emphasis he placed upon it. Can he say anything specific about the steps to be taken in the future to monitor signalling performance? That seems to have been the flaw in this case.

Mr. Parkinson: Following the accident, the board has taken a number of specific steps already. I mentioned earlier the appointment of a director of safety. It took the decision one month before the incident to introduce automatic train protection and it is pursuing it with vigour now. It has gone out to tender on a pilot project. However, the technology necessary to introduce it is not available off the shelf and, as Sir Anthony recognises, British Rail will have to develop it. He says that, when the technology has been evolved, it should be introduced over a shorter time scale than British Rail was planning; it was thinking of 10 years and he says that it should be five.

British Rail commissioned a major safety audit and every comparable piece of technology has been inspected. It has decided to invest in cab radios. It suggested many of the recommendations included in the report and is pursuing them now.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Secretary of State concede that the pressures placed by the Government on top management for performance and their subsequent pressures on middle management place impossible pressures on those on the job? Does Sir Anthony Hidden's report refer to competition from privatised British Telecom for telecommunications engineers? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that some of us do not believe what the Government say about rail safety when he and the Minister of State are specifically permitting London Underground Ltd. to extend one-person operation to its deeper tubes which will deliberately and measurably reduce standards of safety which are already unsatisfactory?

Mr. Parkinson: I have made the point—the hon. Gentleman can look at the figures—that there is now record investment in British Rail, and a substantial sum will be spent to implement the recommendations made in the report. I realise that the hon. Gentleman has not had the chance that I have had to study the report, but he should study it carefully. In the report, Sir Anthony says two things. First, he says that it would be pointless for British Rail to start creating a wage spiral by competing with other people for the skilled men available, and the report mentions British Telecom. Secondly, he says that, unless there is more flexibility and co-operation between management and unions in finding ways of solving these problems, there will continue to be a shortage of labour. It will need co-operation from all men of good will in the system and not just management.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Those of us who have constituents who were bereaved in the accident will be grateful to Sir Anthony Hidden for the thoroughness of his report, which can be judged by what has been said today, and to my right hon. Friend for the speed with which he has accepted its recommendations.

My right hon. Friend referred to false messages coming from the signals. Is it not true that for the past 150 years of railway history, when we have had tragic accidents due to signalling failures, they have invariably led to further safety measures being introduced? Although that is no consolation to the bereaved, is it not a reassurance to the travelling public?

I want to ask my right hon. Friend a specific question relating to blame. Does he accept that there is a fundamental difference between a private sector ferry operator operating in competition with other operators and a nationalised industry trying to provide a public service—part funded by the taxpayer—for social reasons? Bearing in mind the discussion about the DPP, where do the sponsoring Departments stand? My right hon. Friend cannot answer that serious question now, but he must consider it in future.

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend says that we must learn from this accident, and that that has been the pattern in the past. That is why Sir Anthony was appointed and has done such a thorough job and made his 93 recommendations. He twice referred to the danger of relying totally on hindsight. He said that men of good will carrying out their work, as the people on that occasion were, can make mistakes and that it is very easy for other people, with the benefit of hindsight, to point to the mistakes. My hon. Friend is not arguing for that spirit of acrimony. He is saying, "Let us learn lessons", and I hope that we are doing that.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I associate the London group of London hon. Members with the Secretary of State's tribute to the emergency services. Would it not be a more fitting tribute to the ambulance workers, who did such a valuable job, if the Government were prepared to concede their case for a reasonable wage increase? Is the Secretary of State prepared to speak to other Ministers so that the rightful demands of that hard-working group of emergency workers—the ambulance workers—is met in full? If he does not do so, Government statements on and tributes to the emergency services simply appear to be hypocrisy and cant.

Mr. Parkinson: I cannot get involved in the present industrial dispute. It has never been questioned that the Government put great value on the work of the emergency services. Sir Anthony underlines that point in his report. I acknowledge publicly, as the report does, the great debt that we owed to the London ambulance service on that occasion and on many others.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): Will my right hon. Friend say a little more about the recommendations on the response of the health services, particularly counselling services, for the bereaved? Does he agree that, with hindsight, one of the lessons to be learnt from the Clapham tragedy, as from others, is that the services should be maintained far longer than has been the case to date?

Mr. Parkinson: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health is taking the recommendations extremely seriously. My hon. Friend draws attention to one of them. My right hon. and learned Friend has accepted the recommendations in full and will be implementing them.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Does the Secretary of State accept that it would do much for public confidence if the safety inspectorate were not within a sponsoring Department but were entirely separate and independent? That is true about the North sea and transport.

Mr. Parkinson: There is no criticism whatsoever of the railway inspectorate in the report. The report endorses its work by making recommendations that its powers should be extended. For instance, it states that it should have the power to study the safety and manufacture of rolling stock. That is an oversight and it will be corrected. The inspectorate is not criticised. It is not exactly praised, but the fact that it should be given extra duties is evidence of the report's view of its importance. There has been a long argument about the location of the safety inspectorate. I am interested only in its contribution to safety. I am examining its location, and I will report to the House as soon as I can.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be helpful if we had time to study the report and to reflect on it before making too many off-the-cuff comments? Nevertheless, I hope that he will encourage British Rail to deal sympathetically and speedily with any financial problems that the victims may still have, because no word spoken in this House by hon. Members of any party will alter the position of those people who will suffer for a long time to come and to whom we have all expressed our sympathy.

Mr. Parkinson: One of the satisfactory features of this sad incident was the prompt way in which the chairman of British Rail went to the scene and accepted full responsibility to the relatives on behalf of the board. I shall bring my hon. Friend's comments to his attention. However, if my hon. Friend has any evidence that that is not happening, I should be only too happy to follow it up as a matter of great urgency. I know that British Rail is anxious to do the right thing by those who have suffered from the tragedy.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): I am a former railway worker and I believe that the Secretary of State has relations in the railways. Does he agree that, in view of the long hours worked by railway workers, there should be a substantial increase in their wages and in the number of staff? When such demands are made, is the Secretary of State prepared to be sympathetic to them and to encourage his right hon. Friends in the Cabinet to be sympathetic also?

Mr. Parkinson: The inspector states that the electrician concerned had worked long hours but that he was not physically tired. However, the inspector went on to say that he felt that those long hours could have blunted the edge of the electrician's concentration and might thus have affected the way in which he did his job.

I agree that there is a real problem—indeed, Sir Anthony touches on it in the report—in attracting to this skilled work the skilled people that we need. I do not say this in any spirit of acrimony, but Sir Anthony states that, to find a way round that problem, both management and unions will have to show a greater sense of flexibility than they have been prepared to do to date.

The promotion structure for electricians, for example, prevents skilled people from coming in at anything other than the bottom grade, which means that skilled people do not want to join the service. Sir Anthony has said that that is the result of an agreement between British Rail and the National Union of Railwaymen and that it is one of the things that needs to be examined. We are not talking acrimoniously, but to find a way round what is clearly a problem, unions and management will have to talk seriously together about ways of changing some of the old practices.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the comprehensive nature of the report will be widely welcomed by my constituents who use the railway line in question daily, and especially by those families that were so tragically affected by this serious accident?

May I press my right hon. Friend on the question of two-way radios? Is he aware that the Wessex electric rolling stock is the most modern on Network SouthEast and enables passengers to make telephone calls from the train? When will two-way radios be installed? Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that there is no truth in the rumour that the delay in allocating frequencies was a result of resistance from the Department of Trade and Industry?

Mr. Parkinson: As my hon. Friend knows, there has been great pressure on wave lengths and it has been difficult to obtain the necessary frequencies. That has been a big obstacle, but those problems have now been resolved, as I have said. The exclusive use of five frequencies and access to two others should now ensure that swift progress can be made on going ahead with cab radios. I do not think that British Rail needs any prompting from me about this, but if it does, I should be happy to give that prompting.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): It is a pity that the Secretary of State has said only today that there is enough finance available for safety on the railways. That statement should have been made 10 years ago. It is a pity that the right hon. Gentleman is seeking to blame everybody except the Government. Is he aware that there has been a prolific growth in the number of unmanned level crossings in the past 10 years and that there were countless deaths until Professor Stott made a report which put things right? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the accident at Bellgrove would not have happened——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that time is short this afternoon. Will he please confine his remarks to the report under discussion?

Dr. Marek: The Bellgrove accident was mentioned, Mr. Speaker; British Rail was trying to save money, and that accident would not have happened had British Rail not been trying to save money.

Is the Minister aware that the Clapham accident occurred simply because British Rail was strapped for cash in trying to modernise an outdated system? There is a charge of corporate murder which should be addressed, but it should be addressed not by British Rail management, who were accomplices, but by the Government.

Mr. Parkinson: It took Sir Anthony Hidden and his assessors more than 50 days, listening to evidence, to arrive at their conclusions. The hon. Gentleman has dismissed their work, dismissed their report, drawn on his prejudices and talked nonsense.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend continue to refute, as he has done effectively this afternoon, the allegation made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) that this accident occurred through lack of investment? It is fair game for the Opposition to attack the Government on almost any issue, but not on a matter where lives have been lost. The Opposition should not try to turn that to party

[Mr. Michael Grylls]

political advantage. As my right hon. Friend has pointed out, there is, in any case, no evidence to show that what the Opposition allege is true.

Will my right hon. Friend agree that there is no evidence anywhere in the world to show that efficient, profitable and well-run industries are any less safe than old-fashioned nationalised industries? Is it not a fact that the record of privatised companies has been superb? In other words, nothing can be blamed on anything to do with the move to make British Rail more efficient, a move which, in the end, will lead to greater safety through greater investment.

Mr. Parkinson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining the fact that the report shows that British Rail said in its evidence to the inquiry that at no time has it been constrained by a shortage of financial resources in making safety a high priority. British Rail now has the biggest investment programme it has ever had. Opposition Members and I disagree because they believe that one shows one's commitment to a system by the size of the subsidy. We believe that it is important to modernise and improve the system. As the subsidy has been reduced, the investment has gone up, and we think that that is the right way to proceed.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, wherever the investment goes, it is not available to provide enough trained men and women, kneeling in the dark trying to rush to finish a job when they are exhausted because they have been working compulsory overtime? Will he accept that all the oleaginous expressions of regret about safety will not do anything to protect the passengers if the men and women who work on our railways, who are forbidden now by their masters from making any public statement about their fears of what is going wrong, are not given proper wages, proper support and investment in time and money rather than the abstruse arguments that the Minister has used this afternoon?

Mr. Parkinson: I am aware that the hon. Lady has taken an interest in this subject for a long time and that she represents a major railway town, but on this occasion I totally disagree with her. The problems of British Rail are clear and they are analysed carefully. Sir Anthony says that British Rail is having trouble in attracting sufficient numbers of skilled people. He outlines some of the causes, and I am telling the hon. Lady that the problem is infinitely more complex than she made it sound in her intervention.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Will my right hon. Friend accept that an important part of his statement for many people has been the refutation that there is any linkage between this accident and those which, sadly, followed at Purley and in Glasgow? In regard to those who are particularly concerned with Purley, he will recall that it was agreed that the inquiry should be held in public and that the findings should be published. He said that he hoped that they would be published in due course. He will appreciate that we are anxious to determine what the separate causes of the other accidents were.

Mr. Parkinson: I must tell my hon. Friend that publication of those reports has been delayed at the request of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On money, what does the Secretary of State quietly say to Jimmy Knapp when he complains about skilled men leaving British Rail to do maintenance on local authority car park barriers? What exactly is meant in the eighth paragraph of the right hon. Gentleman's statement when it says that finance will not stand in the way? What is the agreement with the Treasury about extra money? What sum has been talked about between the Department of Transport and the Treasury as a result of the Clapham accident which will be made available as a result of Sir Anthony Hidden's report? What figures, in pounds, have been discussed?

Mr. Parkinson: On the second point, provision was made before the report was received, in anticipation of the sort of expenditure that might be necessary, and it is already built into the public expenditure arrangements which I agreed with the Treasury. If further resources are necessary, and they will be, I give the hon. Gentleman an absolutely unqualified assurance that they will be made available.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): It is clear from the terrible accident at Clapham and also from the serious and shocking accident that occurred at Huddersfield station last night that the possibility of accidents is greatly heightened when modernisation of the line or of signalling —in the case of Huddersfield, the modernisation of the station itself—is taking place. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that British Rail has taken steps to ensure that its employees are particularly vigilant and safety conscious at such times? Will he take this opportunity to confirm that a full inquiry will take place into the events at Huddersfield station last night? Will he also take this opportunity to join me in expressing gratitude to the emergency services at Huddersfield and also in sending best wishes to those who were injured in that accident?

Mr. Parkinson: I have had a preliminary report on the Huddersfield accident, but I cannot comment further because the investigation will be under way. As soon as I can tell the House anything else, I will, but at the moment I believe that it would be unfair to those concerned to prejudge the inquiry. My hon. Friend is right in intimating that both accidents arose from investment in modernisation. If he reads the report, he will find that the inspector says that it was because the modernisation was not properly planned and supervised that the dreadful accident happened. British Rail has tried very hard to learn from that and, as I have already said, it has accepted and will implement the recommendations. We shall look at the Huddersfield accident to see whether there is more to be done or whether mistakes were made. I cannot prejudge that issue now, but the arrival of the ambulance men on the scene within four minutes was very impressive and I pay tribute to that.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The Secretary of State has made many references this afternoon to the inflexibility of the trade unions in the railway industry. If by that he means that he wants more multi-skilled people on the railway, I advise him to read the very good health and safety report, which shows that in industries where there is multi-skilling the accident rate is much higher than it is in other industries where single-skilled tradesmen are employed.

I divert the Secretary of State's attention to his reference to the Glasgow Bellgrove accident report. The report on that accident cannot possibly be delayed at the request of the DPP, whose remit does not run to Scotland. There has already been an inquiry into the Glasgow Bellgrove accident under the fatal accident inquiry legislation in Scotland. That kind of bad briefing, slipshod approach does not give us the confidence to believe that Ministers have learnt the lessons of those accidents and that they will not happen again.

Mr. Parkinson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to correct the record. The Purley report has been delayed at the request of the DPP. The Bellgrove report has been delayed because, as he knows, one of the key witnesses was too ill to give evidence. I apologise to the House for bracketing the two, but I did not wish to mislead the House. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has given me the opportunity to put that right.

Paragraph 16.77 of the report states:

> "The internal promotion system which is an inevitable handicap to BR in satisfactorily filling the higher posts in its wages grade staff in the S and T Department, is the result of a formal agreement between BR and the NUR. It is a fetter on the acquisition of skilled staff and it is long overdue for reconsideration."

That is the spirit in which I have been referring to the unions today. Management and unions must get together to develop modern working practices for a modern railway system. That will need an effort on both their parts.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): May I draw the Secretary of State's attention to paragraph 14.36 of Sir Anthony Hidden's report in which he makes specific reference to the need for safety to be included in the objectives of the British Railways Board.

Does the Secretary of State recall a letter sent by one of his predecessors, the right hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore), to the chairman of British Rail on 21 October 1986 setting out the objectives which the Government wanted British Rail to pursue over the next three years? The letter was more than 1,000 words in length, but there was no mention of passenger safety, although there are plenty of references to the need to cut costs, to improve efficiency, to increase the rate of return on investment, to reduce the public service obligation grant requirement, and to increase the role of the private sector. There is no mention of safety. Does the Secretary of State share Sir Anthony Hidden's concern about that?

Will the Secretary of State comment on the fact that staffing levels in the permanent way, signal and telecommunications section, have been cut by 18 per cent. in the past five years? Were the staffing cuts the direct result of the cut of 51 per cent. in Government grants to British Rail over the same five-year period?

Paragraph 14.40 of the report states:

> "It is clear that if sensible decisions are to be made by BR and by Government on the most effective use of funds for saving the lives and reducing the injuries of staff and passengers, then it must establish a way of assessing in financial terms the effect on safety of investment schemes. Both the Government and BR need to conduct a thorough review of its investment appraisal procedures so that a financial value can be put on safety."

The Secretary of State makes great play of the fact that the accident took place at a time of considerable investment in the signalling system. Is he aware that the Waterloo area resignalling scheme was approved in 1978 and that, despite that approval, Clapham junction A signal box, which played a central part in the tragic accident and which was built in 1936, still signals half the trains through the busiest junction in the world? So much for all the investment under this Government over the past decade.

Does the Secretary of State accept that both our fathers worked in the railway industry and that if my father was still here he would be appalled at the right hon. Gentleman's attempt to shuffle off responsibility for the accident on to the railway unions instead of acknowledging the financial hostility of the Government of which he is a member?

Mr. Parkinson: Like the hon. Gentleman, I am proud of the fact that my father was a railwayman. Nothing that I have said this afternoon could be described by anyone who was remotely objective as shuffling off.

The report recognises that management accepts its responsibility. It recognises that there were faults and it is determined to correct them. The report draws attention to the fact that that correction will require the co-operation of the unions. The hon. Gentleman is drawing a totally misleading and, I suspect, deliberate inference from my remarks.

In the letter to which the hon. Gentleman referred from my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore), although safety is not referred to directly, the legislation has safety as its prime objective. However, I am drawing up new objectives for British Rail, and I will spell out safety in a much more specific way.

The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong to say that the level of staffing is connected with the level of grant. I must point out to him over and over again that, although Opposition Members continually complain about the level of fares, the income from fares has made up for the shortfall from the subsidy. We believe that eliminating wasteful subsidy and ploughing money into investment is a far better way.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the appraisal of safety investment. It is a difficult and rather morbid business to try to attach a value to a life. However, we recognise that it is vital that better ways are found of appraising safety.

Investment in safety, about which there is a myth, is not required to produce any sort of return: safety is justified as safety. The idea that it has to pass a profit test is quite wrong——

Mr. Snape: Read the report.

Mr. Parkinson: When assessing two systems, one might take into account which gave better value for money, but no return is required.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the 1978 scheme. It has taken a long time for that scheme to be introduced and fully implemented——

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Why?

Mr. Parkinson: If the hon. Lady reads the report, she will find out why. The whole report is about the problems of planning and making arrangements, and about 93 recommendations for improving the system.

I conclude as I began. This was a dreadful accident which changed the lives of many of those who survived and caused great loss to the families of the 35 who died. It is our duty to learn everything that we can from the dreadful tragedy in as unacrimonious way as possible. We shall be implementing the 93 recommendations as a matter of urgency. The chairman of British Rail is coming to see

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me tomorrow morning at 8.30 and we shall discuss how to get a move on with the recommendations that are not being implemented at the moment.

Ambulance Service (Pay Dispute)

4.27 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the ambulance dispute in the National Health Service.

The situation in the London ambulance service is that the trade unions have reimposed their 14 conditions for the operation of the accident and emergency service, which means that the management of the London ambulance service are unable to provide a guaranteed accident and emergency service for London. The unions have in effect called out their accident and emergency service members in sympathy with non-emergency men who have been required to work normally if they are to be paid in full.

Nearly all accident and emergency services in the area served by the LAS are now being provided by the St. John Ambulance brigade, the Red Cross and the Metropolitan police.

Following earlier discussion with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, I have now asked him if the armed forces would assist the police and voluntary services in providing an accident and emergency service in London. In view of the gravity of the situation and the need to maintain an essential service to the public, my right hon. Friend has agreed to my request. He has given instructions to the armed forces to provide assistance in London and they will be deployed with the police and voluntary services from tomorrow afternoon.

The Government have taken this step with the greatest reluctance. We would very much prefer to see a full accident and emergency service provided by trained ambulancemen but that is impossible while the unions continue to insist on all the 14 conditions which they have imposed. I must stress that the involvement of the armed forces, the police and the voluntary services will cease once the trade unions agree, as they did two weeks ago, to provide a normal accident and emergency service.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Yesterday the Secretary of State advised the House that he resented the allegation made by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that he had made unpleasant comments about the ambulance staff. Is he aware that every broadcasting bulletin this morning quoted him as describing ambulance staff as "pretending and posturing"? Can he confirm that he used those words? Does he really believe that that kind of language helps to resolve a dispute which has reached the crisis and severity that prompted this statement?

We have just heard a statement which reminded the whole House of the debt that we owe to the emergency services because the report praises the courage and professionalism of the emergency staff at the Clapham accident. In the light of those words, how can the Secretary of State invite ambulance staff to settle for 6·5 per cent. when firemen have been awarded 8·6 per cent. and the police 9·2 per cent.? Is he aware that yesterday both the police and the firemen gave their complete support to the ambulance staff in their demand for parity?

Is the Secretary of State aware that at this moment in every ambulance station in London ambulance staff are ready and waiting to provide emergency cover? Is he aware that in those stations it is management that has now refused to put through the emergency calls? Is it not clear that it is not ambulance staff who have withdrawn emergency cover from London but the management of the London ambulance service?

The Secretary of State said that from tomorrow the Army will be called in to provide cover in London. Can he confirm that many of the Army personnel who will be providing the cover have been trained on the basis of a refresher course lasting 48 hours? Was it really possible in those two days to train them in the techniques of defibrillation, incubation or infusion? Why rely on men who are not trained for the trauma that they will have to meet and who have no experience of meeting it when we have trained ambulance staff waiting at stations to do the work?

Can the Secretary of State confirm that in the eight weeks of the dispute he has never once sat down with the staff side of the ambulance men? Would it not have been better to talk to the ambulance staff before he talked to his colleagues at the Ministry of Defence?

Finally, can the Secretary of State answer the question that has remained unanswered since the dispute began and that remains its central mystery? If he is so right in offering ambulance staff 6·5 per cent. and if the ambulance staff are so unreasonable in rejecting it, why is he so afraid to go to arbitration which would end the dispute this afternoon? Instead of calling in the Army, why not call in the arbitrators and give back to London a proper ambulance service?

Mr. Clarke: It is quite obvious that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) takes the view that was taken by some of his hon. Friends about an hour ago in Question Time that the people of London will get their accident and emergency service back when the ambulancemen are given the money that NUPE demands, whatever that may be.

The 6·5 per cent. offer that the hon. Gentleman complains about is not what is on offer to the men taking the industrial action that I have described. Qualified men in London are all being offered at least 9·3 per cent. under the existing offer. The 6·5 per cent. is available to the rest of the service. When judging the present action it is worth recalling that NUPE and the other trade unions recommended the 6·5 per cent. offer to their members for settlement. They are entitled to change their mind, but I get increasingly irritated by Mr. Poole describing as appalling an offer that he recommended only a month or two ago and regarding the rejection of that offer as justifying such dangerous action against the general public in London as he is proposing.

We are talking about last year's pay settlements in the course of which NUPE settled the claims of many of its members in the National Health Service for 6·5 per cent.

The men from the Army who will be coming in tomorrow afternoon are in many cases less well paid than the ambulancemen whose jobs they will be taking. They took a 6·8 per cent. settlement, as did the nurses and some other groups. If people wish to discuss the issues of the amount, they should be discussed, as management has been suggesting throughout, in the Whitley council. Mr. Duncan Nichol, the chief executive of the National Health Service, has constantly tried to reopen negotiations. There is nothing in the case that NUPE now claims in rejecting an offer that it commended to its men only a month or two ago that justifies such disgraceful action as it is organising in London at the moment.

The hon. Member for Livingston asked about my comments this morning. I have not heard any of the media, but I hope and trust that I have been reported more accurately than in the potted version given by the hon. Gentleman. I referred to the fact that the men although doing no work are at the moment still in the ambulance stations. It is the case that they are pretending to be prepared to operate the accident and emergency service when——

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): That is disgraceful.

Mr. Clarke: That is not disgraceful. The men know perfectly well—*[Interruption.]* It is no good the hon. Gentleman exploding with rage on the strength of his briefing from NUPE.

Mr. Spearing: That is not so. I have been there.

Mr. Clarke: We had all this out last week. The men knew—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very unseemly to shout in this way. It is not the way that we conduct ourselves here.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I looked at the 1 o'clock BBC news and it was made quite clear that Mr. Nichol was not telling the truth, and that the men were there to carry on emergency work, if asked to do it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Everybody must take responsibility for what he says.

Mr. Flannery: He should tell the truth.

Mr. Clarke: The 14 points to which the unions have reverted include a refusal to use the radio telephone sensibly, a refusal to crew up, and other points on which they have not been insisting, such as the adequate provision of red blankets. Last week or two weeks ago, they withdrew some of those points to restore the accident and emergency service and the claim that today's difficulties have somehow been caused by the management is a sick joke being perpetrated by the unions and plainly believed by some Labour Members.

I have no desire to see Army personnel being used on the streets of London to assist the public. That has not had to be done since the last Labour Government did it 10 years ago. The men should now resume accident and emergency working, and honour the promise that NUPE keeps giving, that the accident and emergency services will not be threatened by the industrial action. We can then return to the business of the industrial dispute, which can be settled if the unions are as willing to enter into sensible negotiations as the management has made it clear for the past two or three weeks that it is.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that the same union, NUPE, allowed the dead to remain unburied in the winter of discontent? Does he also understand that the people of London recognise that, if there are any deaths, the blame for them should be laid at the door of Mr. Poole and NUPE?

Mr. Clarke: I share my hon. Friend's indignation that union leaders face the prospect of risk to the public and then make heated statements saying that it is not their fault, when the origin of the whole problem is that the

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members—the ambulancemen—are obeying instructions from the union, which were drawn up with the purpose of disrupting the service to the public. I also recall the activities in the last year of the Labour Government, when they gave in to so many of the strikes in the Health Service that eventually all of them went on strike for ever bigger claims, and NUPE was at the forefront.

My hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) reminded me of the occasion when he was a local authority leader under the last Labour Government, and Ministers in the Ministry of Defence came to see him to organise the use of the Army and of the Green Goddesses. We know that all that happened was that the then Government gave in to the pay claim, with the result that yet more people went on strike a month or two later.

This dispute is unnecessary. It could be resolved in the Whitley council and it ought to be resolved by sensible negotiation. Nothing in the claim justifies the kind of action that is being taken today.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Does the Secretary of State recognise that public opinion is behind the ambulancemen, because it is clearly seen outside this place, and apparently everywhere except in the Department of Health, that the offer to the ambulance men is unjust, in comparison with offers to the other emergency services? It is a question of political will for him, as the Secretary of State, either to encourage arbitration or to make the funds available to the NHS management to enable a fair settlement. Why will not the Secretary of State respond to that reasonable request? That would do away with the need for industrial action. If he did so, he would be entitled to accept a sensible basis for all the emergency services that would involve no strike agreements and pendulum arbitration. Why does he not adopt that approach?

Mr. Clarke: As I have just said, the 6·5 per cent. offer, as it was then, was negotiated in the Whitley council and was recommended to the men by their own trade unions. Since it was turned down, it has been improved to 9·3 per cent. in London. The ambulancemen negotiated a lower level of settlement than other NHS staff because they received a particularly generous settlement in 1986 and had an hour taken off their working week last year. For all those reasons, the management is justified in saying that any further discussions must start on the basis of that deal, which has been commended so recently by the unions.

I do not accept that comparisons can be made with other emergency services, when only one tenth of the mileage of the ambulance service is taken up by emergencies. We have never had the same pay system for the police, firemen and ambulancemen in Britain under any Government.

I acept that there are paramedics, and people who provide particular parts of the ambulance service, who ought to be appropriately rewarded for those skills. I have seen no sign that the unions are prepared to make that distinction in the settlement that they seek. I find the point of view of the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) surprising, because he is not in the Labour party. He said that, because the ambulancemen are on strike, we should turn away from the system of negotiation and give them the money that NUPE says that it wants to restore a vital service to the public. If I were to encourage the management to concede that, NUPE would have a lot more people out on strike in the winter, as it has proved capable of in the past.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, due to the regrettable and irresponsible behaviour of the unions, one man's pay dispute could soon degenerate into another man's loss of life? Will he consider the importance of taking the negotiations out of the political arena? I do not want him to commit himself in any way, shape or form, but will he please not rule out the possibility of a pay review body for the ambulance men?

Mr. Clarke: I am conscious of the first matter that my hon. Friend raised. My prime responsibility and that of my colleagues in the Government, including the Secretary of State for Defence, is to try to ensure public safety as far as that is possible, using the resources available to us in the armed forces and the police. We are bringing in those services because we see the need to protect the public against the consequences of the action now being taken.

As I have already explained, the management view seems to me to be the only view that a truly responsible management could take. There are review bodies for some staff, but we cannot have group after group of Health Service workers taking industrial action, and getting arbitration or a review body after initially being attracted by offers made to them. That way lies chaos.

In the Health Service the management has to weigh up pay claims with services to patients. It is all right for the railways to pay out 8·8 per cent. when railway workers are on strike—they wind up putting the fares up, which nobody likes. It is all very well for Labour councillors to give 8·8 per cent. to their manual workers because they wind up increasing the community charge. If the management of the Health Service starts paying more to people who take individual action against patients, it has to close wards and reduce patient services. A responsible management should not do that.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I thought that the Secretary of State's statement was absolutely despicable, and I have heard many despicable statements since 1983. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that to say that ambulance workers are not prepared to provide emergency cover is a monstrous perversion of the truth, and he knows it? Will he explain to the House how we can justify a 10·7 per cent. increase, dating from January, for Members of Parliament when ambulance workers will get only 6·5 per cent.? Is he prepared to organise a vote in the House so that we may see whether Conservative Members are prepared to vote in favour of their wallets rather than of saving lives?

Mr. Clarke: I ask the hon. Gentleman to go away and check the facts. I think that he believes what he says—I accept that he normally does. However, he is lending credibility to the myth that management is causing the present difficulties.

If the hon. Gentleman genuinely wants the accident and emergency services to be maintained, he should advise his constituents who work in the service to operate it normally. They are operating it not normally, but according to conditions which make it impossible to guarantee a service because there is no proper communication with the vehicles.

Last year, the pay increase to hon. Members was equivalent to the ambulance men's offer, which was 6·7 per cent. As Ministers got less I have to gaze around the House to see if any hon. Member can recall the exact percentage increase. This year the pay settlement has been based on the Civil Service settlement in August which was 6·5 per cent. By a quirk of the resolution of the House it happened that the third stage of a deal of 4 per cent. paid earlier was added to that figure for hon. Members. Therefore, the settlement for Members of Parliament is based on the 6·5 per cent. that civil servants accepted in August or September this year. We could carry on arguing about that and about its merits, but it is a matter for the management to settle with the unions in the Whitley council.

The idea that the ambulance men's pay claim justifies risk to life and limb on the streets of London is a grotesque exaggeration.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): While I believe that my right hon. and learned Friend's statement has been both factual and honourable, will he not pursue the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes)? In a civilised country, is it not time that those who work in life-saving public emergency services should have their pay taken out of the political arena? They should forgo the right to strike, and the pay for all the emergency services should be dealt with by an independant pay review body as is nurses' pay. That is long overdue.

Mr. Clarke: One could make that case for everyone who works for the Health Service, and many other people who work in public services. The result would be that the management of the National Health Service would have responsibility for the pay and conditions of more than 1 million people taken out of its hands, and arbitrators would dispose of the resources. Managers would be left to see what they could provide by way of patient services as a result.

These issues can be settled by sensible negotiations. We introduced a review body for the nurses when they refused to take industrial action, while NUPE and other unions had all the other staff out in an industrial dispute. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) remembers that because I think that he was in the Department with me at the time.

It is false to say that ambulance men, in the middle of an industrial dispute caused by NUPE, should be given a review body as a reward. The situation is different from that under which the nurses were given a review body. They have always had a no-strike deal as a part of their constitution and they were given a review body when they refused to take industrial action.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that he and his friends are undertaking a massive conspiracy to deceive the public about the true nature of this dispute? Ambulance men and women are underpaid. They have put in a claim for parity with the fire service, which ought to be met. The Secretary of State has misled the House by claiming that the 14-point statement by NUPE in London is anything other than an agreement absolutely and totally to maintain 999 services. It is on his instructions that the ambulance officers this morning were told to stop staff going out on 999 calls. It is the Secretary of State's decision that is preventing the people of London from getting a 999 service.

Members of the unions concerned have made it clear, at every turn, that they will maintain an emergency service. The responsibility for not maintaining the service lies with the Secretary of State and with him alone.

Mr. Clarke: The unions are claiming parity not with firemen but with fifth year firefighters. They do not like first, second, third or fourth year firefighters because that would not make the claim as big. It is an arbitrary choice to link pay with fifth year firefighters, with whom there has been no formal link in the past.

We shall have an accident and emergency service as long as the men who are in that part of the service work it in the ordinary way.

Mr. Corbyn: That is what they are doing.

Mr. Clarke: No, 14 points have been invented that do not normally apply. The hon. Gentleman is maintaining the debate vigorously from a sedentary position, but he cannot deny that those points are not points which usually apply in the service.

Mr. Corbyn: Yes, they do.

Mr. Clarke: They have been invented to disrupt the service and they have succeeded in doing so. The ambulance service cannot discharge its duty to the public until the men agree to work normally, and certainly agree on key matters such as using the radiotelephone.

I tell the House categorically that I did not give instructions to anybody to take the action that the management of the London ambulance service has taken. The managers of the service notified the NHS management executive, and me through the executive, of what it was proposing to do. In my opinion it had no choice if it was to discharge its responsibility to the people of London, except to ask the police and eventually to ask me to ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to ask the Army to maintain essential services.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the business that is before the House. There is a Standing Order No. 20 application and a ten-minute Bill. In addition, the House must deal with a long list of amendments to the Local Government and Housing Bill. I shall allow three more questions from each side of the House and then we must move on.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, although the Police Federation is not especially happy that police officers should have to perform the duties of ambulance staff in an industrial dispute, its chairman has stated publicly today that it would be wrong for an emergency service to feel obliged to take industrial action to secure a pay agreement? The federation has not expressed any view on what should be the appropriate level of pay for ambulance men and women.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I tell him and the Police Federation that I contemplate the use of the police to maintain the ambulance service only with the greatest reluctance. They are being diverted from other tasks. They are not as well trained as the ambulance men

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and they cannot provide as good a service as that which could be performed by the accident and emergency service, although they all do their manful best. I can assure my hon. Friend and the federation that the Government will use policemen or, if necessary, military personnel only to protect the life and limb of citizens at risk. There is no question of our using the police force or the armed forces for the purpose of strike breaking. To return to the industrial dispute, which I think should be settled, the action taken by the unions should at the very least not threaten life and limb by withdrawing the accident and emergency services.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): Only this afternoon I was looking at the British Empire medal that was awarded to Mr. Brian Murray, the ambulance man who dragged the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) from the Grand hotel at Brighton. Mr. Murray is on hunger strike for 60 hours on the embankment further up the river from this place in protest at the way in which he, as an ambulance man, is being treated by the Government. Is it not a disgrace that brave people such as Mr. Murray should be humiliated and insulted by the Government, who are intent on cutting their pay?

Mr. Clarke: I accept entirely that the ambulance service carries out its duties conscientiously and well and that the performance of the service in recent tragedies of all sorts has been exemplary. Indeed, it is almost the only emergency service in the country that has not come in for any criticism, directly or indirectly, for its response to industrial action. Having said that, the proper level of pay for ambulance men should be settled by a process of civilised negotiation, which has worked for many years in the Whitley council and which produced a result this year which was commended to Mr. Murray and his colleagues by the negotiators who were responsible for it. It is a great pity that he feels obliged thereafter to take part in a hunger strike. It is a gesture, but it does not seem to be frightfully relevant to the issues in question. It is wholly undesirable that the men in London—Mr. Murray does not work in London—should suddenly introduce 14 extraordinary points, which include some that put the lives of Londoners at risk.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the negotiating procedure for the salaries of ambulance men has not yet been exhausted? Surely each ambulance man should reflect to himself that in not returning to negotiation and by taking the present action he is potentially harming the people of London, and that he should return to work and carry out his duties.

Mr. Clarke: The Whitley council management side takes the view that the negotiations were never completed in the Whitley council. It began to increase its offer to the London men after the first ballot of the members of the unions. It increased the London men's offer to 9·3 per cent. There has been a remarkable change of attitude on the part of union leaders between the spring or summer of this year and now. In my opinion, that has far more to do with the political climate than with differences in negotiating a proper level of pay for ambulance men for the next year or two.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Secretary of State has said repeatedly in a number of answers that the ambulance men should return to a negotiation. Is there more money on the table to increase the core pay offer? Is he saying that potentially more money is on the table?

Mr. Clarke: I shall repeat to the best of my recollection what Mr. Duncan Nichol has said. He has talked about the possibility of a two-year deal that would involve bringing some more money forward from the second year. He has talked about the possibility of local flexibility to deal with parts of the country where there are local recruitment and retention problems. He has talked about a review of the 1986 deal with the trade unions, which was advantageous to ambulance men but which is now giving rise to arguments about the way in which overtime is calculated.

In advance of the unions either modifying their claim one iota or agreeing to return to the negotiating table, it seems that Duncan Nichol, the chief executive of the Health Service, has put forward several propositions. Unfortunately, the unions prefer their 14 points and getting the police on to the streets to do their work.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there are two facts on which any responsible trade unionist should quietly reflect? The first is that the central complaint of the ambulance staff is that they should have comparability with the police force and the fire brigade. That has been examined by an independent tribunal—the Clegg commission—and rejected. Secondly, all the National Health Service staff have their pay and conditions regarded by the Whitley council, and 94 per cent. of them have settled within the council this year. It seems extraordinary that when one group seeks to break that negotiating tradition the Opposition should rush immediately to its aid rather than support the established machine which has existed for a considerable time to settle pay and conditions in the NHS. Is not the bottom line in the dispute that we can see things becoming only worse until the ambulance staff go back to the Whitley council and start, with the NHS management team, to find a way out of the dispute through the proper and accepted negotiating machinery?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is right. Comparability with firemen and the police has been examined by successive Governments and rejected. The concept was examined by the Clegg commission and rejected. The ambulance men do not claim parity with the police, and to the best of my knowledge and recollection they have never done so. They are claiming that they should be compared with fifth-year firefighters, who happen to be a convenient grade for the purpose of getting the extra money that they are aiming at this year, which is 11·5 per cent. Review bodies are urged upon me. The nurses have a review body, and they took 6·8 per cent. last year. The Army has a review body, and it took 6·8 per cent. last year. The 6·5 per cent. that is on offer is not a million miles away from those settlements, but that is not what the unions are after. They are after a double-figure pay settlement as a reward for industrial action. They should modify what they say because, as my hon. Friend has said, 95 per cent. of the Health Service staff have already settled for about 6·5 per cent.

Mr. Robin Cook: Given the Secretary of State's replies to some of my hon. Friends' questions, may I help him to get it right on the use of radiophones? The only restriction in the 14 points on the use of radiophones is their use for non-emergency calls. There is no restriction in the 14 points—there never has been—on the use of radiophones to respond to accidents and emergencies. In the light of that clear position on the 14 points, how can the right hon. and learned Gentleman possibly use that as his strongest example of why it is necessary to suspend the entire accident and emergency service and bring in the Army?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is not describing accurately the restrictions that are being placed on the use of radiophones. If a radiophone is not being used normally, it is not possible to control an accident and emergency service. The unions are not prepared to use the system normally so that full communications are established between control and ambulance drivers.

The second key point is crewing up, which we covered last week. As I understand it, there are also foolish points about not collecting casualties because there are no red blankets. I am not aware yet that the unions are insisting upon that. It is absurd for the unions and their supporters to say, "We are prepared to operate the accident and emergency service" and then to say, "But there are these new conditions that we wish to apply to the way in which it should be operated." I know that the management of the service does not want to use the police or the Army any more than I do. It has called on us for assistance only because it cannot operate an accident and emergency service unless the unions agree to tell their men to operate it normally.

T. W. Kempton

4.59 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the announcement late yesterday evening that T. W. Kempton has gone into receivership."

T. W. Kempton was one of the largest textile firms in the city of Leicester and one of the most prominent in the country. It had a turnover of £25 million a year. The news that the firm has gone into receivership is a bitter blow to its 840 employees, many of whom live in my constituency, and a shock to the textile industry. Here is a firm which only six years ago received a Queen's award for export achievement.

There is widespread agreement, and the chairman, Mr. Russell Kempton, confirmed to me today, that the main reasons for the horrifying closure are increasing levels of imports and high interest rates. In the first half of this year, our trade deficit for textiles and clothing was £1,840 million, £140 million higher than the previous year. Job losses have been at an all-time high since last summer. The industry has lost 10,000 jobs. Since January 1988, 22 textile firms in Leicestershire have either closed completely or announced partial redundancies, amounting to a total loss of 2,800 jobs, or 5 per cent. of the entire county's work force.

Gentex, Ladies Pride, Corah, Harold Ingram, Chilprufe and Leslie Wise are just some of the names on the tombstones in the ever-filling graveyard of the textiles industry. I and other hon. Members who represent constituencies with textile interests have frequently urged the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to act to prevent this haemorrhaging. He states repeatedly that, in order to act against the surge of imports from the far east, he must have proof that damage has been done to our industry. The closure of T. W. Kempton is the proof that he needs. It is the latest in a long line of firms that have bitten the dust, destroyed by unfair competition and prohibitive tariffs imposed on exports from the United Kingdom. Only by acting decisively in the interests of our textile industry can the decline be prevented.

I ask the Department of Trade and Industry to assist the company in whatever way it can to preserve employment in Leicester. I ask the Secretary of State to meet the leaders of both sides of the industry to discuss the matter with urgency. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to give me leave to move the Adjournment of the House so that we can discuss fully recent serious developments in the textile industry.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the announcement late yesterday evening that T. W. Kempton has gone into receivership."

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20 I have to announce my decision without giving reasons to the House. I listened with care to what the hon. Member said. As he knows, I have to decide whether his application comes within the Standing Order and, if so, whether a

[*Mr. Speaker*]

debate on the matter should be given priority over the business already arranged for this evening or tomorrow. In this case, the matter that he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order. I regret that I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

5.3 pm

Mr. Eric Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is now one and a half hours since the Prime Minister left the Chamber. I wanted to raise a point of order about something that the Prime Minister said at Question Time, but I could not do so because of a ruling that you made. The Prime Minister is probably on her way to America or Russia by now. It is absurd that I can raise my point of order only now, one and a half hours after the issue should have been raised.

I ask you to reconsider carefully your ruling. You accepted a point of order from my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). I do not disagree with that, because it was on a vital matter. My point of order is that the Prime Minister equated people in CND with Pol Pot. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) may laugh, but it is not funny to suggest that hon. Members who believe in CND are murderers or to compare them with Pol Pot and his despicable gang. The matter should have been dealt with there and then but, because of your ruling, only now, one and a half hours later, do I have an opportunity to raise it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should reflect carefully on what he has just said. At the beginning, he stated that he would have liked to raise a matter with the Prime Minister or about her comments at Question Time.

Mr.Heffer: That is not what I said in my point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. Member to look in *Hansard* tomorrow at what he said. A point of order must relate to order in the Chamber. I cannot be held responsible for what the Prime Minister says, provided that she is in order. What she says is her own responsibility. As the House knows, points of order are matters on which the Speaker can adjudicate and I cannot adjudicate on whether the Prime Minister's comments are right or wrong. If I allowed what the hon. Member suggests, we should have a whole rash of points of order arising out of Question Time, which would disfigure the proceedings and delay subsequent business. The matter that the hon. Member raises is not a point of order for me.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall hear the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), because it is important to clear up the matter.

Mr. Heffer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you now ruling that hon. Members on either side can say just about anything about citizens for whom you are responsible? We are all responsible to the people who elect us to the House. Are you now saying that it does not matter what the Prime Minister or any other individual says in the House about people, even if it is a downright lie, and that we cannot stand up to defend our people?

Mr. Speaker: I am saying to the hon. Member and to the House that in this place we have total freedom of speech, unless it reflects upon another hon. Member.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that last week you said:

> "It is not in order to use House of Commons stationery for party-political purposes."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1989; Vol. 159, c. 321.]

I have to hand a House of Commons franked envelope. There is nothing remarkable about that. We use them every day to write to our constituents about matters which concern them. Unfortunately, this envelope, franked and paid for by the taxpayers, was used to send out minutes to members of Redcar constituency Labour party. Will you consider sending a bill to Redcar Labour club, as, among others, it is——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can give the hon. Member guidance. This matter was raised last week about other similar episodes. Will he kindly send the envelope to the Services Select Committee, which is already dealing with two other cases and which, I am sure, will wish to deal with that matter too?

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You said that you were responsible for the order of the House. This afternoon, a statement was made which related to the London area, for which you allowed one hour. You called mainly London Members. The statement was not issued until the moment when the Secretary of State rose to speak, so no one could read it in depth beforehand or ask sensible questions on it. The whole procedure was a farce. You allowed only half an hour on the ambulance dispute, which relates to the whole country, and you stopped only seven Members who were seeking to catch your eye—of whom I was one—from asking a question. Hon. Members from the north of England in particular were not called to speak about the ambulance dispute. One would have thought that it was a private dispute occurring only in London. Will you consider the way in which you allocate time to ensure that hon. Members from constituencies outside London catch your eye?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is the first time that I have agreed with the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). I have spent most of my time shouting and bawling from one side to the other——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not relish it.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Member for Langbaurgh is right. I am not against spending an hour on the train inquiry statement, and nor am I against spending an hour on the ambulance dispute statement. However, Mr. Speaker, you called hon. Members who had been called previously. There have been several statements on the ambulance dispute and some hon. Members have never been called——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not yet Mr. Speaker. I know that he was an experienced chairman and I often accept——

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend was very good.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, indeed the hon. Gentleman was a very good chairman. I was often grateful for his advice.

I must say to both the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) and the hon. Member for Bolsover that I have to make a balanced judgment——

Mr. Skinner: You have not been very good at it lately.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman had better calculate what he is saying.

Mr. Skinner: I have done.

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the hon. Member for Langbaurgh, who raised the point, that I allowed the first statement to continue because I was anxious to ensure that those hon. Members whose constituents had suffered as a result of that sad train accident were called to say something about the report. I hope that the House will not consider that to be wrong.

There was a private notice question yesterday about the ambulance dispute. If the hon. Gentleman had listened carefully today, he would have heard the Secretary of State say that the troops are on alert in London, not elsewhere in the country. Perhaps there will be other occasions when this matter is before us—I hope not—but then I shall bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said.

BILL PRESENTED

PATIENTS' CHARTER

Mr. Charles Kennedy presented a Bill to establish certain rights for people in need of health care, and to promote the involvement of patients in decision-making within the National Health Service: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 10 November and to be printed. [Bill 217.]

Toxic and Hazardous Substances (Miscellaneous Provisions)

5.12 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I beg to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) please sit down?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Yes, I will do.

Mr. McCartney: I beg to move,

> That leave be given to bring in a Bill to protect the general public in the purchase and application of toxic and hazardous substances within the home environment; to provide a code of conduct for use by consumers and contractors; to set up a register of proscribed substances; and for other purposes.

I am the chair of the all-party home safety group which campaigns in the House on a wide range of issues on behalf of consumers and workers. We believe in the right to purchase goods that do not poison, cut, gas, electrocute, burn, maim or kill, and in the right of workers to be employed in the safest possible environment.

The Bill belongs to a family of measures that the group has been promoting, including a successful campaign to ban dangerous foam furniture, inflammable fabrics, dangerous nursery furniture, the introduction of smoke alarms and the banning of unsafe glass products in the home. We must pay tribute to the London hazards centre for the campaign, and especially to Hugh MacGrillen and his team.

The Bill is a solemn and heartfelt tribute to the victims of toxic and hazardous substances, and the list is endless and growing. It is a poignant reminder to the families of Eric Riley—who, in the words of his wife Ann, was murdered by Lindane; to Keith Pritchett, killed by leukaemia while working for Cuprinol; David Rea, a Rentokil sprayer who is afflicted by leukaemia and is currently in a very serious condition; and to a little child, Llwyd Nicholes, who contracted aplastic anaemia following Rentokil's woodworm treatment to his family home. Some 300 families in the United Kingdom—the list is growing weekly—5,500 in West Germany and thousands more worldwide have been affected by dangerous and toxic substances in the home environment. This Bill is a sign to those families that the fight for justice will continue until such products are banned from the market place.

How can it be that a man or a woman working in industry, commerce or the public service is, in theory, protected from the harmful effects of dangerous and hazardous substances by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988, but can leave his or her employment and go into a do-it-yourself store, a chemist or a local garage, or use Yellow Pages and legally purchase a material or substance that can damage the brain, eyes, skin, lungs, liver, kidneys or reproductive organs, and can, in increasing instances, kill?

What other country in the world would treat its children in the way that Britain does? Sheep dip containing Lindane cannot be used in Britain; to do so would be a criminal offence because of its toxicity. Yet Lindane can be administered legally through the prescription service—it is recommended by the National Health Service for use in children's shampoo for the treatment of head lice. It is appalling to think that that substance cannot be used in sheep dip because of its toxicity, but it can be used on the heads of little children. The shampoos are sold under the trade names of Lorexane and Quellada. I urge the Minister seriously to consider that policy.

The attitude of the manufacturers and suppliers of toxic chemicals is deplorable. They make no effort to establish whether their products are safe. They attempt to discount evidence of toxic effects and they make very little effort to inform the public of the possible consequences of using their chemicals. For example, Peter Bateman—the public relations director of Rentokil—has described Lindane as a life-saving chemical, despite all the evidence of its toxic properties. I ask Mr. Bateman to stop and think for a moment about Ann and Eric Riley. Eric was exposed to Lindane and PCP—pentachlorophenol—in January 1987. He rapidly developed lethargy, depression, pain in the throat and stomach and other symptoms. Eric had an epileptic fit in April 1987 and suffered memory loss and lack of co-ordination. He never fully recovered his health. He had a further fit in January 1988, as a result of which he drowned in the family bath—killed by Lindane.

Mr. Bateman should also think about the grandmother in Skipton who wrote to me only this week. Following an advertisement on Yorkshire Television, she bought a product called Gammexene, which contained Lindane, to dust the tomato plants in her greenhouse. She developed nausea, dizziness, irritation of the eyes, nose and throat and muscular spasms in her legs that persisted for some months. Her grandchildren now refuse to kiss her because they complain that she has been poisoned.

Cuprinol, a company that has advertised extensively on television, has been worried for some time that it has been poisoning its own work force. There are 23 outstanding worker claims against the company. The Transport and General Workers Union is more than concerned about the company and its activities and the risks of Cuprinol's hazardous products. The company has chosen to deny publicly the appalling efects of Lindane, TBTO—tributyl tin oxide—and PCPs, yet secretly it has been withdrawing Lindane from its lethal concoctions. If that is the case, why does it not withdraw old stocks from its suppliers? Will it destroy those stocks and issue a warning to consumers not to purchase products containing Lindane produced prior to the date that the substance was removed from the production process? Will it now accept liability for the damage already done to its customers and its work force?

The performance of contractors that use chemicals is even worse. A survey in the *Building Trades Journal* of 14 specialists in timber treatments reported staggering incompetence. An editorial in the *British Journal of Industrial Medicine* summed it up:

> "Modern management has no incentive for the identification of so far unknown or unproved risk."

Perhaps more importantly, there are no penalties for failing to identify risk. In general, the public have no protection against toxic materials and their use by incompetent or unscrupulous operators.

The complacent attitude of the authorities beggars belief. Only a few months ago at the Dispatch Box the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), said that he did not believe that Lindane and other chemicals were dangerous. Yet that was at a time when the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food had already banned the use of Lindane in sheep dip. On 10 July, the Health and Safety Executive, in a private meeting with industry, said that there were problems with the public perception of attitudes towards the introduction and continuation of hazardous substances in the home environment. The HSE pleaded with industry to introduce a system of advice and information leaflets to the public.

That information is to be delayed until at least July 1990 because, in the words of minute No. 5, the Nationwide Association of Preserving Specialists reserved its judgment on this matter. Even in private, the industry was not prepared to admit that things were going wrong and that serious damage was being done to the health of many British people.

The situation is even worse. At present, the regulations are not working effectively. For example, a company called Mould Growth Consultants Limited is selling a product called Wintox to local authorities, and it has been established today that it has never received approval from the Health and Safety Executive or the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Those local authorities currently negotiating with that company should withdraw immediately until the company receives approval from the Health and Safety Executive, or the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. That should be treated as a matter of urgency.

The Bill would give members of the public the right to information. It would establish a regulatory authority to license particular chemicals or processes for domestic use, a code of practice for the protection of consumers against unscrupulous manufacturers, suppliers and contractors and a register of harmful substances, including a proscribed list.

The House should be asking the Government immediately to ban PCPs and Lindane, to phase out organic insecticides and arsenic formulations and to phase in inorganic bone compounds, to rewrite British standards and to give the Health and Safety Executive a greater role. Without that minimal action, deaths in Britain will continue while wood preservative and chemical companies are happy to put profits before the lives of many working people. That private scandal should be exposed and ended forthwith.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Mike Watson, Mr. Frank Doran, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr. Martyn Jones, Mr. Keith Bradley, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. David Hinchliffe, Mr. Thomas McAvoy, Mr. John Battle, Mr. Gerry Steinberg and Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

TOXIC AND HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS)

Mr. Ian McCartney accordingly presented a Bill to protect the general public in the purchase and application of toxic and hazardous substances within the home environment; to provide a code of conduct for use by consumers and contractors; to set up a register of proscribed substances; and for other purposes. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 216.]

Orders of the Day

Local Government and Housing Bill

[SECOND DAY]

Lords amendments further considered.

Clause 71

DUTY TO KEEP HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

Lords amendment: No. 112, in page 78, line 8, after "1926" insert—

"(dd) any property which—
(a) with the consent of the Secretary of State given under section 417(1) of the Housing Act 1985;
(b) with the consent of a Minister given under section 50(1)(e) of the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1958; or
(c) by virtue of section 50(2) of that Act (houses vesting in local authority on default of another person)
was brought within the corresponding account kept under Part XIII of the Housing Act 1985 for years beginning before 1st April 1990;"

5.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment Nos. 113 to 118, 119 and amendments (a) to (f), and Lords amendments Nos. 120 to 138, 318 to 327.

Mr. Chope: Part VI and schedule 4 are concerned with revenue finance for local authority housing. It might help the House in its consideration of the various provisions if I set out some of the background and outline our objectives.

The House may know that part VI encapsulates the principles that underlie the Bill—accountability, efficiency, fairness and targeting. The present financial framework in which authorities provide their housing service gives insufficient incentives for efficiency, does not make the best use of public resources, and does not give council tenants a clear view of what their accommodation and the housing service are really worth. Local authorities are required to account for their day-to-day expenditure and income on council housing separately, in the housing revenue account, but they can transfer money freely between their housing revenue account and the rest of their general rate fund. In other words, they can use ratepayers' money to subsidise the housing service, or conversely use surpluses from the housing revenue account to pay for non-housing services. That distorts accountability to tenants and ratepayers, and engenders inefficiency.

The discretion to move resources in and out of the housing revenue account makes it difficult to ensure that the available Exchequer subsidies to council housing are directed to those authorities which most need them. The Government provide about £3 billion of subsidies in support of expenditure on the housing revenue account, but that money is paid through three separate channels

[Mr. Chope]

—housing subsidy, rent rebate subsidy, and an element of rate support grant in support of contributions from the rate fund.

Anomalies are almost bound to result from such a system. Some authorities which receive those subsidies can make surpluses which they can use outside the housing revenue account, so Exchequer money for council housing is used for other purposes. The other side of the coin is that fewer resources are then available to target on authorities which need extra help with their housing expenditure.

One further consequence of the present financial framework is that the pattern of council rents around the country does not reflect the variation in the value of council housing or the standard of service provided by different councils in different parts of the country. Rents are based instead on historic values. Council tenants cannot clearly see what their accommodation is worth or whether they are receiving an efficient service, and they are not given the signals that they need to exercise freely the choices we have made available in the housing market.

In that context, we have established our new financial regime, which has three objectives—to tighten the financial discipline of local authorities in the provision of the housing service; to target taxpayer subsidies more effectively; and to encourage more sensible, realistic council rents, which come to reflect the pattern in the value of housing around the country. Those objectives are set in the context of the total level of housing revenue account subsidy, remaining roughly at this year's level—£3 billion per annum.

There are two main elements of the new regime. First, housing revenue accounts will be ring-fenced from the rest of the authorities' funds, preventing ratepayers' money from being used as a discretionary subsidy to council housing, and restricting the use of housing surpluses outside the account.

Secondly, the three existing sources of Exchequer subsidy will be combined to prevent a single housing revenue account subsidy, paid where on our assumptions authorities need additional help to balance the ring-fenced account. In combination, those two elements will help us to achieve our three objectives.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Is it right that private owners who contribute nothing via their rates should be on bungalow waiting lists? A senior citizen has a right to go on the senior citizen list and to be provided with accommodation, but ring fencing makes it extremely difficult for all local authority residents to be treated fairly.

Mr. Chope: I have to disagree. There will not be any inequalities under the new system. There are inequalities under the existing system. It is unreasonable that those who are still waiting for council housing should be contributing, through their rate bills, to the existing council housing revenue account which is there for the benefit of existing tenants. As soon as people on the waiting list become tenants, they will be paying rents which go into the housing revenue account.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does the Minister agree that some authorities have not used the rate fund for years to subsidise their council house rents, and that council tenants are paying taxes to subsidise mortgage interest relief?

Mr. Chope: I do not accept that either. The pattern of historic costs of council housing varies significantly. Some housing estates were built largely in the 1930s, and other councils have a majority of estates built in the 1960s and 1970s, so they have higher historic costs. But it is unreasonable that people, just because they are living in properties built in the 1930s, should enjoy lower rents than people living in properties which are more modern. The essence of our proposals is to make the regime much fairer and more equitable.

The majority of the Lords amendments are technical, designed to clarify the accounting treatment of various items within the housing revenue account. A group of amendments to clause 71 and schedule 4 was intended to clear up an anomaly concerning property that is disposed of. The amendments reflect the common-sense view that such property should no longer be counted as housing revenue account property.

5.30 pm

Amendments were also made to clause 78, and to the schedule dealing with the way in which rent rebates are shown in the account, and providing for the cost of discretionary extensions made by the authority to the housing benefit system. That group took in the change made in Commons Committee at the instigation of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) regarding rebates for war widows and the war disabled.

There were also amendments to the list, in schedule 4, of permitted debits and credits to the account, regarding the relationship between the account and its sub-account, the housing repairs account. Amendments were also made to correct obvious omissions, providing specifically for expenditure from revenue resources on housing capital works, and funds to cover rent arrears.

Two important groups of amendments were made in Committee in another place, both of which were foreshadowed on Report in this House. The first concerns the new residual debt subsidy, or RDS. The RDS provisions in clauses 79 to 81 were introduced to clear up some of the anomalies in the present accounting and subsidy arrangements, which exist when large amounts of an authority's housing stock are disposed of. RDS was to be payable to authorities that disposed of stock for which the receipt did not cover the outstanding debt.

Following development of our proposals on housing revenue account subsidy, and consultation with local authorities and the local authority associations, my hon. Friend the then Under-Secretary of State announced our conclusion that a separate residual debt subsidy would be needed only for the current year, 1989-90, and only in the case of authorities not in receipt of main housing subsidy. Amendments Nos. 121 to 128 amend the provisions to give effect to that change in approach.

The second major amendment to this part of the Bill is amendment No. 119, which is intended to ensure that provisions dealing with the calculation of the main housing revenue account subsidy are in line with our stated policy. The first part concerns the Secretary of State's powers to make assumptions for subsidy purposes about credits or debits in the housing revenue account. Housing revenue account subsidy is to be paid to enable an authority to balance its housing revenue account on certain assumptions about its expenditure and income. The main such assumptions concern the level of rents and expenditure on management and maintenance of the housing stock. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State announced on Report our intentions regarding council house rents.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): In case any hon. Member is not clear on this, may I make it clear that the assumption is intended to give the Government an opportunity to set rent levels that they believe should be set throughout the country?

Mr. Chope: Not at all. The Government are saying loud and clear that it will still be for individual local authorities to decide rent levels. We are also saying, however, that there should be a fairer system of subsidy, and the new system will be much fairer than the existing one.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): The Minister has said that he intends to clarify the assumptions. A letter from his predecessor, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), to Manchester city council states:

> "To the extent that the repairs capitalised were of a normal day-to-day nature, this should be reflected progressively in the M and M allowance . . . in the new HRA Subsidy."

Following yet another change by the Department of the Environment, Manchester, for example, will lose £20 million in subsidy because of the change in treatment of capitalised repairs. That means that rents will have to rise by £10·50 just to stand still. Can the Minister explain why his Department continually changes the subsidy rules, why capitalised repairs are being treated differently and why commitments given by his predecessor have been changed, to the detriment of Manchester's rentpayers?

Mr. Chope: I was intending to deal specifically with capitalised repairs when we reached an amendment on the subject tabled by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). Let me say to the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley), however, that, if he reads the consultation document, he will see that Manchester benefits greatly from the new system. Under our proposed system, it is deemed to need the minimum increase of 95p a week, whereas, under the existing system, this year's assumed increase is £1·95 a week.

I shall deal with the issue of capitalised repairs in more detail later. The main point is, however, that Manchester has been spending a good deal on capitalised repairs that were not truly capitalised: in other words, it was spending money on decorating and routine maintenance that no sensible person would regard as expenditure that could properly be capitalised. If Manchester continues to do that, it will not be able to use capital moneys for such purposes. Under the new system, however, it will be able to capitalise genuine capital repairs, as it has been able to do in the past.

Mr. Soley: The Minister has confirmed what I said a few moments ago: in effect, the Government will determine rent levels. As is known by every Conservative councillor in the Association of District Councils, and by every Labour councillor throughout the land, the Minister is deciding—to use his words—what is sensible. Unfortunately, he is the only person who agrees with his definition of "sensible"; none of the Conservative or Labour councillors in the ADC agrees with it. Why is the Minister the only sensible person around?

Mr. Chope: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for accepting that I am sensible, but I do not regard myself as the only person to take what I consider the sensible view that capital moneys should not be spent on routine house decoration, and that ordinary revenue income should be used for that kind of revenue expenditure. My view is that capital expenditure should be incurred on capital assets: that means truly capitalised repairs that are in the nature of either major long-term maintenance that would probably be incurred only every 30 years, or other capital improvements.

That, I think, is the view that most accountants would advise us to take, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman disagrees with it. I know that his authority in Hammersmith has interpreted "capital repairs" very liberally. My Labour-controlled authority in Southampton, however, has taken my view, that it would be wrong to incur capital expenditure on what should normally be revenue items.

Mr. Soley: I thank the Minister for giving way again: he is very generous with his time.

Is it not a fact that almost all industries would think it appropriate to use capital moneys for revenue purposes at times? If the Minister sold his house and moved into a cheaper one, he might well use some of the capital accumulated from the sale to repair and renovate the new house. That is a very normal thing to do. In the words of the Prime Minister, it is the normal everyday economics of the family.

Mr. Chope: No, it is not. I think that responsible authorities would say that, when public money is involved, existing tenants should pay for existing decoration carried out in their flats and houses, and that the cost should not be a burden on successive generations. For that is effectively what is happening: if capital moneys are used to carry out today's routine decoration, debt will be incurred on which interest must be paid by generations of successor tenants.

Mr. Soley: The Minister has just referred to "any responsible authority." Does he therefore think that the Association of District Councils, which agrees with me, not with him, is irresponsible?

Mr. Chope: If and in so far as authorities have used capital moneys for revenue purposes in the way that I have described, I would say that that was ill advised. It will certainly not be possible to do that under the new system.

Mr. Soley: That is the Minister's view.

Mr. Chope: Yes. In my view, it is irresponsible. That is the view of many people in local government.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): Manchester found that it was more economical to have programmed repairs—for example, the replacement of rotting window frames and the repainting of houses on a massive estate programme. Would that come under the heading of capital expenditure?

Mr. Chope: What could be described as the cyclical painting of estates every three, five or seven years, depending on the area, is an ordinary revenue item. If one wanted to replace windows by means of a major replacement programme which would only be necessary every 20 or 30 years, that would be a legitimate item to

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capitalise. That is the distinction to be drawn between ordinary expenditure items and items that can properly be capitalised and upon which capital resources can be spent.

Under the rent guideline system that we are introducing, we start by assuming a national total of rent income for the year. Our proposal for next year is that this should reflect an increase of 5 per cent. in real terms, plus 5 per cent. for inflation. That is exactly the same increase as we have assumed in the existing subsidy system for each of the last two years.

The net result of the rent proposals is that the proposed guideline increase is nowhere less than 95p and nowhere more than £4·50. Of 366 local housing authorities in England, 66 receive the maximum guideline increase, 170 receive the minimum increase and the remaining 130 fall somewhere between the two. For almost one half of all local authorities, there will be a guideline rent increase of less than the national inflation figure. I am prepared to guarantee that that is a figure and a fact to which Opposition Members will not draw attention.

The proposals are fair and reasonable. They will start the process of encouraging a more logical pattern of rents which will reflect the true variation in the valuation of property. They will also ensure that rents do not move out of the reach of ordinary people. They certainly do not reflect the dramatic claims made by the Opposition at Report.

While discussing the subsidy calculation and the proposals made on 23 October, it might be helpful if I were to say a few words about the other main assumption in the subsidy calculation—the allowance that we shall be making for expenditure on management and the maintenance of the stock. Our proposed assumption is that each authority will increase its spending by 5 per cent. to take account of inflation, plus an increase of 3 per cent. in real terms. That should enable all authorities to provide a good standard of day-to-day maintenance. The proposal, as with all the other elements of subsidy, is now open to consultation. The authorities have until 4 December to submit their comments.

5.45 pm

Mr. Soley: My immediate response is that those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. I have never before heard such an incredibly blind view of the housing crisis, not least the crisis over rents. The Minister knows that what he has said about rents is only a very small part of the picture. Rents will increase dramatically.

The Government have not referred to the extent of the housing crisis which affects local authority tenants, housing association tenants and private tenants. This wide-ranging group of amendments provides us with an opportunity to debate both the housing revenue account and homelessness. Some local authorities will not be required to keep a housing revenue account, which raises the issue of what will happen to the homeless. The amendments also provide us with an opportunity to discuss rent arrears and rent levels.

One would have thought, from what the Minister said, that there is no problem. The reason that I was so anxious to intervene during his speech was to use for his benefit the Association of District Councils' evidence. That is not a Labour-controlled organisation; it is almost solidly Conservative controlled. When I spoke at a conference of the association in the Minister's constituency, Southampton, I received overwhelming support from Conservative councillors when I said that in the Labour party's view the Secretary of State does not have the right to take away the money that they have gained from capital receipts—from selling council houses—and make them use it to repay debts, although they want to use it to repair, renovate and rebuild the housing stock. I was cheered when I said that, so I say to the Minister, simply in terms of his own political survival, that he ought to be wondering why it is that he is so totally isolated and why it is that he is the only one who knows what a sensible rent is.

The Government have consistently refused to tell us what a fair rent is. At first they referred constantly to market rents but when market rents became a little embarrassing, because they were increasing so rapidly, we began to hear about affordable rents and low rents. Nowhere have the Government referred to what they think rent levels should be in the local authority sector, the housing association sector or the private sector. Such is the extent of the housing crisis that the Government cannot bring themselves to face either the purchase sector problem or the rented sector problem.

That is why the Minister who, we are told, is responsible for housing, although I sometimes doubt it—the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard)—chose not to speak about mortgage interest rate rises when he addressed his own party conference. Mortgage interest rates have no effect, apparently, on the housing problem, yet we know that they are hitting people badly if they are trying to buy for the first time or if they are trying to sell and buy another house. They are also having a grossly distorting effect on the housing market because of the combination of house price inflation over a number of years—which will resume again in due course—and a distorted subsidy system, brought about by the cut in subsidy to the rented sector. It is that which has created the chaos that the Government have inherited.

As there is now a housing crisis, the Government have decided that they had better not have a Minister for Housing. We were told initially that the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe was going to be the Minister for Housing. Then we discovered that he was in charge of water privatisation. However, we were told that when he had finished privatising water he would deal with housing. When the hon. and learned Gentleman has finished with water and deals with housing, which presumably will be some time in the new year, what the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) will know for sure is that his position is unassailable. He will no longer be what he is supposed to be now, I assume—the Minister for Housing, although he never actually confesses to being the Minister for Housing.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the real Minister for Housing stand up?

Mr. Soley: Yes, will he do so? In a way it is farcical, but really it is very serious. The major housing crisis that we face is due to a lack of affordable accommodation either for rent or for sale in both urban and rural areas, but we do not have a Minister for Housing to deal with it. There is not even a recognition of the problem.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the new Ministers and welcoming them to their various responsibilities? Will he also point out to them that they are respectively the twelfth and thirteenth holders of those posts since 1979? Will my hon. Friend also join me in saying that if we hold a similar debate on a similar Bill in 12 months time, it is almost certain that the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) and the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) will not be sitting on the Government Front Bench?

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is quite right. A number of the Ministers who passed through while I have been doing this job were in post for only 12 months. To be fair, one of the better Ministers held his post for only 12 months. Because he realised the seriousness of the problem and decided to do something about it, he was moved.

To put the problem in context, rural areas of England which did not have a housing problem before now have one. Sons and daughters of people who live in good housing in villages in the south of England suddenly find that they cannot afford to buy or rent. People who have lived in the area for a long time, the people who drive the trains, teach in the schools or nurse in the local hospitals cannot afford to buy or rent. House price inflation has pushed house prices out of their range, and rents are going up to market levels and are therefore unaffordable. In Dorset, an average family house costs about £90,000, a market rent is approximately £100 a week and the average male unskilled wage in that area is £90 per week. It is impossible to square the equation.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): The hon. Gentleman referred particularly to the south, but the problem is just as bad in many parts of the north. In my constituency of High Peak there are many villages where families who have lived there for many generations can no longer afford to buy or rent. In most of the villages and towns there is a desperate shortage of rented accommodation and council housing and there are no private-sector houses that ordinary people can afford.

Mr. Soley: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support. I am not saying that the problem occurs only in the south, but the picture is more extreme in the south because house price inflation has had a much more dramatic effect there, for many reasons of which we are all aware. But the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that in some areas of Yorkshire the figures are similar to those in the south, and that must apply to many other areas.

In addition to that general pain is something that I never thought I would live to see in my own country—teenage children sitting in our streets with cardboard signs saying, "Homeless and hungry". They are under 18 and they have nowhere to go. To have a Minister, whether or not he is responsible for housing, who is so blind to that appalling problem that he can introduce a Bill that not only does nothing about it, but because of certain conditions will prevent local authorities from doing something about it, is absolutely disgraceful. I cannot face seeing many more youngsters sitting homeless and hungry in the street.

There was a time when one did not give money to people who were begging because one knew that there was a support system. One could stop and talk to them and persuade them to go to their local DSS office or to emergency night shelters. During the last years of the Labour Government and in the early 1980s, even in London one could always get someone a roof over their head. Nowadays one cannot do that. That is why increasing numbers of the public, myself included, give money without asking questions because the housing crisis is so desperate. It is one of the worst examples of the typical Tory picture of private affluence and public squalor. Sadly, that public squalor is endured by the most vulnerable people. The Centre Point report shows that about one third of those youngsters have come out of care —the care that we operate in the Dickensian Conservative 1980s where apparently it is all right to leave kids out in the streets when they are no longer the responsibility of the local authority. They drift around and are likely to be drawn into crime, drug abuse and alcohol abuse which are strongly associated with homelessness.

Rent levels are central to much of our debate. The Government should face many of the problems concerning rent. They admit that they are trying to push up council rents, although they argue about how fast and how far. However, they rarely recognise or admit that they have dramatically pushed up housing association and private sector rents, so there is no escape. Some Conservative and other councils consider that if they transfer council housing to housing associations or private landlords somehow people will be safeguarded from rent increases. That is not true. Last year housing association rents increased by an average of 24 per cent. Market rents in the private sector are leaping ahead to such an extent that it is difficult to predict how high they will rise. My judgment is that the market rate will approximate towards what the property would fetch if it were sold and the owner invested the money and took a return on it. The interest rate that they would get would be roughly the market rent. That is why market rents are going through the roof.

Just to make that appalling picture worse, the Government have introduced capital value rents. On 1 April 1990 the Government will bring in a new system of calculating rates based on the capital value of the property. The Ministers occasionally say that Labour's alternative to the poll tax includes an element of capital values. Our system would be fully rebatable, but there is no rebate on the capital value basis that they are using to set rent levels.

Mr. Chope: To bring the debate closer to the hon. Gentleman's home territory, does he support and approve of the rent policy in the Labour-controlled London borough of Hammersmith, where the average rent last year was £35·88 and where there has already been an increase this year far in excess of those prevailing in other local authority areas? Does he recognise that, whatever the level of rent, people are eligible for rent rebates? Under the existing system and under the new system there will be no alteration in rent rebate entitlements.

Mr. Soley: I agree entirely with my council when it says that it is being forced to increase rents by a Government who have progressively cut the money that goes to every local authority, regardless of whether it is controlled by the Labour party, the Tory party, the Liberal party or anything else. That is what is forcing up rents. There is always a case for increasing rents at sensible levels—using my definition of sensible and not the Minister's—but what

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is not acceptable is that in recent years the Government have removed the subsidy from the rented sector so that people are forced to pay more.

The Minister says that housing benefit is available, but it has been cut eight times by the Government, to the extent that many hon. Members on both sides of the House have constituents who have lost up to £10 a week in benefit. That is why the Government had to introduce phased transitional arrangements.

Still worse, late at night, the Government introduced that wicked Act in which they cut the benefit of people who have a spare room. If someone has a two-bedroomed home and a member of his family dies or moves out that person will suddenly lose housing benefit because he has a spare room. The Minister should try telling people that they will lose mortgage income tax relief if they have a spare room. How many spare rooms does the Minister have and how much mortgage tax relief does he get? If he thinks that it is fair that he gets mortgage income tax relief on his spare room, he should conclude that people in rented accommodation with a spare room should also receive some subsidy.

Mr. Battle: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Minister's statement that the Bill proposes no changes in housing benefit was quite incredible? I know that the Minister was not on the Committee considering the Bill, but he might have had the courtesy of reading the reports of its proceedings before he spoke. It is absolutely plain that one of the most iniquitous proposals in the Bill is the suggestion that those paying rent who are not on benefit will end up paying the difference in housing benefit when the subsidy is withdrawn from the DSS. That is in the Bill.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I was going to mention that in due course, but I am sure that my hon. Friends on the Back Benches will do so. What is happening is quite wicked because the poor will subsidise the very poor. I do not know why the Minister is shaking his head. His predecessor accepted that the aim was for those people receiving benefit to be paid in certain circumstances—there will be many cases in local authorities—by people who were not receiving benefit. The next door neighbour not receiving housing benefit, but who has a job, will be subsidising in his rent level the housing benefit being paid to the person next door. It will not be paid centrally in the way that it used to be. It is incredible that the Minister is not aware of that.

6 pm

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman is misrepresenting the position. Under the new ring-fenced housing revenue accounts money from the taxpayer—the taxpayers' subsidy—will be used to meet the needs that exist. For example, if there is a need for more housing benefit to be paid out of that ring-fenced account by a given local authority because of the needs of its tenants, all things being equal, that will be compensated for by increased subsidy. It is a misrepresentation to suggest that the poor tenants will be subsidising the even poorer.

Mr. Soley: Before he reads the message being passed to him by the civil servants, will the Minister give the House a guarantee that if any local authority finds itself in a position where the people receiving housing benefit are having that benefit paid for by other tenants it will receive an increase in subsidy so that that will not have to happen?

Mr. Chope: This is the first time that I have debated across the Chamber with the hon. Gentleman and I have come to the conclusion that he is selective in his choice of examples. He said that Government support for Hammersmith and Fulham has been cut causing rent increases. Does he accept that in 1986-87 housing subsidy in Hammersmith and Fulham was £10·5 million and in the current year it is £21·6 million? It has more than doubled but the hon. Gentleman was asserting that the Government have cut support to Hammersmith and Fulham. If he cannot get his facts right concerning his own local authority, I cannot take him seriously.

Mr. Soley: I will deal with both points. The Minister used 1987 as an example. I too would choose that year as an example. However, we are worried about the past 10 years during which time the Government cut money to local authorities by about £24 billion. Hammersmith and Fulham has borne more than its fair share of cuts, even when it was under Conservative control.

I thought that the Minister was going to give the House the commitment for which I asked. He said that I was being selective and misleading but I know that he would not want me to mislead the House. If I find an example of a local authority where housing benefit is being paid to some tenants and that benefit is being paid for by other tenants through the rents, will he give a commitment that he will ensure Exchequer subsidy to prevent that happening? Can we have a straight answer to that question because every local authority whether Labour or Tory is in that position?

Mr. Chope: We will ensure that where an authority cannot raise sufficient income to cover all the costs in its housing revenue account, including the cost of rebates, subsidy will be paid to make up the shortfall. There is no question of tenants having to pay more because of an increase in the rebates bill. If the cost of rebates increases, subsidy will increase to meet the extra costs. That subsidy should go to the authorities that need it and not to cover costs that authorities can meet for themselves. The closer we stick to that basic principle the more we can do to assist in meeting real needs. The further we stray from it, the more we will leave real needs unsatisfied. Perhaps that is what the hon. Gentleman wants.

Mr. Soley: The Minister is avoiding the change in the wording. Clearly he is not familiar with the Bill. Clause 78(1) of the pre-amended Bill says:

> "In subsection (2) of section 30 of the Social Security Act 1986 (housing benefit finance), for the words 'total housing benefit' there shall be substituted the words 'relevant benefit' and there shall be added at the end the words 'and in this subsection "relevant benefit" means total housing benefit excluding, in the case of a local authority in England and Wales, any Housing Revenue Account rebates granted by them'."

Will the Minister give the House a commitment that he will ensure that any local authority finding itself in the position which I have described and which is set out in the Bill will receive the subsidy that the Minister said it should receive? Will the Minister answer yes or no?

Mr. Chope: I have set out the position clearly. The hon. Gentleman is mischievously trying to suggest that where a local authority is in need, tenants will have to pay more because of an increase in the rebates bill. He may not find that he has much material in the Labour party's policies on housing but he ought to get our policies right and understand them before he criticises them.

Mr. Soley: Getting it right involves reading the Government's clause, which I have just done. The Minister's position will be unassailable much sooner than I thought. He will not last long in the job if he makes such gaffs. It will not be missed that the Minister said that there would be subsidy from the taxpayer to ensure that the poor did not subsidise the poorest and then retreated to the position that he now holds.

Capital value rents will force considerable rent rises. The Minister skated over that lightly saying that the average rent rise would be quite low. I cannot remember the figure he used, but I think that he said it would be about 95p minimum and £4·50 maximum. The Minister could use this point against me if he wanted but the places worst hurt will be the southern areas of Britain. One of the people most hurt would be the chairman of the Conservative party—the man who encourages the team approach. The man in Mole Valley will not be clobbered on the poll tax but every one of his council tenants will have to pay an increase of £4·50 a week in rent.

Can the Minister try to understand what it is like to live on the average wage of an unskilled person which is about £100 a week and then have to pay a rent increase of £4·50 per week? Can he envisage a situation where, because of housing benefit tapers and cut-offs, many people will not receive any benefit towards that, or if they do, it will be minimal benefit? What will the Minister say to the tenants in many Conservative areas in the south who next year will face rent increases of up to £4·50? He could tell them to do what they are doing in Canterbury or Elmbridge, which is to abandon council housing altogether and hand it over to a housing association where tenants can expect another massive rent increase. The increase was 24 per cent. last year and it will be high again next year, although at present it is hard to predict just how high it will be.

There is also the question of capitalised repairs. Council rent levels are further threatened by the plan to stop local authorities spending capital receipts on repairs. In the past that has been accepted as entirely legitimate by the Department of the Environment. All of a sudden, the Minister has discovered that that is not what accountants would do. In fact, it is what accountants do in private business, in the public sector or in everyday life. It is a normal, sensible way of managing one's affairs. That is why I can pray in aid Lady Anson and the Conservative-controlled Association of District Councils and most of the other Conservative authorities which are not in the ADC. All of them agree with me that they should be able to use the money that they have accumulated to meet their repair and renovation expenses.

I am not alone in saying that the anxiety that is being caused to tenants is unacceptable. I have a cutting from the Hemel Hempstead *Herald and Post* about Dacorum council, another Tory-controlled authority. It states:

"tenants could face huge rent increases if the Government ties levels to the local private housing market.

Chairman of the borough council's Housing Committee"—

a Conservative, of course—

"Councillor Peter Benton, told the *Herald and Post* he is waiting 'quite anxiously' for information on new Government orders.

'It really could be a muddle of things. The point is that we are already an efficient council with our housing stock of 15,000 homes,' said Councillor Benton.

'This is just another step in reducing our responsibility and one can only regret that.'

'They are figures'"—

I do not know whether I entirely agree with this—

"'drawn up by bald-headed civil servants eating their salmon sandwiches in the Department of the Environment in Marsham street'."

I have not seen many bald-headed civil servants eating salmon sandwiches in the Department of the Environment, but that is what councillor Benton thinks. He went on to state:

"'it will be an order of the Government"—

that is absolutely right—

"which the council can do nothing about'."

I shall offer the Minister an opportunity to intervene. He thinks that there is everything that he can do about it. Will he give an assurance to the Conservative leader of Dacorum council that he will ensure he gives it sufficient subsidy so that it need not do what councillor Benton thinks it must do?

Mr. Chope: Dacorum council is Conservative-controlled. The hon. Gentleman also referred to Mole Valley. He seems to think that it is wrong for a political party to impose fairer policies which may have an impact upon its supporters in certain areas. The Government do not share the hon. Gentleman's cynical view of politics. Last year, in Mole Valley, average rents were £19·74, and in Dacorum they were £18·99. There is plenty of scope for reasonable rent increases in those areas, having regard to the fact that, in the hon. Gentleman's own borough of Hammersmith, average rents were £35·88 last year. Also, this year in Haringey, which most hon. Members regard as a borough with considerable needs, rents increased not by £4.50 but by two tranches of £4·50—one in the spring and one in October.

Mr. Soley: Let me try to help the Minister, as he is clearly getting into some difficulty. He should sit back and relax and imagine that everything that I say to him is designed to help him out of a hole—funnily enough, it is. He should abandon his absurd approach to setting rents and should sit down with his officials—he had better bring in one of his senior friends or he will quickly find himself out of a job—and start asking, "What is an affordable rent?" He could start from the position that many people in the housing movement have taken. If people are spending more than 20 per cent. of their net disposable income on rent or housing costs generally, they will quickly get into serious economic trouble.

I do not expect the Minister to say that 20 per cent. of one's net disposable income is a satisfactory rent level. It is not—it is too high. That percentage should be the highest. However, we know that, increasingly, it is the case for council tenants, housing association tenants and, above all, private sector tenants. Many tenants in housing associations, the private sector and, increasingly, in the council sector, are paying between 40 per cent. and 50 per cent. of their net disposable income on housing costs.

If the Minister bought a house and mortgaged himself up to the hilt, he would be terribly worried if he found himself paying 40 per cent. or 50 per cent. of his net disposable revenue on housing costs for more than a year

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or two. He knows that he could not do it. If one cannot do that on a Minister's salary, I am damn sure that one cannot do it on the salary of a skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled person. I implore the Minister to give up the daft argument that he is getting himself into about whether councils can set levels. We all know that they cannot. We know that the Government have been centralising local authority powers like mad. The issue is not just about that. It is about what people can pay for rent and the subsidy that is being taken from them in the private sector, the housing association sector and the council sector.

Unless the Minister gets this matter right, he must soon face up to the fact that not only will more people be pushed into homelessness and economic despair because they cannot afford their rents, but, setting the personal problem aside, the economic effects will be disastrous. Not only in London but in many other parts of the country now employers cannot find employees in areas in which housing costs are high.

6.15 pm

Yesterday, on the Radio 4 "Today" programme, the Secretary of State for Education and Science volunteered the information—I did not prime him to say it—that the Government cannot recruit and retain teachers because housing costs are too high. If Conservatives—councillors and Ministers alike—are saying that, there must be something seriously wrong. If I cannot convince the Minister that this matter is deadly serious by referring to kids in the streets with their "homeless and hungry" signs or by getting him to examine mortgage rates and so on, what on earth can I do to convince him?

Matters have been made worse by what the Government are trying to do. They set out their proposals in their consultation paper of 23 October. It states:

> "It is essential therefore that the introduction of the new system should not of itself introduce any sharp change in the level of rents or management and maintenance spending in any individual authority . . . The effect of these proposals will be to ensure a smooth transition to the new regime."

The new regime involves rent increases of up to 173 per cent. in some areas, again including Mole Valley. The document went on:

> "For the tenant, the immediate effect should be indistinguishable from what would have happened if the current system had remained in force."

The Minister should tell that to the tenant in Mole Valley when he pays £4·50 a week extra. The commitment was known as the soft landing. If that is a soft landing, and if the economy is also in for a soft landing, we had better emigrate before it is too late.

Mr. Chope: One question is at the root of the hon. Gentleman's argument. If rents of £35·88 in Hammersmith are affordable, why must we permit Mole Valley rents to go up by no more than £1·95 a week? Why should Mole Valley rents of £19·74 not be allowed to increase so that they are more in line with costs in that area?

Mr. Soley: Apart from capital values, which are relevant, the real problem is that the Government are embroiled in a situation in which the housing subsidy system is now chaotic. They have allowed the purchase sector, subsidy to expand and expand—not only through income tax relief but through discount sales and so on —at the same time as they cut the subsidy to the rented sector. That distorts the housing market to the extent that there is enormous house price inflation and people are unable to buy. Because the Government have moved literally 1·2 million homes out of the rented sector into the purchase sector, and because the building of new premises has come to a grinding halt because of interest rates, there is nothing to replace the rented sector. That is why people cannot find anywhere to rent or to buy. It is basic economics—supply and demand. The Government do not seem to understand those basic mechanisms.

The effect of the proposals of 23 October is that 66 authorities will have an assumed rent increase of £4·50 —the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—170 authorities at the minimum rate of 95p, and the rest will be somewhere in between. The £4·50 increases are overwhelmingly in London and the south-east, where rents are already higher than in the rest of the country. On 24 October, the then Minister, Lord Caithness—another one who lasted only a short time; some people did not notice his departure, let alone his arrival—tried to pretend that the Government had achieved a soft landing. Indeed, they said that they had already achieved a soft landing, so if the £4·50 was still to come, presumably that is where one would hit the barrier. Lord Caithness said that the average assumed increase was £2·08—that is about 10 per cent. in cash terms—and was because so many authorities, especially in the north, had increases of 95p—below the rate of inflation.

However, that is not the whole picture. It was stated that the new system should not

> "of itself introduce any sharp changes in rents . . . in any individual authority."

However, that is clearly what it has done. In terms of that commitment, the average figure is irrelevant. The Minister should look at the figure of £4.50. The Government's proposals also stated:

> "for the tenant the immediate effect should be indistinguishable from what would have happened if the current system had remained in force".

The Minister should tell that to the Mole Valley tenants and to those in the other 65 authorities. The average is irrelevant to tenants in Hackney, Lambeth, Mole Valley or Cambridge. What matters to them is the amount by which the provisions will affect them. The figure of £4·50 for those 66 authorities is over 50 per cent. higher than any determination that has ever been made under the existing system. Even if the 1981-82 figure of £2·95 is increased to allow for inflation, it is still only an increase in 1990-91 prices of £4·41. I hope that the Minister will give some thought to that in due course.

I turn now to the issue of bad debts and rent arrears and to Lords amendment No. 320. I refer to the Minister's earlier remarks about the subsidy available. Local authority tenants are having increasing difficulty in paying their rents. Although local authorities generally are devising new forms of management systems to make it easier for tenants, if a person's rent is taking an increasing amount of net disposable income, that person will get into arrears.

I should like the Minister to respond to my next point when he replies to the debate. The Audit Commission is about to issue a report, the contents of which are well known, demonstrating that there has been a massive increase in rent arrears in virtually all local authorities. The Audit Commission is equally clear about the cause. It states that the cause is the housing benefits cuts. Will the

Minister address himself to the challenge that the Audit Commission is putting to this House—and especially to the Government—and do something to prevent rent arrears from escalating in local authorities across the country because of the housing benefit cuts rightly identified by the Audit Commission and about which many of my hon. Friends have known for ages?

We shall seek to divide the House on amendment (b) to Lords amendment No. 119, which deals with the repair and renovation issue.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way because I want to point out to him that, while he was commenting on the dramatic increase in rent arrears following the housing benefit changes, the Minister was shaking his head in disagreement. I agree that it is his own head—and he is welcome to it because it is not a particularly clever or pretty one—but the fact is that all the evidence is so overwhelming that I cannot understand why the Minister is in dispute. I can give him the figures for my own London borough of Newham, where arrears increased by 30 per cent.—in line with the average increase in arrears throughout the country, in both Tory and Labour authorities. Can my hon. Friend explain why the Minister does not seem able to understand the facts?

Mr. Soley: What I can explain to my hon. Friend, who rightly pointed out that it is the Minister's head and he is entitled to shake it if he wants, is that the reason the Minister shook his head is that if he had said, "No", it would have appeared in *Hansard*, whereas the shaking of a head does not often appear in *Hansard*. If the Minister has not discovered this already, he will discover pretty shortly that what I have said about the Audit Commission is absolutely right.

Mr. Banks: Perhaps the Minister's body was wriggling and shaking while his head stayed still.

Mr. Soley: We shall seek to divide the House on amendment (b) because we do not want any rent increase over and above the highest agreed by the Government in the last three years, which is about £1·95. As I have said, they will increase this year by £4·50 for many people. We shall seek to divide the House because we believe that the increase should be held to a maximum of £1·95, given that the increases that the Government have brought about over the previous eight or nine years have been well above what would normally have been expected by tenants.

I turn now to amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 119. As capitalised repairs will increase costs, when setting the Government's prescribed rent levels, I should like the Secretary of State to take their effect into account. As my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) said in an intervention, the danger is that if the new capital value rents are taken into account together with the capitalised repairs problem, there is no doubt that several local authorities around the country—again, of all political colours—will face rent increases running into two figures—in other words, of over £10 per week. Furthermore, the authorities will not be able to do much about it. They could stop doing some of the repairs, with all that that implies for a worsening in living conditions and a decline in the housing stock. However, even if they leave some repairs, they cannot ignore them all and will then face rent increases in some areas of over £10 per week. I am simply asking the Secretary of State to take into account capitalised repairs before setting the rents. The Government's assumed maintenance figure for capitalised repairs may be wrong for 1990-91. Indeed, I am sure that it will be wrong. At this stage I simply want to put on the record the fact that I believe that there will be strong evidence to support that.

I have spoken for longer than I had intended, but as hon. Members will agree, I have taken several interventions. These issues are incredibly important. I end where I began, by saying that we are facing a housing crisis in this country the like of which we have not faced since the end of the second world war. The position is now desperately serious. I pray in aid again the Association of District Councils, which has produced a report entitled "A Time to Take Stock", stating that we need to spend between £36 billion and £50 billion just to maintain the existing stock in good repair or rather to improve its condition. When sentiments such as that come from Conservative organisations which are pleading with the Government to do something, I know that what my hon. Friends and I have been saying for many years is correct.

The housing crisis that is tearing apart the fabric of our society is not confined to the inner cities. It does not just affect the high-priced areas of the south. It is tearing apart the lives and the communities of people in urban and rural parts of Britain, in the north, south, east and west. Its worst form is the homeless child begging in the streets. Its everyday form can be seen in the people who cannot afford to pay their rents or mortgages and who become homeless as a result.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): I rise to support the Opposition amendments. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has just delivered what I and many of my hon. Friends regard as an excellent opening to our debate, telling a few truths which, unfortunately, the Government are not necessarily prepared to accept. I have watched the Ministers on the Treasury Bench shaking their heads like nodding toy dogs in the backs of cars. It is a disgrace that they should do that and then simply read out the notes passed to them by the civil servants in the Box when they do not have a clue what this is all about.

All Opposition Members and the majority of people in the country know that costs are increasing alarmingly in every sector of housing. We have all heard about the plight of home owners. The mortgage increases and high interest rates have been given great publicity by the press and many of us are, of course, subject to those increases ourselves. The increases in local authority rents, however, have received little attention. Local authority tenants have faced huge increases over the past few years, yet these have been largely ignored by the press, and even by this House. Housing association tenants and tenants in the private sector have also been badly hit in the past few years. However, I wish to speak about local authority tenants.

6.30 pm

Council rents in England this year have gone up by an average of £1·44 per week, representing an increase of 9·6 per cent. That is bad, but it is not half so bad as what will happen if the part of the Bill with which we are dealing passes unamended into law. Further major increases in council house rents will be inevitable.

[Mr. Gerry Steinberg]

In considering the housing revenue account subsidy, I will cite my local authority in the hope that the Minister will reconsider the situation. If the Bill is unamended and the notional housing revenue account turns out to be a minus, the amount in question will have to be paid over to the general rate fund irrespective of whether it equates with the actual revenue housing account. For my local authority of Durham, that will mean about £1 million more, or £2 extra per week per council house tenant. That sum will have to be passed to the general rate fund account or to one of the other accounts mentioned in the Bill. That is daft because one need not be a brilliant accountant to know that the notional account will become £2 million in deficit terms in view of the £1 million that is pushed over and the other £1 million that has to be found to bring the account into credit.

Nowhere in the Bill can I see what should be done with that additional £1 million when it is notionally put into another account. I suppose that it will be used notionally to subsidise the poll tax.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Has my hon. Friend considered, in relation to Durham's housing revenue account, what the effect would be on the interest element if tenants were allowed tax relief in the way that mortgage payers get tax relief on their mortgage interest, whether or not they need that subsidy?

Mr. Steinberg: My hon. Friend makes a valid point and I wanted to intervene in the Minister's speech to put that question. The Minister argued that a local authority's general rate fund should not subsidise council house tenants. He asked why the ordinary ratepayer should subsidise council tenants. But does he not also regard tax relief on mortgage interest as a subsidy from the taxpayer to the mortgage payer? If so, will he accept that a council tenant who does not have a mortgage but who pays all his other taxes is contributing to what is, in effect, a subsidy to mortgage payers? Would it not therefore be fair for ratepayers to contribute to a subsidy for council tenants?

As the Bill is drafted, the Secretary of State can dictatorially control the rents of every local authority. He can control the management functions and, by using the subsidy formula, he can control the quality and range of repairs that local authorities may carry out. There must be safeguards in the use of that power. Under the Bill as drafted, councils will have to decrease the overall service that they provide to their tenants or substantially increase rents. Common sense dictates that a further deterioration of council properties will occur unless council rents are subsidised to the necessary extent.

Does the Minister want to see the nation's local authority housing stock deteriorate? Is it, indeed, his aim to see council houses deteriorate due to lack of money to repair them? If not, and if he believes that authorities should look after their houses adequately and have the necessary funds to do so, he must amend the calculations in the Bill.

I again take my local authority of Durham as an example in considering the issue of capitalised repairs. It is not a large authority. I recall the Minister visiting Durham some years ago and meeting me and fellow councillors in the authority's hospitality room. We shared a drink, which was coffee; because the drinks have to be paid for out of the rates and it is a prudent local authority, that is all that we are given to drink.

It is estimated that by 1991, £2·335 million will have been channeled into the housing revenue account for capitalised repairs out of the capital receipts from the sale of council houses. But the Bill will prevent capital receipts from being used for capitalised repairs. In future, 25 per cent. of capital receipts will be available for capital work and the other 75 per cent. must go to redeem debt. In other words, 75 per cent. of the capital receipts that some local authorities were using to carry out capitalised repairs will no longer be available to them. If Durham council wants to continue its capitalised repair programme—in other words, if it wishes to do the equivalent amount of work that it planned to do—the money will have to be found from elsewhere, and the only way to raise it will be by raising the rents.

Local authorities have been forced to use their capital receipts for capitalised repairs because their HIP allocations have been cut dramatically over the years. For example, whereas in 1982 Durham received £2·85 million, this year it will receive £1·26 million. That is why Durham and other authorities took the opportunity of using capital receipts to do capitalised repairs. If Durham wishes to maintain the same programme but substitute the sum involved with a rent rise, it will have to increase rents by about £4·70 per week per tenant. Will the Minister cushion such an appalling increase and compensate for the necessary capital allocation? Will he take such matters into account when fixing management and maintenance allowances for subsidy purposes?

The Durham architects department has made substantial profits on contracts in recent years. Those profits have been made even though the department has tendered against private building companies. The department, having won those contracts, has made huge profits for the local authority. In the past, those profits had to be credited to the general rate fund. The city council then transferred it back to the credit of housing repairs in the housing revenue account. In other words, Durham was able to use its direct labour organisation profits to carry out further major housing repairs.

While the Bill was in Committee I wrote to the then Minister to ask him to clarify whether it would still be valid for DLO profits to be used in the housing revenue account. The letter that I received in reply was difficult to understand, but it seemed to say that that practice would remain legitimate after the Bill had been enacted. Having studied the Bill more closely, it appears to me that because of the ring-fencing regulations it will not be valid for those profits to be used, although that had been the impression gained by the local authority and by me.

In 1989-90 about £1·2 million went into the housing revenue account from DLO profits. If my local authority wants to continue its programme of work next year at the same level as this year, council house rents will have to increase by £2·42 per week per tenant. I hope that the Minister will clarify this. If he cannot do so tonight, I hope that he will write to me. Such clarification is vital to Durham city council and I suspect that it is equally important to many other local authorities which use their DLO profits in that way.

The rent rebate subsidy takes up part of the housing revenue account. Admittedly, at the moment 97 per cent. of that subsidy is paid by the Government and only 3 per cent. comes from the general rate fund. Because of the ring-fencing regulations, however, the authority will have to find the extra 3 per cent. as it will no longer be lawful to take it from the general fund. That does not represent a large amount of money in Durham—it is probably chicken feed to the majority of local authorities—but it does amount to £130,000, and to raise that money in the future the council will have to increase the rent paid by council house tenants by 26p per week.

Given the possible increases that may be incurred as a result of the Bill, what will the proposed changes mean to tenants living in Durham? If the local authority wants to carry on with the work that it has undertaken for the past few years, rents will have to increase by £9·30 per week —and that does not take into account any increase for inflation or anything else. Rents will have to increase by 45 per cent. next year merely to allow the level of repairs to stand still. I do not believe that that is fair and I am sure that even Ministers in the present Government would not regard it as fair. One must remember that that rent rise would not take into account any general increase in rents —it would be needed just to do the work necessary to stand still. When calculating the housing revenue account subsidy the Minister must take into account the likely changes that will result from his decisions. Failure to do that will be a disaster for my local authority and for the majority of council house tenants.

6.45 pm

I doubt that local authorities will increase their rents by 50 per cent.—tenants could not afford to pay such an increase. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith has already explained what a person expects to pay for his housing out of his general income. It is simply not on to increase council house rents by 50 per cent. Without such increases, however, repair programmes will be slashed. Properties will deteriorate and fall into further disrepair. The Minister may question whether such repairs need to be done in the first place. A recent survey conducted in my local authority showed that properties needed about £66 million to be spent on them to bring them up to a reasonable standard. The amount of money that needs to be spent throughout the country to bring all local authority housing up to a reasonable standard of repair runs into billions. That money must be spent and I hope that the Government will take that into account when considering the housing revenue account calculations.

The Government encouraged local authorities to use their capital receipts for repairs and, having done so, it is not right for them to leave those authorities in the lurch. Local authorities acted in good faith, they took the advice of the Government and they used their capital receipts to carry out capitalised repairs. The Government now intend to withdraw that money. The Government have said that rents will not rise as a result of the Bill, but we all know that that is a ludicrous claim. The Minister may give us the information that is passed to him from the officials' Box, but we all know that council house rents will rise steeply unless he changes the method by which he calculates the housing subsidy.

I hope that the Minister will take cognisance of a Department of the Environment consultative paper issued on 27 July 1988 which said:

> "It is essential therefore that the introduction of the new system should not of itself introduce any sharp change in the level of rents or management and maintenance spending in any individual authority . . . The effect of these proposals will be to ensure a smooth transition to the new regime. For the tenant, the immediate effect should be indistinguishable from what would have happened if the current system had remained in force."

If the Bill goes through unamended, the new system will be far from indistinguishable from the present system. I plead with the Minister to consider the calculations to ensure that local authorities are given subsidies for their housing revenue accounts to enable them to carry out the necessary work as that will ensure that tenants do not face astronomical rent increases to pay for that work to be done.

Mr. George Howarth: I recommend that the newly appointed Ministers should look at the statements on housing policy made by their predecessors since 1979. I spent some time doing just that. It is an increasingly interesting exercise as one realises that there has been a common thread running through Government policy which brings us to what we are discussing today: what is a sensible rent to expect people to pay for their council house or flat? I want to consider what the Government's housing legislation has amounted to since 1979.

No Conservative Member would deny that the Government originally had only one housing policy. They believed in universal owner-occupation. They thought that there was only one way in which the market could resolve the problems that people faced in finding suitable housing, and that was through owner-occupation. That policy led to the Housing Act 1980, which conferred on sitting tenants the right to buy with discounts according to the length of time that they had been tenants.

The way in which the Government responded to the effects of the Housing Act 1980 was very interesting. They did not stop by giving council tenants the right to purchase their properties with discounts relating to the time that that person had been a tenant. Between 1981 and 1983, when he was a Minister, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) regularly appeared at the Dispatch Box, with other Ministers, to say that he expected local authorities to introduce rent increases of £2·50, and over three or four years that increased to more than £6. That was no accident. It occurred because the Government regressively withdrew subsidies to local authorities which would have allowed them to cushion the effects of rent increases.

For the first time we saw the carrot-and-stick approach which the Government have consistently adopted towards housing policy. Indeed, that is the only consistent thing that the Government have done in housing in their entire 10 years in office. The carrot was the opportunity to exercise the right to buy; the stick was that if a tenant did not exercise that right, he would inevitably face increasing rent bills. As a consequence, it would eventually become sensible, to use the Minister's words, to exercise the right to buy instead of remaining a tenant.

To some extent, in the Government's terms, the right-to-buy policy was a success. Perhaps against their initial inclination, many people decided that it made financial good sense to purchase their council houses. Some people in London made huge profits. On a day-to-day budgeting basis, over five or 10 years, it probably made sense for many people to cut their outgoings in rent by purchasing their council homes because their rents would inevitably overtake what they would be expending in mortgage payments had they purchased the council house with a discount.

Mr. Pike: There is another aspect to the stick approach. In addition to direct subsidy to housing, local authorities had to consider grant-related expenditure housing factor E7. If they had not taken account of the kind of increase which the Government were advocating, they were penalised through factor E7. The stick was double edged.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that. My hon. Friend and I have both worked in local authorities. I was a chairman of a local authority housing committee and I know that such factors played a major part in assessing rent increase limits. Year after year it became depressingly repetitive having to make those calculations. Cuts in rate support grant and withdrawal of subsidies in general made it almost impossible to avoid large rent increases.

By the mid-1980s, the Government's housing policy seemed to be failing. It was not failing because they had not succeeded in selling council houses; they succeeded in doing that on a large scale. It failed for other reasons. Economists such as Professor Mintford concluded that the lack of opportunity to rent property was acting as a brake on the mobility of labour.

That meant that young people in my constituency, where we still have a major unemployment problem, could not come to London or the south-east to find jobs because they had nowhere to stay. I will not go into Professor Mintford's recommendations to the Government in detail. Perhaps the Minister will read over those recommendations and assimilate them. The major thrust of Professor Mintford's argument was that there was a need for rented property, certainly in the south-east and London.

Professor Mintford has a peculiar brand of economics. He considered the problems of Merseyside and decided that there was too much of it. The logical solution therefore was to remove half of it. I am not sure which side of the Mersey he had in mind, but——

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am trying to follow the hon. Gentleman's arguments is so far as they relate to the Lords amendments. It is very interesting to hear his general views on the Government's housing policy. However, is not his contribution more of a Second Reading speech than one specifically related to the amendments under discussion?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I remind the hon. Gentleman that that is for me to judge. If the hon. Gentleman looks at this group of amendments, he will see that they cover a wide range of issues.

Mr. Howarth: As usual, the impatience of the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) overtakes his intellectual gift for following the debate. I have no difficulty in following his point of order, and I am sure that at the appropriate time he will intervene and make his own comments which, as usual, will be well wide of the mark.

Until Professor Mintford and others rode on to the housing scene, the Government had only one panacea—owner-occupation. Professor Mintford believed that the revival of the private rented sector—and he suggested direct incentives for that from central Government—was the key to providing the accommodation needed in London and the south-east to bring the unemployed down from the north from constituencies like mine to work in Wimpy bars in London and rent in the private sector.

Professor Mintford's suggestion about developing the private rented sector led to the Housing Act 1988. Many of us spent three and a half months trying to fathom out the logic of that Act. It was obvious that the Government accepted the suggestions of Professor Mintford and others that there was a need for rented accommodation, and they decided to create that through the private rented sector.

The Government embarked on a programme of privatising the housing association sector. I have given that phrase some thought; I have not simply thrown it out. If we consider the development of Government policy towards the housing associations over the past two or three years, effectively, as the present Minister for the Environment and Countryside used to say frequently at the Dispatch Box, they are pushing what was a voluntary sector into the private sector. They are doing that through financial means.

The Government were in favour of expanding the private rented sector. Secondly, they were in favour of deregulating housing associations. Thirdly, they created a series of devices under part IV of the Act to bring about the breaking up of local authority housing. They made no bones about that——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have given the hon. Gentleman quite a lot of rope; I do not want him to hang himself. If he came back to the housing revenue accounts, I should be much obliged.

7 pm

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I would not dream of straying from the subject.

The Government's general attitude towards housing is summed up in the proposals on ring fencing as they apply to all these matters.

In the 1988 Act the Government set out, through the use of housing action trusts and the pick-a-landlord—strictly speaking, the pick-a-tenant—schemes, to give people the opportunity to opt out of local authority housing——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now going very wide. I have asked him once to return to the point.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker.

These provisions have universally failed—no one has opted out. I have described the carrot, which was the offer of somewhere else to go, but the stick is contained in this Bill. It is to be seen in the Government's treatment of council house rents and housing revenue accounts. Having failed with the carrot, they now introduce the stick. As in the early 1980s and subsequently, new arrangements for rents and for the way in which council house finance is treated are being introduced to make it increasingly attractive to tenants to opt out of a local authority.

The Government hope that tenants will opt either into the newly deregulated housing association sector or into some other form of housing. The Minister is nodding as I point out last year's carrot and this year's stick.

Instead of taking a sensible view of housing policy and of choice, the Government have chosen to victimise council tenants, because of their own ideological predictions, so that they can force them into a financial position in which they have no choice but to follow the Government line. If the Government were so worried about the situation, why did they not look into some of the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) mentioned? Why did they not recognise that billions of pounds are needed to put all the housing stock of all the various types of tenure in good order? Why did they not devise a new system to do that effectively? They did not even attempt to think about it. Despite their protestations, why did not the Government consider doing something through local authorities—they are responsible for homelessness—to try to resolve the problem of homelessness?

One of our amendments deals with homelessness. It is no accident, given that the Government have removed 1·2 million properties from all types of rented accommodation, that somewhere along the line something has to give. What gave is visible on the streets of London and across the country. It is not a problem that affects only London; 43 per cent. of all the people who registered as homeless last year were outside London—in towns, rural areas and other cities. These people have nowhere to go. Even when there is surplus local authority accommodation that can be brought on to the market, the Government will so arrange the housing revenue account and other factors that affect local authorities that these people will probably not receive the right combination of benefits to support their efforts to rent a council house or flat.

The Government can pump a few million pounds here and a few million there into new schemes and claim to be a caring Government who are doing something about homelessness, but they know that the problem will get worse until more houses are built. Since 1979, 19,000 fewer council houses a year have been built and there have been 9,000 fewer housing association completions every year. Clearly no effort has been made to deal with the problems of homelessness.

The Government talk about subsidies. I served on the Standing Committee of this Bill, and it was absolutely clear to us that the way in which the rate fund contributions and housing benefit will work is that the poor will be bound to subsidise the even poorer, perhaps to the advantage of the taxpayer but definitely to the disadvantage of those who are trapped in the system.

It is worth discussing who gets what out of the housing system. Housing benefit, whether we like it or not, is the subsidy that applies to those in greatest need. Over the past two or three years the Government have been intent on reducing it. They have not had the guts or the foresight to look at mortgage income tax relief, which is the comparable system——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman himself said that he was a member of the Standing Committee. As such he is familiar with this clause and with the amendments, and I must refer him to them.

Mr. Howarth: This is a wide group of amendments. I am not sure how I can talk about the subsidy system that applies to local authority tenants without comparing it with housing subsidies for others in the community. I suggest that mortgage income tax relief is directly comparable——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not in the Bill, and it is way outside our debate this evening.

Mr. Howarth: It was worth a try.

As my hon. Friends have said, council tenants will not benefit from all this. Those in other sorts of tenure will continue to receive other sorts of benefits.

The tragedy of this Bill is that the Government had an opportunity to examine all the problems that contribute to the housing crisis, but they have refused, or were too stubborn or too stupid, to deal with the problems. Instead they have carried on with a Bill that does nothing to resolve this country's housing problems. Our amendments would go some way to alleviating the problems that the Bill will cause, and I strongly commend them to the House. Some time in the next two or three years, however, my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith will be at the Dispatch Box with Labour's housing Bill, and only then will we start to deal with the problems of housing.

Mr. Battle: I shall speak to Lords amendment No. 117 and amendments (a) to (f) in the name of my hon. Friends. I shall also refer to amendment No. 121 on homelessness and to the amendments dealing with capitalised repairs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) was right to deliver a wide-ranging speech because the Bill is becoming increasingly threadbare. The Government are in increasing difficulty in finding someone who is prepared to defend it. For weeks we have not been clear about who is the Minister for Housing. I gather that it is traditional for the Government to send a Minister to see the housing associations. However, they could not find one to send this year and a civil servant was sent. Obviously he cannot answer about policy.

No one on the Government Front Bench has seen the Bill through every stage of its consideration in the House and in Committee. That means that for the benefit of the Ministers who are now with us we have to go over old ground again because Ministers now give us answers that are completely different from the answers that we received from former Ministers. I shall give one practical example. In this debate the Minister decried capitalisation of repairs. I remind him that his predecessor, who is now the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, said that he felt that capitalisation was entirely legitimate. Perhaps the Minister will say whether he agrees with his colleague or whether there has been a policy change.

At least the policy of the former Minister was consistent with that of the present Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), who went round the country 18 months ago encouraging local authorities to use all their capital receipts for repairs. What is that if it is not legitimate capitalisation? Perhaps the Minister will explain whether policy changes with the Minister or whether it remains according to the content of the Bill as it is discussed in the House, in Committee and in the other place.

Mr. Chope: There is a great danger that I will be traduced as a result of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was here when I spoke earlier.

Mr. Battle: I was.

Mr. Chope: If that is the case, the hon. Gentleman should recall that I specifically differentiated between true capital and capitalised repairs and captitalised repairs that are not for true capital purposes but for the purpose of, for

[Mr. Chope]

example, carrying out routine decoration works which most people would regard as not an appropriate use of capital resources.

Mr. Battle: I know that the Minister has not been in post for long. He should refer to *Hansard* and the debate in Committee on the Bill and on the 1988 Act which was on this precise topic. I am happy to assure him that former Ministers took a different view from the subtle distinction that the Minister is now trying to draw.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I know that the hon. Gentleman would not want to mislead the House. Can he give us chapter and verse of any occasion when any former junior Minister or Housing Minister told the Standing Committee or the House that small matters such as outside painting should be part of the capital programme? I do not remember that, and I do not believe that it happened.

Mr. Battle: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman intervened. I seem to remember that he was on the Committee that examined the 1988 Bill. Perhaps he was writing Christmas cards and not paying attention. If he reads the Committee report, he will see that it contains a thorough discussion on the difference between capitalised repairs and the need to use capital receipts to carry out those repairs.

7.15 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Where is it?

Mr. Battle: The hon. Gentleman should go to the Vote Office and ask for the Standing Committee documents. If he spends the next two hours going through them instead of having his meal, he may find the information there.

There is a key issue in the housing revenue account that will affect tenants. The Minister may not recall it, but I am sure that other hon. Members who took part in the debate and those who attended and listened will remember that we had a thorough discussion about the balancing of the housing revenue account. I remember pressing the Minister hard on the issue. One side of the housing revenue equation consists of income in the form of rents. The expenditure column contains the management and maintenance costs, the repair costs and the housing benefit costs. I am sure that from the briefings that he has been given the Minister will recall that at one stage the ring fencing of that account included the housing benefit to be paid to private sector tenants. That obviously caused a great loophole, because if landlords hyped up their rents the local authority would have had to use its housing revenue account to subsidise the high rents of the private landlord. That was ludicrous and was not then included in the Bill.

At one point the Minister suggested that there had been no changes in the rebate structure, but I suggest that there have been because clause 78(1) of the Bill quite categorically states:

> "In subsection (2) of section 30 of the Social Security Act 1986 (housing benefit finance), for the words 'total housing benefit' there shall be substituted the words 'relevant benefit' and there shall be added at the end the words 'and in this subsection "relevant benefit" means total housing benefit excluding, in the case of a local authority in England and Wales, any Housing Revenue Account rebates granted by them'."

That illustrates the difficulty that we encountered right in the middle of the Committee. When we were in Committee discussing this Bill, another Committee on which I also had the privilege to serve was discussing the Social Security Bill. The Government had not got their act together and had not connected the proposals in the Social Security Bill to the Housing Act 1988. The reason for that is apparent because many council tenants are on housing benefit. If, as the Minister proposes, all housing rents go up in line with capital values, then the bill for social security and in particular housing benefit will increase incredibly as well. Therefore, a cut-off clause was introduced.

The Minister needs to study the interaction between the Social Security Act 1988 and the Bill. If he does that, he will find that if rents rise for council tenants they will get their personal rebate but the local authority will not get its money back from the Department of Social Security. That shortfall in the accounts will have to be met from increases in the rents of tenants who are not on social security. There is no other way. That means that the poor or people on modest incomes will have their rents increased in order to pay the deficit in the housing benefit of those who are unemployed or have low incomes. Before the Minister and Conservative Members leap up and say that this will not affect people on benefits, they should look carefully at the detail of the Bill.

There is a parallel to which I shall briefly refer. Many Conservative Members say that the poor will have the poll tax paid for them, but we all know that there is also a cut-off clause. The suggestion is that everybody will pay 20 per cent., and that means that the maximum rebate is only 80 per cent. The notion that the Government are protecting the poor from increases is false. It is quite wrong to use the Bill and housing policy as a means of sorting out income maintenance. That should be done through the social security system and not by insisting on cuts in the repair programmes of local authorities by putting pressure on the housing revenue account.

I hope that the Minister will take that on board and will withdraw the proposals in the Bill before local authority rents go up and the social security offices refuse to reimburse local authorities for the housing benefit costs. As a result, local authorities will be penalised on the repair and maintenance work that they could provide for their tenants. It will mean that local authorities will put in the rebates and that the income maintenance which should come from the tax system through the social security system at the centre will be pushed back to local level. Perhaps in line with the Government's approach to poverty we will be pushed back again in the direction of a kind of retrograde parish relief system at local level.

I asked the new Minister a question earlier today. It is relevant to amendment No. 112, as it deals with the homeless. I asked him:

> "what is the Government's estimate of the number of homeless people under the age of 18 years."

The reply was:

> "The numbers of people under the age of 18 years among the households accepted as homeless are not reported by local authorities and my Department has no estimates."

Given the new scientific age of computer calculation, and the emphasis that the Government put on collecting accurate information and statistics, I find an amazing complacency in that reply, not least because it is well known that in my city of Leeds every month 300 young people present themselves as being homeless or threatened with homelessness, and that at least a third of them are aged under 18. I hope that the Minister is not suggesting that he will shuffle off responsibility for the homeless by saying that, as the Department cannot keep figures of those who are under 18, they are not a problem.

The Minister should say that there will be a change of policy. The Bill, with its proposals to ring-fence the housing revenue account, will simply add to the ideological almost-addiction of the previous Secretary of State, who was hooked on the free market. He believed that the price was all—push rents up and the housing problems will be resolved. Already one of the Minister's colleagues has said that the Government will introduce no more legislation on housing, because they have "done housing".

I take the view which I am sure many others take, that the Government's housing policies have resulted in a housing disaster in terms of improvement of stock and a housing tragedy in terms of human lives for those who are homeless. I hope that this rag-bag of amendments, whose acceptance would make the Bill even more shoddy, will mean that increasingly Ministers are unprepared to defend it, with the result that, even at this late stage, they will be prepared to withdraw it.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I did not have the pleasure, if I may call it that, of serving on the Standing Committee on this, or any other, housing Bill. Therefore, like the Minister, I am new to the job. When I looked at the amendments and the Bill, this amendment dealing with ring fencing was the one that stood out. It seems to me to be a deliberate attempt to raise rents and work towards the elimination of all council housing. This may be the Government's aim.

There is no doubt that there is a terrific housing shortage. I used to think that I came from a rather affluent society in my home town of Southport, which is in Sefton. However, when Sefton was created in 1974, we gathered Bootle, Crosby, Formby, Southport and many other little parishes. Within that group, I realised that there was a big and growing housing shortage. In my own home town of Southport, 3,000 families are waiting for housing. I cannot see that the Bill will improve that by one iota.

The housing shortage is not contained merely within my Merseyside area. It stretches throughout the country, and since I live part of the time in London, I have been able to see the many homeless young people in the capital city. They are now moving out of the cardboard cities and into the concrete jungle because winter is coming. On many nights I have spoken to the police and to the homeless and they tell me that the problem continues to grow, not only in London but in other major cities, and now the towns. I cannot think that the Bill will help those homeless people.

The deterioration in property will get worse. Some authorities have not been good at looking after their housing stock, and many have come to the attention of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. They are of many persuasions—all political parties have had that trouble. What the Minister is proposing will not help in any way to improve the housing stock, much of which now needs a great deal of money spent on it. The housing subsidy account and the housing revenue account have been able to cope with many of the repairs that need to be done to council housing, but from here on that will be much more difficult.

It has been said that the Minister claimed that rents would not rise. He did not say that—he was misquoted. He said that rents will not be out of the reach of ordinary people. I should like to know what the term "ordinary people" means.

Mr. Battle: Those on average wages.

Mr. Fearn: I do not know. I hope that the Minister will explain what he means, because this is the yardstick on which the Government will work. I should find it difficult to spotlight the ordinary person by using that yardstick. Can he guarantee that when he comes to define ordinary people, rents will not be out of the reach of those people?

It is morally wrong that better-off council tenants should be paying, through their rents, for the welfare benefits given to other tenants. Private and housing association tenants will not be put in that position. It will place council tenants in the difficult position of having to pay a little extra. This is particularly bad as better-off council tenants are a long way from being well off. There is no such thing as a well-off council tenant. A well-off person is one who owns his own property with only a small mortgage and there are few like that these days. To say that we are subsidising council tenants is untrue. It has never been true and it will not be true. It is another case of the poor subsidising the poor.

We have here greater central Government control over local authorities' housing activities, thus once more stifling local initiative—something at which Whitehall has been very good, especially since 1979. I can see that the Bill will do nothing to alleviate the growing housing shortage. If the Minister can explain one or two of those points, I for one shall have my eyes opened.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Rent levels are already far too high, and the Bill will continue the substantial increases in rents that have already taken place. Those increases in rents result from the elimination of housing subsidies and are not the fault of the local council, certainly not mine, which recognises that much of the rent increases has been unjustified, but has simply no alternative, like every other local authority. These substantial rent increases have been aggravated by the substantial reduction in housing benefit. The phasing out of transitional benefit—a benefit which came about only as a result of the outcry, particularly by Opposition Members—will mean that many of those who will be expected to pay full rents will not be in a position to do so.

I receive many complaints from constituents about rent levels. They come to see me at my surgeries and show me the amount of rent that they are paying out of a relatively small income. I can hardly believe that they can be paying so much in rent. As one would expect, I write to the housing department, but it is nearly all in order in most cases. Usually there has been no mistake and the responsibility falls on the Government who, since they came to office 10 years ago, have deliberately pursued the policy of making life more and more difficult for local authority tenants.

One of the reasons why rents have gone up, apart from the substantial reduction in housing subsidies, is the Government's wish for council tenants to buy. They are pressurised to buy. They are told, "Why remain a council tenant? It is easier to buy." In many cases they have no wish to buy the property in which they live. The ring fencing that is included in the Bill will ensure that tenants

[Mr. David Winnick]

who are certainly not well off, but who are somewhat better off than others, will subsidise poorer tenants. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said, the poor will subsidise the very poor.

We have not heard much from the Minister about the private sector. He would be boasting if there were any justification for boasting. We know the junior Minister's record before he came to the House. He is a fanatic about the privately-rented sector. He and other Ministers told us that there would be a revival of that sector, that that would solve much of the homelessness and the difficulties experienced by so many people.

I wonder how many more rented accommodation has come about in the private sector since the new legislation was put on the statute book—not much. That demonstrates what we said at the time—that the revival would not come about for all the reasons that we gave at the time. We are confronted by an acute housing crisis, as my right hon. and hon. Friends have said.

7.30 pm

I shall give an illustration. Some constituents of mine, who are not in the worst housing plight, came to see me last Saturday. They are a young couple who have been married for two or three years and have one child. They live with the wife's mother. The situation in the household is tense. They are high on the waiting list, but every time they go to the local neighbourhood office, they find that other people are higher. That is understandable because, presumably, other people are considered to be in greater housing need.

The couple have been married for nearly three years and they have never had any accommodation of their own. They told me that, about 18 months ago, they considered buying a place but it was not possible then, let alone now. Theirs is not the worst case—far from it—but it illustrates some of the problems of people who are being punished and penalised, day in and day out, by the Government because they cannot afford a mortgage. What can they do? They can wait for years to be rehoused by the local authority. I am not exaggerating. Housing associations cannot help them, and it is a joke to mention the private rented sector to the people who come to my surgeries and who write to me about their housing problems.

Why should our fellow citizens be penalised because they do not have the income to buy? I accept that they are a minority, but they are a sizeable minority. If we leave the main building here and turn right, we will find that a vigil is taking place opposite Downing street. It is a vigil for the homeless and I understand that it has been organised by Shelter. This Christmas, there will be more homeless people than in any year since the end of the war. That is certain. There will be more families in bed-and-breakfast hostels this Christmas than ever before. Imagine what it must be like to stay in bed-and-breakfast accommodation for the Christmas holiday and not to know when one will be rehoused.

The Prime Minister likes photo-opportunities and she likes to be photographed in favourable circumstances. Will she visit a bed-and-breakfast hostel on Christmas day? Will the Secretary of State or the Under-Secretary of State go to a hostel and see their fellow citizens living in squalid conditions because of the Government's policies? Nowadays one cannot go to a main line railway or Underground station in central London without seeing young people with boards saying, "I am homeless". They are begging. They do not appear to me to be social victims in the sense of being drunkards. In the main they are young people who are encouraged to come to London by the Government. Once they are here, even if they find a job, they have no means of finding accommodation. That is the crisis that we have to deal with and to which the amendments refer.

Many accusations can be made against the Government. One of the worst is that they have shown a callous disregard for people who are not able to solve their housing problems by buying. They have shown a callous disregard for people who desperately require rented accommodation. Had I been told before 1979 that there would be a substantial reduction in the rented sector, I would have found it almost unbelievable. I shall not go into the argument about whether it is right for local authorities to sell houses, as it is not a part of this debate, but it is only right and proper that when accommodation is sold it should be replaced. Yesterday, in a parliamentary answer, I was told that the number of local authority starts last year was approximately 13,000 and that it is likely to be even less this year. That is disgraceful and scandalous.

I do not apologise for the fact that I have raised these issues in the House before and I shall continue to do so because the Chamber of the House of Commons is the right place to raise them. There is not much concern on the Conservative Benches. Ministers are well off. None of them has ever suffered the indignity of being without accommodation. None of them understands what it means not to be able to resolve housing difficulties. The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) may mutter as much as he likes—Ministers do not understand the problems that I am trying to explain to the House.

I say again that it is scandalous that our fellow citizens should have to spend Christmas or any other time in the conditions that I have described. That is why we are right to object to the Bill. It is the duty and responsibility of Labour Members to explain what is happening at every opportunity, in the House and outside, and to point out the indifference that the Government show to the homeless and near-homeless in Britain.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): What will be the effect on the housing revenue account of the Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Order 1989—a statutory instrument which was shoved through the House in the early hours of the morning without any publicity? I honestly believe that it is the most nasty, vindictive piece of legislation that I have seen go through in all the time that I have been in the House.

The statutory instrument will affect the housing revenue account. It means that the rent rebate system for poor people will not be based on the rent of their dwelling, but will be calculated by a rent officer. He will decide how much of that dwelling can be taken into consideration for rent rebate. There is a formula. For example, if Mr. and Mrs. Bloggs, a married couple, are living together, it will be one room plus a little bit. Aged couples will wonder what will happen when one of them unfortunately passes away. How much increase in rent will the survivor have to face because of the reduction in rent rebates?

I concede that Ministers have not understood the implications for housing revenue accounts if some local authorities meet the cost of such a shabby statutory instrument. The House may recall that what were National Coal Board houses were sold off to Mickey Mouse landlords, or racketeers. The houses are in the private sector now, and they will be caught by the statutory instrument. Again, there will be implications for HRAs. High rents are being charged on some of the estates of ex-NCB houses, and when tenants are entitled to a rent rebate, someone has to find the cost of the rebate. Under the old system, the Government met the cost. Under the new system, the burden is borne by local authorities' HRAs.

Some of the ex-NCB houses were defective and came within the terms of the Housing Defects Act 1984. In accordance with that legislation, local authorities had a duty to repurchase. Some houses are now owned by local authorities and will not be subject to the statutory instrument, but others are in the private sector. Any responsible local authority would not take the decision lightly that for some dwellings on privately owned estates it should have to find the difference between the provisions of the rent rebate system and the system that applies under the statutory instrument. The local authority can use the HRA, or rent rebate can be reduced to the extent that the rent officer becomes involved. In any event, money will have to be found from capital accounts.

Have Ministers ever considered tenants on private estates of the sort to which I am referring? It seems that they have not. There will be chaos on some estates. One local authority may take a sympathetic view and use its HRA, while the adjoining authority will not. That cannot be just. It cannot be fair.

Many tenants have been thrown to the wolves by the policy of the Government and British Coal. Many tenants do not know who their landlords are. These people will not have the protection that is enjoyed by local authority tenants. I hope that the Minister will tell us whether he has any plans to alleviate the problems of former British Coal estates.

7.45 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The Government's proposal that there should be a ring fence around the income and expenditure of local authorities' housing revenue accounts has been discussed for about a year. I do not have any great objection in principle to having a ring fence around an HRA providing four conditions are met. First, as a result of ring fencing, the rents that will be paid by tenants must be reasonable, and by "reasonable" I mean affordable by the sort of people for whom the accommodation is designed, the sort of people who will occupy the accommodation that is provided by the local authority. Secondly, the system which is devised must be fair and reasonable.

Thirdly, the system must not inhibit good management and repair policies. It must not stand in the way of a local authority ensuring that its estates are well managed, and in inner city areas good management is not an easy task. Repairs must be of a high standard and performed quickly, to the satisfaction of tenants. Fourthly, the deficit which results from the first three objectives—there will inevitably be a deficit in places such as Lambeth and Southwark—must be met by the taxpayer instead of the ratepayer. That would be welcome in the borough within my constituency, where the burden that is placed upon ratepayers generally to subsidise the HRA is a pretty heavy one.

My fourth condition is not an unreasonable one, because it would not cost the Government very much money. It would not cost them more than a few hundred million pounds to make up the deficit, and that is a fleabite compared with the £4,000 million or £5,000 million that is paid out each year by taxpayers generally to support the cost of the mortgage interest relief scheme.

Does the system that is being introduced meet the criteria that I have outlined? In my view, it does not. My first criterion is that rents should be reasonable for those who are likely to occupy the accommodation that is provided. We know from an amendment that the Government introduced on Report that the level of rents which they propose for local authority dwellings should be related between authorities to the prices that are obtained when houses are sold under the right-to-buy scheme.

It is comparatively easy to predict the relativities of rents between one part of the country and another. There is not much variation between the comparative prices of houses being sold under the right-to-buy scheme between one area and another and house prices generally. For example, we know that in Rossendale the cost of a house for a working-class family will be about £15,000 to £20,000. There are some who will be able to buy a terraced house for rather less than that. In Lambeth, which is within my constituency, or Wandsworth, which is the borough that the Minister used to represent when he was a councillor, the capital cost of housing is about three or four times higher than in somewhere such as Rossendale, Burnley or Bury.

We can deduce from those relativities that, if £20 or £15 a week is the right sort of rent in Burnley or Rossendale, the comparative rent based on right-to-buy figures within Lambeth, Wandsworth or Southwark will be £60 or £80 a week. That, however, is not the market rent. If market rents are to be charged for local authority accommodation, which may be the long-term effect of housing action trusts, in my part of London, rents would be between £100 and £200 a week. That can be checked easily by looking through the local paper, the *Evening Standard* or *Loot*. They are not exaggerated market rents. Those two sets of figures illustrate the comparison between one part of the country and another. Ring fencing and the Government's formula for gradually increasing local authority rents will lead to rents in a borough like mine being pushed beyond the means of the people for whom the housing was designed.

Secondly, is the proposed system fair? As other hon. Members have said, because of changes in the housing benefit system, ring fencing will mean that some council tenants will pay more rent to subsidise their poorer neighbours—the reverse of the previous system. Poorer tenants will subsidise the poorest in the housing revenue account. That is a strange system.

In Belgravia, people pay more rent because they live next door to rich people. In Hampstead, people pay more for their houses for the same reason. In Pimlico, Chelsea and other areas, the values of property and the rents that people are prepared to pay are often greater because of the affluence in which they live. In an odd reversal of that position, in poorer parts of the metropolis, on the other side of London, poorer tenants will pay more because they live next door to the poorest tenants. They will pay

[Mr. John Fraser]

towards the cost of their neighbours' housing benefit because of changes in the social security arrangements and the new system of ring fencing.

Thirdly, will the new system satisfy the test of more adequate provision for repairs and management? I have a quarrel with many local authorities. Often—I have to say that to protect myself against anyone who says that this is not true of their local authority—rents are low, but the quality of housing management and repair is also low. If I had to make a choice between a slightly higher rent with better management and repairs and lower rents with poorer management and repairs, I know what I would choose. I should prefer to pay a little more rent to have a little more quality.

In some housing authorities people tell me that the rents are very high. When I ask about the rents for housing association property in the same area, they tell me that they are much higher. One deduces that a huge crush of people must want to move from housing association properties into local authority properties. However, when the transfer applications are examined, it is often found that that is not the case. People do not mind paying more in return for higher quality.

The problem is political as well as financial. Often it is politically difficult to defend the case for putting up rents. Sadly, there is often resistance to increasing rents a little to spend more on repairs. Nothing in the Bill will make it easier to do so. Ring fencing will drive up rents to pay for the reduced subsidy. If local authorities want to follow my suggestion to increase rents, with tenants' consent to raise money for better repairs, they will find that they have been pre-empted.

If rents in Lambeth have risen from £20 to £60 a week to pay both for eliminating the subsidy to poorer tenants who will lose benefits and for the costs of administering housing benefit, there will be no margin to allow an extra pound or two on the rent to pay for good management. Indeed, the converse will happen. Councils will be under pressure to reduce spending on repairs and management because tenants have already swallowed enough rent increases. That is why the amendments are important. In setting notional rents, the Government need to take account of the effect of their proposals on management and repairs.

About two thirds of the cases raised with me in my constituency relate to housing problems. I do not have a monopoly on that. At the end of my Friday night advice sessions, I despair about what I can do to help my constituents. The same kind of cases come up time and time again. Sometimes a husband and wife or partners may live with their two children in a bed-sit. What kind of privacy or life can they have in such accommodation? Such cases are not isolated. Many such families come to me within the same evening and ask, "What are the Government doing about it?"

There was a time when Ministers genuinely cared about housing problems. They thought that we in the Labour party had got it wrong and that their new formulae would get it right. There was a honeymoon period when we gave them credit for their intentions, if not for their achievements. Because of the direction of housing policy and the removal of subsidy from local authority housing, when people ask whether the Government care, I have to reply, "They don't care if you die of despair. They don't care if they are driving you into inner-city concentration camps without any hope or prospect of bringing up a family in dignity." Many poorer people in the community, who rely on their local authority for housing, cannot avoid reaching the conclusion that that is the Government's attitude.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) said. Like him, I see many people at my surgery who are in a desperate housing plight. As a result of the Government's policies, there is virtually nothing that I can do for them. I also agree with him about ministerial attitudes.

The amendments are about housing revenue accounts and rents. I wish to deal with the serious implications for Waltham Forest. I know that there are similar problems in other hon. Members' areas but I have the provisional figures for my area which I want to share with the House and the Minister. I am not sure that he is aware of the serious implications in my area for rents, capital investment, repairs and the local authority's ability to tackle homelessness, which is an immense problem. All the available accommodation in my area is taken up by the homeless, so that there is little movement of other people on the waiting list, even if they are in dire need.

Withdrawal of housing subsidy according to the Government's guidelines will mean a loss of about £4·7 million to Waltham Forest. That will mean a rent increase of 21 per cent. with effect from 1 April next year. To that will have to be added the cost of unsubsidised management, and maintenance costs, inflation, charges from the current year and provision for bad debts, which the Government have not taken into account in their notional figures. The actual figures will be greater than the notional figures set by the Department of the Environment. That is another £3·75 million, which pushes up the rent rise to 38 per cent. In addition, there is a shortfall on the capital account, which again arises out of the Bill and which must be met by the housing revenue account so that the capital books can be balanced. It is another £7 million in Waltham Forest, which pushes the rent rise up to 70 per cent. Why must there be such a rise in rents under the Bill? Even if it were 20 per cent.—although 70 per cent. is more likely—it would not be in line with inflation, which is much lower. It is between three and 10 times the rate of inflation. What is the justification for that ?

8 pm

The Government proclaim that fighting inflation is their top priority. If so, why are they pushing through a measure that will have such an impact on rents? Does the Minister really understand the implications of the Bill, especially as they affect tenants? If not, the Government should urgently review the Bill. If they do, they are effectively saying they do not care a fig about the problems that the Bill will create.

The figures that I have for the capital account for 1990-91 show an HIP allocation for the borough of £10 million, and that is being optimistic. If we add to that capital receipts of £6 million, the total resources amount to £16 million. That is only half the 1989-90 resources. The Bill provides three main reasons for that. First, councils cannot use the previous year's capital receipts. Secondly, they cannot use their prescribed receipts—that is, the right-to-buy money—for repairs as opposed to major investment. Thirdly, 75 per cent. of the right-to-buy money cannot be used for investment; it must be used to repay past debts.

The capital programme was set about a year ago, so it cannot simply be cut. It includes mandatory grants in excess of £1 million and contractually committed schemes, which are unavoidable without penalty, of £15 million. In other words, that £16 million is already committed. There are urgent 1989-90 schemes that Waltham Forest must fulfil, and they amount to another £7 million. There are only a few of them—for example, Northwood tower where there is serious structural and fabric disrepair. There is Cogan avenue, which is needed because Whitebeam tower has similar disrepair problems and 100 families must be decanted to Cogan avenue.

Three housing association schemes are also included which are intended for people with mental and learning disabilities. Those crucial schemes must be fulfilled. That brings the capital programme to a total of £23 million, yet the resources available under the Bill will be only £16 million, a shortfall of £7 million.

Will the Minister guarantee that the new system under the Bill will allow the same current level of investment to continue? The figures show that that will not be the case, but there will be cuts in capital investment of 50 per cent. or even more. The only way that that could be avoided is for the additional burden to fall on the rents, as I have already explained. What is the Government's intention? Do they really understand the impact on local authorities such as Waltham Forest? If they do not, they should review the Bill. If they do, they are cynically uncaring.

The Bill has implications for the fight against homelessness. One method to deal with homelessness is leasing, and Waltham Forest has a programme to secure about 500 leases in three years. It is a central part of its strategy of avoiding the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation, although other boroughs are forced to use that option. Waltham Forest should be congratulated on not putting people into bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and the leasing scheme plays a great part in that success. The Bill includes regulations that will penalise councils that swap short-term leases. If a council takes out a lease for more than three years, the total capital value of the lease is assessed and the amount that the local authority can then borrow is reduced by that amount. That is iniquitous.

If a local authority leases a property for three years and then releases it, and then my authority, Waltham Forest, takes up that lease, the first authority's holding of the lease counts against the credit limit of Waltham Forest. Councils such as Conservative-controlled Westminster and Liberal-controlled Tower Hamlets have already taken up at least 300 properties in Waltham Forest. That will restrict Waltham Forest's right to lease homes in its own area.

That is wrong. A local authority should be able to take out a lease for longer than three years. The homelessness problem will not be solved in anything like three years; it will take much longer to tackle it. Therefore, Waltham Forest is effectively being penalised for trying to sort out its homelessness without having to resort to bed and breakfast. Is the Minister really suggesting that Waltham Forest should use bed-and-breakfast accommodation? That would be the effect of the regulations.

I ask the Minister to review the position. The Government are doing precious little to tackle the problem of rising homelessness. At the very least, they should not be imposing restrictions that will hamper the legitimate attempts of a local authority to tackle the problem. I ask the Minister seriously to consider those points.

Mr. Redmond: I had not intended to make a speech but having listened to the Minister I felt that I must make a few comments. I am concerned that this Minister is no different from those who went before him in his attitude towards housing. The Government's hatred for the council house tenant is crystal clear, and it appears to increase each year. I used to think that the Government hated the miners more than anything else, but it now appears that they have turned their hatred towards the council tenant. Their policies are detrimental to a section in our society that requres cheap accommodation because they cannot afford to purchase in the private sector. I am a little worried that that hatred is blinding the common sense that should prevail in order to meet the needs of that section of our society.

Since 1979 there has been no long-term planning for local authorities, never mind housing. For a housing authority to function properly it needs a long-term strategy. However, when the Government interfere with the money available to an authority, the needs of council tenants cannot be met successfully.

The Minister talked about the fairness of the legislation and, in particular, of the group of amendments. I listened to him carefully, but I cannot see any fairness within the system. One thing is sure: when the Bill is enacted the council tenant will be a damn sight worse off than he or she is now. Compassion for and understanding of the needs of the council house tenant are in short supply.

The Minister talked about the Government meeting a housing authority's needs, coming along with a pocketful of money and doling it out if the council proved that a need existed and that it had acted within the guidelines laid down by the Government. He cannot live in the same world that I live in. When Doncaster, like I am sure every other local authority, submits its housing investment programme, it usually finishes up with 50 per cent. of what it requires to meet its needs in the forthcoming year. However, the Government have seen fit to cut that allocation, which has a knock-on effect.

The money from the sale of council houses is the tenants' money which should be invested in a local authority's housing stock. However, the Government appear to say one thing and do another. They have allowed housing authorities to spend only a percentage of capital receipts when all of it could have been spent to improve conditions for tenants.

The Minister appeared unable to say what he thought a fair rent was. I do not know how long a piece of string is, but the Minister appeared unable to say any more than that rent increases would depend on this, that or the other. However, I have no doubt that rents will continue to escalate. It is no good the Minister saying that they will go no higher than inflation, or whatever. Experience shows that not to be true and that is a great pity.

The Minister talked about fabrication versus repairs. He appeared to accept that the cost of installation of new window frames would form part of the HIP allocation but said that the cost of painting window frames would not, and that is a tragedy. Local authorities struggle like hell to

[Mr. Redmond]

try to maintain their properties in a reasonable state of repair, but older properties require more money spending on them to ensure that they are maintained to a reasonable standard. Unfortunately, the money is not there to maintain them, so a gradual deterioration is taking place. It is a great pity that the Government will not provide money to invest in fabrication while authorities continue with their repair programme. Fabrication reduces the need for repairs. One-off repairs are a damn sight more costly than a fabrication programme, which can lead to savings in the long term. It is a tragedy that the Government are not interested in long-term solutions to housing problems.

8.15 pm

Between 1975 and 1979, when there was a change of Government, Doncaster council had 1,500 new starts a year. That figure dropped in 1979. Those new starts were made possible as a result of Government money and the Government's permission to borrow money to meet a need within the community where housing waiting lists were growing. Those 1,500 new starts comprised houses to meet the needs of large and small families and decent bungalows to meet the needs of our senior citizens. However, the ring fencing that the Minister talked about will stop investment in such bungalows, for which the need is escalating. As people in our community become older, they become more infirm and need suitable accommodation. I regret that the Government are treating the elderly with contempt.

Doncaster, like many other authorities, provides accommodation for senior citizens from all sections of the community—private and public. Unfortunately, ring fencing means that the council house tenant is being asked to pay an increased rent to provide accommodation for the private sector, and that is wrong. Money should come not only from the Government but from the rates to provide accommodation to meet the needs of the elderly in our society. There is a complete lack of understanding about what will be needed in the future. It will be a great pity if the Government do not stop to reflect and then come back to the House with a sensible policy for that section of the community which they can view with pride.

Yet again, the Government are trying to kid the public that they are providing something when they are not. When the public come to taste the fruits of that policy they will find that they are bitter fruits indeed. At the next election many Conservative Members will have cause to condemn their Ministers for not providing suitable and sensible policies which meet the needs of the community.

Mr. Allen McKay: The Bill and the Government's attitude towards the Lords amendments suggest that they have launched a continuing attack on local government and all that it stands for. It would have been far better for the Government to be honest and to say at the outset that the Bill represented a continuation of their policy of moving all local authority housing into the private sector, with the possible exception of free sheltered accommodation.

I should like a categorical statement from the Minister about what is meant by the proposals in the amendments concerning the housing revenue account, rents and rent rebates. I expect rents in my area to be forced up to £50, £55 or £60. The Government say that that is fine, because there is a system of rebates—which, over the years, has caused problems that we are now gradually surmounting. According to the Government, a group of people who do not receive the rebates will bear the brunt of the attack.

I cannot help but think that the Government's policy is to try to force that group out of their chosen status as council tenants, leaving them no alternative but to buy their houses. If the Government had made that clear, fair enough, but they have tried to cover it up.

The reason for my continued opposition to the Government's ring-fencing policy is the fact that my authority ring fenced years ago, long before the Government ever thought of doing so. For years we have taken nothing from the rates to help with housing. Some of my colleagues in other authorities have said that we are wrong. Fair enough: they have their views, and we have ours.

In my area council housing, by and large, has financed itself, but we always had a plan for housing development that was 10, 12 or 14 years in advance. We increased the rents of existing council houses to pay for the void during which no rents would be received for houses that were being built, and did not take the money from the rates.

Under our system, elderly people could be moved out of three-bedroomed houses into bungalows, leaving the houses free for families. Under the Bill and the Lords amendments, housing benefit will be cut if the Government consider that the recipients are living in houses too large for them. If that happens, those people will of course turn to the local authority, hoping to be rehoused; but many houses have been sold. The Minister shakes his head, but what I have said is true, and we can prove it.

Will ring fencing force tenants to pay for the rebates of other tenants? That is what was intimated by the previous Secretary of State. Will tenants have to pay for the rent arrears of others? That seems likely to me. If the Minister can refute what I have said, let him tell us from the Dispatch Box that every treasurer of every local authority who submits an account of rent rebates and arrears will continue to receive money under the present system.

The Minister has talked of targeting subsidies, and has said that the Bill will make things simple. When a Minister in the present Government talks about making things simple, I immediately assume that he has found a way of saving money, for they never make anything simple unless there is something to be gained. Everything that the Government have said suggests that they intend to load council house tenants with the debts of others: the poor will pay for those who are poorer still, as my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) has pointed out.

All that we want is for the Government to be honest about what they are doing and what it will mean. Will rents be raised by as much as I have suggested? Why should a housing account not pay for itself? When we accused the Government of centralising the rent scheme, they denied that they were doing so. The Minister, however, mentioned a minimum of 95p for each council house, which must mean that rents are to be controlled centrally. What is to stop a Minister—whatever his party—from increasing rents time and again without the local authority's permission? Will the 95p minimum and the £4·50 maximum be based in such a way that the authority will be left free to decide how to spend the money?

If an authority is paying its way in council housing, as mine is, why should it have to put 95p on the rent if it does not need that money? What authority has central Government to impose such a requirement on a council that has achieved what local government has wanted to achieve for years, and has managed to make council housing responsible for itself?

Moreover, it is the houses that have paid for themselves —the houses whose rent has contributed to the "global" sum of the housing revenue account—that have been sold, although they are the seedcorn of the council housing system. Far from helping local authorities and their tenants, the Government are destroying a housing system that has lasted for years, for the sake of a purely ideological concept of house ownership.

As the Minister knows, I agree wholeheartedly with home ownership. My local authority bought land and put in sewers and roads at the ratepayers' expense to ensure that those who wished to build could do so more cheaply than many others elsewhere. Houses were purpose built for sale. Much of what the Government have done, however, has ruined such policies, in my area and others, and I find that very sad.

It is even sadder to know that some tenants will be paying through the nose—unless the Minister can tell us that that will not happen. I wish that he would say that all housing rebates will be paid as they are now rather than being taken from other tenants, and that rent arrears will not be paid by tenants either. Council tenants in my area should be crying out. There may be six houses in a row, four of which may have been sold. The others will be occupied by council tenants. In their rents those council tenants are paying, for example, for the grass to be cut in the gardens of the other four houses.

If the Bill is passed, as I expect it will be, my local authority will have to look again at what belongs to housing and what belongs to rates. If the Minister honestly and truly looks at the position, I am sure that he will acknowledge that council house tenants are being imposed upon. He will then come to the Dispatch Box and say exactly what is to happen. Our council house tenants will have to pay for the rebates of others. They will also have to pay for the rents of other people. We should be given the answer to that question. Council house tenants ought to be able to decide what their future is to be.

8.30 pm

Mr. Pike: I have waited for some time to take part in the debate. I did so quite deliberately because I had expected to hear contributions to the debate from a few Conservative Members. It is surprising that no Conservative Member has taken part in the debate on these important Lords amendments and the amendments that have been proposed to them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) spoke about housing subsidy for those in receipt of benefit. He also referred to ring fencing. I listened carefully to the Minister's interventions during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). Whenever the Minister was pressed on those issues, he changed the question that my hon. Friend had asked and gave the answer that suited him. At no stage did he answer the questions that were put to him. Every time that the Minister rose to his feet, which he did several times, he deliberately changed the question because notes were being pushed at him. We want to be convinced that at no stage will the poorest tenants who are able to pay their rents and other council house tenants be asked to meet part of the housing subsidy that is to be given to those who need it. Do the Government intend to meet the shortfall that arises from any additional burdens that local authorities have to bear as a result of the proposed changes?

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend knows that the Bill, as drafted, clearly states that the poor will have to subsidise the poorest through the housing benefit system. The Minister got himself into trouble when he said that any difference would be made up by the taxpayer. He had to retreat from that position during the series of interventions that my hon. Friend has rightly identified. We need to know whether the Government's intention is to make people pay for the housing benefit of others in the area, or whether the taxpayer will have to pick up that bill.

Mr. Pike: That is an important point. If the Bill becomes an Act, it is what the legislation says that will count, not what the Minister says. If the Minister meant what he said—that the taxpayer, not council tenants, will meet the bill—that must be spelt out clearly in the legislation. Even at this late stage an amendment ought to be tabled to make that clear.

The Bill has been altered at every stage. I was not a member of the Committee, but I know that the Bill was altered in Committee. It was considerably altered on Report and it was almost completely redrafted in the other place. If the Bill is still not right at this stage, the Government must get it right. We need to know whether the Minister's original statement was correct—that taxpayers will have to bear the cost, not council house tenants.

It is regrettable that local authorities have been made to bear the burden of administering housing benefit. They were never fully recompensed for their work. The burden was shifted from the Department of Social Security to the local authorities. They had to carry out the Government's dirty work.

The Government have deliberately discriminated against those who want to live in rented housing, particularly in council houses. They have encouraged people to buy their homes, a point that has been made on several occasions during the debate. In 1979 the Government's subsidy to the housing revenue account in Burnley was £1·6 million. That was rapidly eroded, over a period of two years, to zero, and it has been at zero ever since. Furthermore, housing factor E7 in the grant-related expenditure assessment is affected if councils do not increase rents in accordance with the Government's wishes. We want council tenants to be given a fair deal. If the Government are not prepared to do what we wish them to do, council tenants will, once again, be unfairly penalised.

A person who is buying his house gets tax relief, whatever his income. If he is paying tax at the higher rate, his tax relief will be at the higher rate, subject to the £25,000 limit. His position has to be compared with that of a council tenant. I hope that the Government are prepared to accept that they have made a mistake. They ought to make a concession to council tenants and treat them fairly and equitably. However, the Government do not believe in fairness and equity, so I shall not be surprised if they are not prepared to go down that road.

[Mr. Pike]

We deal with capital receipts in one of our amendments to the Lords amendment. It would enable councils, if they so wished, to use capital receipts for repairs. It is important that we should allow local authorities the right to do that. I have never agreed with the way in which the Government imposed restrictions on the use of capital receipts through the 20 per cent. factor and I certainly do not believe that they should now prevent them from being spent on repairs. If they do that, there will be an immediate shortfall on the housing revenue account. Local authorities either will have to put the rents up even more to ensure that important repairs are carried out, or, worse, the repairs will not be carried out and there will be a further deterioration in our housing stock.

The Government should be concerned that in the past 10 years there has been a deterioration in public and private sector housing. We do not have a housing crisis. We have a number of housing crises which have all been created by the Government.

When I was a local council member I did not agree that capital receipts should be used for repairs to council property. However, I strongly believe in local government and I believe that local government should have the ability to take such a decision. That is the fundamental difference between the two sides of the House. Although we might not always agree with what local authorities choose to do, we certainly believe that they have the right to choose. I believe that that money should not be used in that way, but I might be in a minority. Nevertheless, that is the view I took when I was on a local authority. However, I recognise that, due to further reductions in their HIP allocations, pressure to increase rents by other measures has forced local authorities to consider that option. They have no alternative. I do not blame local authorities, as I recognise why they have been forced into that position. I stopped being leader of Burnley council in 1983 and the situation has continued to worsen year by year. I appreciate why local authorities have had to do that.

I hope that the Minister recognises the importance of our amendment. If the Minister does not want to force up rents to totally unacceptable levels, if he does not want council houses to deteriorate and the housing stock to worsen, and if he is a reasonable man, he should agree with it. I wait to be surprised some day by a positive response from the Government. I hope that tonight the Minister will choose to surprise me.

The Government must recognise that the further turning of the screw on local authorities, and particularly on council tenants, is becoming increasingly unacceptable. If they believe that council tenants will support them in the next general election, they are sadly mistaken. The categories of people to whom they can appeal for support will dwindle as they increase the numbers of people that they attack.

I hope that the Minister has taken note of the points that have been raised by my hon. Friends. We have had a constructive debate, although no Conservative Member has contributed to it. I assume that either Conservative Members are not interested in council tenants, particularly those on housing benefit, or that they accept our argument and hope that the Minister will respond favourably. Perhaps they will join us in the Lobby. I hope that the Minister responds positively and at least meets my two specific points by ensuring that council tenants do not have to pick up the tab for any housing benefit payable to the poorest among them, as that would be wrong and unacceptable. I hope that he also recognises the importance of ensuring that capital receipts can be used to maintain and repair council housing stock.

8.45 pm

Mr. Tony Banks: I hesitated before I stood up because I saw the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) poised in his seat and, in view of what my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said about the lack of speeches by Conservative Members, I thought that we would hear from the hon. Member for Harrow, West.

I have a programme from the Institute of Housing, Northern Counties. There is to be a conference called, "Housing—Moving into the Nineties". It is to be held on Wednesday 8 November. That is tomorrow. There will be an official opening of the conference and an opening address by a Mr. R. Hughes, MP, who, as we all know, is the hon. Member for Harrow, West. He is the parliamentary consultant to the Institute of Housing. I was hoping for a little taster of his opening address. Unfortunately, I cannot make the conference tomorrow, but I shall be speaking there on Thursday when I shall be talking about the Local Government and Housing Bill, so I shall have to rely on an accurate report of what the hon. Member for Harrow, West will have said about housing following the debate tonight and the passing of the Bill.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I hope that the hon. Gentleman can assist me; he is taking so long over the preamble to his speech. Is there any chance that I will be able to get away from the House after the votes to catch my plane at 8.30 am tomorrow?

Mr. Banks: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman that assurance, but I will certainly urge my hon. Friends to make way as speedily as possible so that we can hear the learned words of the hon. Member for Harrow, West. I suspect that he will catch his plane quite comfortably and will be able to say what small contribution he made to the debate this evening. It is certainly far more substantial than that of any other Conservative Back Bencher so far, so perhaps that is to his credit.

The Opposition amendment (a) to the Lords amendment is designed to ensure that, before the Secretary of State makes a determination with regard to the amount of allowance he is to make in calculating housing revenue account subsidies for 1990-91, he has regard to the likely changes which will result from such a determination. We raised many of our arguments in Committee, but we have to return to them here, because, as we see it, the new financial system which will be introduced as a result of the Bill is designed to give the Secretary of State even greater power over the affairs of local authorities.

There seems to be no small part of local authority activity over which central Government do not wish to exercise some form of control. In many ways it is yet a further nail in the coffin of local democracy and accountability. I cannot understand why so many Conservative Members, including the Under-Secretary of State, who have a background in local government are prepared to connive at the unwinding of local democracy throughout the country. This is only one aspect of it—the further control over the housing revenue account, making sure that there can be no discretionary payments from general rate income into the housing revenue account. We know what will happen. Either rents will go up alarmingly, or the standard of repairs and maintenance will fall from fairly lamentable levels, at least in London.

I cannot understand why Conservative Members with so much background in local government are prepared to go along with this. I understand that all things are now done in the name of the Prime Minister and that all decisions emanate downwards from No. 10 Downing street. She has no background, feeling or taste for local government. She seems to have a total abhorrence of it. However, I should have thought that one or two Conservative Members would be prepared to say to the Prime Minister, "This has gone too far. You are destroying the local democratic structures of the country and creating a social and economic crisis, particularly in the inner cities, that will be appalling for the country and even more disastrous for the fortunes of the Conservative party at the next election."

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that he is acting on an assumption that may be incorrect? Is it not possible that many of the hon. Members to whom my hon. Friend refers will have gone into local government not with a sense of enthusiasm for its place in the country but with a mission to minimise it or, in some cases, disrupt it? That may sound cynical, but in my experience it is possible.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend has a good point. Some hon. Members on both sides of the House have used local government as a jumping-off board for a career in Parliament. They are the careerists that we know are among us, and lamentably they are not wholly confined to the Conservative Benches.

When I was elected to the House in 1983, it did not even occur to me that I should stand down as a member of the Greater London council. I acknowledge the debt that I owe to the GLC for training and teaching me about local government and for being an example to the country of how an efficient local authority can be run. It brought a great deal of credit not only to the Labour party but to local government generally through the policies that it pursued. I acknowledge that debt and will continue to pay for it.

I am one of those who never forget an insult. Local government in this country has been insulted by Conservative Members and a council has been destroyed. If nothing else, that will keep me in politics because I want revenge. The old saying "Don't get angry, get even" runs through my political psyche and will continue to do so. I want to see Tory blood on the walls and on the carpets. It will be running thick through County hall and through the county halls and town halls of the country. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for sparking me off on a subject about which I feel strongly. I did not use local government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Now that the hon. Gentleman has got that off his chest, perhaps we can return to Lords amendment No. 112.

Mr. Banks: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I got carried away by the moment. Feelings are running high on the Opposition Benches.

I thought—and I still believe—that some Conservative Members enjoyed being in local government, thought that it contributed a great deal to democracy and that it underpinned parliamentary democracy in many respects. I cannot understand how those right hon. and hon. Members can now agree to a further dismantling of local government.

We are dealing with the problems that will arise in the housing revenue account and the maintenance of local authorities' housing stock because of the Bill. When my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), in his excellent speech, talked about the homelessness crisis in London, the Under-Secretary of State, a former leader of Wandsworth borough council, was shaking his head in disagreement as if my hon. Friend's speech was being made up on the spur of the moment from his fevered imagination rather than from factual evidence.

Anyone who knows anything about London will realise just how appalling the housing crisis is. One only has to leave the House, perhaps on the way to a reception to which hon. Members are constantly invited, and walk along the Embankment to see people sleeping in the boxes of the cardboard cities. If one goes to an excellent concert at the Festival hall, the Queen Elizabeth hall or the Purcell room—they were built, paid for and excellently maintained by the London county council and the GLC—one will see homeless young people. Surely one or two Conservative Members still have a heart and a conscience after 10 years of serving Polly Pot in No. 10. Surely they will feel a twinge of conscience when they see what is going on. We are not making any of this up. The crisis is real. Homelessness in London has doubled since the Prime Minister took office in 1979.

Mr. Pike: I recognise the problem of homelessness in London. I wonder whether my hon. Friend realises that, due to the benefit changes that have taken place this year, homelessness is occurring in many towns where it never existed. Many bed and breakfast hostels are being closed because the amount of benefit being paid to them no longer enables them to remain open and provide even minimum accommodation. The problem does not exist only in London and the big cities but now covers the length and breadth of Britain.

Mr. Banks: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I have a cutting that I was going to introduce later but I will introduce it now as it is apposite. It comes from *The Sunday Correspondent* this week. It is on the back of the two pages containing that weird interview with the Prime Minister. There is an even weirder picture—she has clearly lost her marbles. Page four says:

> "Patten acts on cardboard cities."

The two points are closely linked. When they were changing the social security regulations we warned the Ministers about what would happen. We pleaded with them, but they said they were just scare stories and alarmism that the Minister said could be expected from us. However, the facts are in the newspaper. It says:

> "Homeless school-leavers may again be allowed to claim social security as part of a Government campaign to stop them begging and sleeping rough. Action to cut the growing 'cardboard city' population in London and other towns by providing more hostels is to be announced later this month by Chris Patten, the Environment Secretary. It will form part of a wide-ranging review of homelessness. . . ministers have been forced to recognise that their virtual ban last year on social

[Mr. Banks]

security payments to unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds acts as a formidable deterrent to teenagers who might otherwise come in from the cold."

A report this morning by Shelter, or SHAC, said that large numbers of youngsters were being forced into prostitution and drug trading because they were desperately trying to scrape together the money to exist on the streets of London.

9 pm

The hon. Member for Harrow, West played a good and useful part in the Greater London council. I cannot understand why he does not rant and rave at the Government, as I do from time to time. They do not listen to me, but they might listen to him, because he represents an authentic voice and is an expert on local authority housing. He has sat quietly and said nothing. I find that difficult to understand.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend's point is made even more powerful by the fact that, until the GLC was abolished, 4,300 extra beds were available for youngsters and single homeless people. With the abolition of the GLC, those 4,300 beds went, and, with the abolition of the other metropolitan counties, even more beds went. That is why homeless people, particularly young people, are more vulnerable in London and other cities and, increasingly, in rural areas. We now find homelessness in Exeter, Bristol and other towns where we never found it before. As I said, in 1979 I could always get someone a roof over his head. Nowadays, I cannot do that.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend makes a good point. All over the country, the Government's policies are inevitably leading to greater homelessness. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith could say that so-called care in the community, which has meant that many people have been turned out of long-stay mental institutions, has caused distressed people to go wandering on to the streets.

I must continue to refer to London. Other hon. Members can make their own points about their own cities, but I know a little about London. In recent years I have noticed that two categories of people have suddenly appeared on the streets of London. The first category is the young. They are on the streets because of changes in social security provision and unemployment. They are being forced to move around, like an army of the dispossessed, from one cardboard city to another and from one railway arch to another.

The other category includes the many more people who are mentally incapable of looking after themselves. They have been turned out of long-term mental institutions and, in many cases, put into the so-called community, which means that their own families, who might be hard-pressed in terms of their living, social and environmental conditions, cannot manage. That creates more problems in the homes to which these people go. It may mean that they are told, "Sorry, we cannot look after you any more," and are pushed out into the street. Those two categories of people include the most appalling and dramatic statistics that we have seen for several years.

Mr. Soley: It is extremely important that Conservative Members should understand the causes of those problems. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that income support changes are crucial. Obviously, unemployment also had a part to play. However, the other crucial factor for young people is the catastrophic decline in council house building and, at the same time, the drying up of the private rented sector. The very sector that the Government said would expand has contracted. There are 500,000 fewer houses and flats available for rent in the private rented sector than there were before, precisely because the Government pushed people to buy rather than to rent.

Mr. Banks: As ever, my hon. Friend is correct. One does not need a PhD in housing administration to work out that, if we create a situation in which local authorities are not allowed to build any council houses, there will be an upsurge in homelessness. It is obvious. I should have thought that it was well within the intellectual grasp of Conservative Members to work that out.

I do not need rhetoric to argue the case. We need only to examine the statistics. A good article in "City Limits" coincided with the week-long protest against homelessness in London. If the Prime Minister would venture out of her bunker in No. 10 Downing street—the railings are not there yet, but no doubt she will have them erected at some stage; I bet that she will manage to get out every day even with the railings there—and go to the other side of Whitehall, she will see the young people and others who are involved in a vigil there. Why does she not talk to them and listen to them? I do not think that she listens to anybody. She would want to tell them how to tidy up their cardboard boxes to make them look more comfortable. She would say, "Wouldn't it look better if you cut a few holes and put up chintz curtains?" If she were to listen for a while, she would know a little more about what is going on in the streets of London.

The facts in "City Limits", which were taken from statistics provided by Shelter, the London research centre, and the Association of London Authorities, clearly show us the picture. The article states:

> "In September 1987 there were 18,906 people living in temporary accommodation in London. By March 1989 there were 24,578, an increase of 30 per cent."

Homelessness has more than doubled since 1979. The article continues:

> "By the beginning of 1989 over 106,000 council properties had been sold to their sitting tenants. Until the end of 1987, some 30,000 had sold up and moved on.
>
> In 1975 local authorities started building 20,100 new homes."

That is in London.

In 1986, the figure was 1,200. The key to this whole issue is that in the mid-1970s local authorities in London were building about 25,000 new units of accommodation per year. They are now building about 1,500 per year. That is one of the main keys to homelessness in this country. As I said, one does not need a PhD or even a CSE to work out that statistical correlation.

The article continues:

> "In 1988 30,000 people were squatting in London."

There were 2,000 people sleeping rough in central London.

> "London boroughs spent almost £88 million on bed and breakfast accommodation in 1988-89. In 1981, the figure was £4·3 million."

As we in Newham will be affected by this appalling Bill, I can tell the House that we have moved on from the appalling situation in 1981 when we had nine families in a hostel because in January 1989 we had 1,151 families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, non-secured lettings, private leasings and hostels. Whereas we were spending a few thousand pounds in 1980-81 on bed-and-breakfast charges in the London borough of Newham, last year we spent £5·2 million.

We cannot afford that waste of resources. We should be putting people into decent homes, and for £5·2 million we could build a lot of them. This is craziness. It is the economics of the madhouse which, I suppose, is where the Prime Minister will end up. It is cheaper to build new units of accommodation than to house people in inadequate bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does my hon. Friend agree that there are several unique aspects to the problem of homelessness in London which the Government have signally failed to address in the past decade? The first is that the appalling cost of private rented accommodation and of private homes in London forces those on average wages to look to the public sector. Those people are suffering under the Government's policies and from their refusal to allow council house building.

The second aspect is the appalling conditions in which many homeless people have to live in the bed-and-breakfast hostels that scar our capital. Hon. Members will remember the terrible fire at a bed-and-breakfast hostel in Bayswater many years ago. Many families are in danger of perishing because of the fire risks in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

A further unique dimension—my hon. Friend has referred to this—is the millions of pounds that boroughs such as Hackney have to spend to keep people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Finally, it is impossible for those on low and middle incomes to find accommodation in the inner cities. That factor might appeal to Conservative Members because it is one reason why employers in the inner city encounter such huge problems in getting labour.

Mr. Banks: I agree with my hon. Friend who emphasises the point that I am making from the "City Limits" article, which also states:

> "In Kensington and Chelsea, the average price for a home is now £167,000; luxury lettings are as high as £1,000 a week; some council rents are over £100 per week."

People simply cannot afford those levels of rent. Surely Conservative Members can understand that. I do not know what happens in their advice surgeries—

Ms. Abbott: They do not have any.

Mr. Banks: I am sure that some of them do, but I should be interested to know why they do not seem to be affected by the evidence that must be brought before their eyes. I do not understand how people in my area can survive.

Ms. Abbott: The hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) is laughing.

Mr. Banks: Yes, the hon. Gentleman seems to be laughing. I assume that he is not laughing at the plight of the homeless in London because, frankly, he should hang his head in shame as should every other Conservative Member who has ventured into the Chamber this evening.

This is not a crisis that has been visited upon us by God because we are a sinful people; it is a crisis created by Government policies. Sometimes one can say that Opposition Members stir things up a bit and blame the Government for bad weather or whatever—and that might be considered a little unreasonable—but on this occasion one can point the finger with unerring accuracy and say that the responsibility for the housing crisis in this country lies with the Government's policies. That is where the responsibility lies, and that is where we are determined that it will remain until these policies change.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I accept everything that my hon. Friend is saying about the crisis in London. I warn Conservative Members, lest they feel that it is a purely London matter and that they can be complacent on a national scale, that in Preston the homelessness situation is worsening rapidly. We have been able to avoid using bed-and-breakfast accommodation for some years. But tomorrow the local housing committee will be considering having to resume the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation. In other words, it is a national problem.

Mr. Banks: All local authorities are affected by this legislation. All council rents are likely to go up. It will become more difficult for all authorities to deal with the homelessness crisis. We have always been used to a degree of homelessness in London. Some people have always slept rough on the streets of the capital. That is a sad fact, but it is a fact. But it is now obvious that this depressing feature is spreading to cities throughout the country. More and more people are wandering the streets looking for somewhere to sleep at night. It is criminal of the Government to have inflicted that level of social misery on people.

Mr. Spearing: Some Conservative Members will say that people are attracted to London and exacerbate the problem. Is my hon. Friend aware that in the south of Newham, in the borough which we both represent, half of my constituents live in municipal dwellings, but that due to the policies of the Government—introducing market rents bit by bit across the whole housing sphere—there will be no opportunity for the young people of Newham to obtain, own or in some way live in council accommodation? When recently I have told the members of residents associations about the Bill, saying that many would have to live in tents in Epping forest, they have not dissented from that statement. That is what the Government are forcing people to do.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend, like me, is affected by the severe crisis in the London borough of Newham. I have not yet had an opportunity to describe in detail the situation that we face in Newham. We have tried to explain it to Ministers, but Ministers at the Department of the Environment come and go with bewildering regularity. I congratulate the Under-Secretary on being one of the few who has stayed the course, probably because he is so unnoticeable that the Prime Minister has not realised he is there. Perhaps anonymity in politics is sometimes useful. Alternatively, the right hon. Lady may know that he is such a ruthless Right-winger who is prepared to do anything on instructions from No. 10 that she feels confident in having him in his present office. If that is so, I am surprised that he has not yet become Foreign Secretary. But given the number of shuffles we have each week, even he may end up as Foreign Secretary or as some other exotic figure of state.

On Fridays at my advice surgery young people come to see me with their children and, having been put in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, wonder what the

[Mr. Banks]

future holds for them. For a number of reasons which I cannot fully understand, Newham is not a centre for hotels. We must move our people out to other parts of London, putting them in Westminister, Paddington, Ilford and Romford. Imagine the destruction that that inflicts on the family unit. The education of the children is disrupted and many of the people involved find it impossible to hold down a job.

Those are the human realities behind the policies that are pursued ruthlessly and relentlessly by the Government. They do not seem to care. I can only assume that some calculation has been made to the effect that as the people about whom we are talking are so depressed over what is happening—struggling hard to survive on an hourly basis from morning to night—they do not provide any political threat to the Government.

No hon. Members will have to sleep rough on the Embankment or go to the type of bed-and-breakfast accommodation that I have described; they will stay in decent hotels because the allowances are good. I know an awful lot of people in the borough of Newham who would like to receive the overnight allowances that are given to hon. Members who live outside London to enable them to have a decent dinner and a decent sleep. I do not object to Conservative Members having a decent dinner. They get many decent dinners—in many cases it is someone else's dinner and it is certainly paid for by someone else. Why should they vote for decent dinners and decent homes for themselves and deprive others of exactly those benefits? That smacks of hypocrisy, but that is what one associates with the Conservatives.

9.15 pm

I do not know how people are surviving in London or Preston on a daily basis. All I know is that the Opposition must stand up and fight for them because they cannot fight for themselves. No hon. Member has to suffer their deprivations, so we shall continue to speak for them even though, with the poll tax and the new regulations, more and more of those people are moving out of the political process altogether. That is why Conservative Members do not care. Those homeless people do not pose any political threat as voters to the fortunes of the Government. They are a threat to those fortunes, however, because the conscience of the nation has been aroused by their plight. We are able to articulate their plight in this place and we are able to campaign for changes not only in policies but, ultimately, in Government. It is only with a change in Government that the homeless of London, Preston, Burnley, Liverpool and elsewhere will have a decent chance.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): My hon. Friend is right that the situation is getting worse. Just after the war, when we were faced with the destruction of so many homes, the Government of the time, which happened to be Labour, gave hope to the people because they built council houses. I lived in two rooms for 12 years and I know about housing problems. At least we had the hope, however, that, sooner or later, we would get council accommodation. It so happened that I did not take up that accommodation. After the war we got all the people off the streets, apart from those who wanted to stay out there. After the war one only saw a few people living on the streets. Now there is no hope. Masses of youngsters come to London from Liverpool and the like looking for jobs, but they end up under the arches or elsewhere. The indictment against the Government is that they have taken hope away from people.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend speaks with great experience and wisdom. We know that it was Conservative and Labour local authorities that gave people the opportunity of a decent home. That chance has been destroyed and, as far as the Government are concerned, local authorities are rather like the trade unions, enemies within.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. Gentleman as he is talking about an important subject. I have looked carefully at the amendments in this group, however, and I do not believe that a single word of the hon. Gentleman's speech, important though it may be, relates to those amendments.

Mr. Speaker: I have been in the Chamber for 10 minutes and I do not believe that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is out of order as this is a pretty wide debate on housing. The hon. Gentleman should look at the amendments, however, and ensure that his comments relate to them.

Mr. Banks: I have kept the amendments under my thumb all the time. I have made sure that I stayed in order and I wait for you, Mr. Speaker to decide when I am out of order rather than the hon. Member for Harrow, West. That hon. Gentleman, notwithstanding the things I said about him and his contribution to local government, has chosen not to intervene positively in this debate even though he has had ample opportunity to do so.

The Opposition amendments will ensure that the Secretary of State takes into account the impact of the proposed changes in the Bill on rents and housing maintenance before he makes any determination. Those amendments must be illustrated and that is what I have been doing by showing what effect the Bill will have in areas like Newham.

No doubt the hon. Member for Harrow, West feels very uncomfortable. He knows that I am speaking the truth. It must be a very uncomfortable experience for him to hear the truth. He must be feeling very guilty, despondent and ashamed, and so he should.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) emphasised that this debate is about the housing revenue account. He is right. Under this group of Lords amendments local authorities will not have to keep a housing revenue account. As I said in my opening speech, if they do not keep the account, what will happen to the homeless?

Mr. Banks: That is precisely the point. The hon. Member for Harrow, West knows a bit about this. I hope and trust that he will have a very difficult time tomorrow when he tries to act as a craven apologist for the Government's policy on housing when he talks to housing experts.

In Newham, we have tried desperately to advise Ministers about the likely impact of the Bill and why our amendments to Lords amendment No. 119 should be accepted to ameliorate the position. We have taken several

Ministers around Newham and our last briefing was for the current Minister for the Environment and Countryside. We are grateful for the opportunity to talk to Ministers. We would sit down with the devil himself—and we did in terms of the previous Secretary of State for the Environment. My hon. Friends the Members for Newham, South and for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) and I want to get the best deal possible for Newham. The problems in our borough are bad and they will be made so much worse by the Bill if it is not amended tonight.

Newham has the highest number of unsatisfactory dwellings of any London borough. Those dwellings are unfit and lack basic amenities. There is a severe shortage of dwellings in Newham and we have the fastest increase in homelessness in London. I have told Conservative Members just how dramatically that has increased over the past four or five years. Newham also has more dwellings lacking inside WCs and baths than any other London borough and the highest proportion of dwellings lacking facilities in England. Fifty-five per cent. of the borough's housing was built before the first world war, and 80 per cent. of the private sector stock is of the same age. It is estimated that the total cost of repairing the private sector stock is £328 million. The proportion of unfit private properties increased from 21 per cent. in 1979 to 36 per cent. in 1985 while in London as a whole the proportion fell from 10 per cent. to 6 per cent.

There is also severe overcrowding in Newham, a problem that is suffered disproportionately by ethnic minority households. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South knows more about the public sector than I. In that area, Newham has a specific problem with 107 tower blocks of more than eight storeys. Many of those blocks suffer from structural problems or have reached an age when services need renewing. Nine complete tower blocks in south Canning Town in the constituency represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South are currently vacant. Others are being decanted and Ronan Point has been demolished.

How on earth can we deal with those problems with the extra restrictions which this Bill will introduce? We just want to deal with the problems. We are not trying—*[Interruption.]* Clearly, the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has had a very good dinner. I welcome her to our proceedings, although she has come very late.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend mentioned Ronan Point and its sisters. Is he aware that the borough made strenuous efforts to fulfil the Government's objective of going into partnership with private firms to redevelop these areas so that people could afford the rents in the houses with gardens that would replace the thousand empty flats in the sky? However, the economics of housing and interest rates made that very difficult, even with the best will in the world. Will my hon. Friend ask the Minister to take account of that, because we have done our best to try to meet the Government's criteria? The sums just do not add up.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend is right. Newham borough council has attempted to arrange partnership dealings with the private sector, and Ministers and civil servants from the Department of the Environment know that to be true.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose* ——

Mr. Banks: We have tried everything and we shall try everything. We are so desperate that I will even listen to the hon. Lady, in case she says something sensible for the first time since she was elected.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman referred to a vast number of tower blocks. Why were they built? It so happens that I was vice-chairman of housing in the London borough of Camden. We inherited many tower blocks, both built and being built, but we did not build a single one during the time of our Conservative administration because we did not believe in them. The hon. Gentleman has been landed with the problem because he built the blooming things.

Mr. Banks: I shall excuse the slight hint of hysteria because hysteria and lunacy are catching among Conservative Members. Because of cost yardsticks and because of requirements laid down by Conservative and Labour Governments, local authorities thought that tower blocks were the best way to meet their housing problem——

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): The only way.

Mr. Banks: Yes. I am no hack; I do not go around defending past decisions that I would not have supported. I was on Lambeth borough council when we were still being pressurised into building tower blocks, and I resisted that Labour council's attempts to construct more of them. They are not the sort of environment in which people should be placed.

Wandsworth has sold some of its tower blocks. Such blocks can provide luxury accommodation, but that means swimming pools, porterage, security alarms and all sorts of facilities that no local authority would be allowed to put in. We could turn all our tower blocks, even though I do not like them, into small heavens on earth if we were given the resources by central Government—but will we get them, and will the hon. Lady help us to get them?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Why not imitate what was done in part of Liverpool and go into partnership with the private sector? When we took over in Camden we housed exactly the same number of people per acre by building in six steps—two storeys, then another two and then another two—with lifts to alternate floors. In that way we housed the same number of people without the appalling way of life involved in tower blocks.

Mr. Banks: I do not disagree. I have said that many decisions taken by Tory and Labour-controlled Labour authorities under Governments of both complexions are not defensible in retrospect. They were explicable and understandable, but they were indefensible in social terms. I am trying to deal with the problem that we have inherited. It is no good the hon. Lady saying that we should not have built these blocks. Rightly or wrongly, we built them and now we have to try to deal with them. The problem is not only in Newham; it is found in Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Glasgow and many other cities.

It was not only Labour local authorities that built tower blocks; all local authorities built them. Apart from anything else, they were part of the fashion, and architects and planners wanted to destroy all the existing properties and start from a green field site and build vertical streets. I should like to get hold of some of those architects and planners, put them on the 22nd floor, nail the door and

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leave them there for a few years to see what it is like. Architects, planners and developers do not live in such places; they just build them for other people to live in. They live in nice rural retreats deep in the country.

9.30 pm

I say to those people and to hon. Members that by all means they should have the good things in life, but they should not deny them to other people. That is precisely what the Government do day in day out with the sort of policies that they pursue. I have made my point about the amendments. The Minister should remember that we have not invented the housing crisis in London. It has been created by the policies of the Government. If the Government are not prepared to change those policies, they should go, and every homeless person will throw his hands in the air and cheer to the echo the end of this Government and their damnable policies.

Mr. Chope: At times during the debate Opposition Members have been hysterical but I suppose they can be congratulated on demonstrating that they are still in quite good voice and capable of filibustering. The Opposition have certainly indulged in much bluster on the issue.

I find it rather depressing that most Opposition Members have continued to repeat the misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Government policy. In Committee and subsequently, those Opposition views have been shown to be totally inaccurate. They are short of policies of their own and are therefore trying to attack policies that they are inventing and attributing to the Government. I assure the House that Government policy on these matters is very different from the policy that has been represented by the Opposition.

We heard in the debate the familiar but false accusation about the rents policy. The Government do not intend to push council rents to market levels. We want only market-related patterns of rents. We are not interested either in capital value rents. It should be obvious from our proposals for 1990-91, with minimum increases of 95p and increases damped everywhere, that we are not seeking to establish market rents, except perhaps in areas where rents are very low.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) said that we are seeking to control council rents. The hon. Gentleman interpreted our 95p guideline as the imposition of a 95p minimum increase whether or not councils want it. That is nonsense. The Bill explicitly allows authorities to determine their own budgets and they may set rents higher or lower than the guideline if they wish to budget for an appropriate level of service.

The hon. Members for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) and for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) failed to understand that their council tenants will benefit next year as a direct result of the Government's policies on rents. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said he thought that rents should go up next year by about £1·95. Opposition policy is that there should be the same increase everywhere. That is an absurd proposition and that is why we want to have the new system. Under that system the constituencies of the hon. Members that I have mentioned will benefit. It is surprising that none of those hon. Members was able to recognise that during the debate.

Rent rebates have also been mentioned tonight.

Mr. Steinberg: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Chope: If I have time, I shall try to answer some of the points that the hon. Gentleman made.

We have also seen an extraordinary distortion of the Bill's provision for rent rebates. The hon. Member for Hammersmith persists in asserting that the better-off tenants will pay the rebates of their neighbours. This is nonsense, as has been said in earlier debates. We shall simply be proposing rent guidelines at sensible levels. Where an authority can meet the costs of those rebates, partly or in full, it is right for it to do so. However, most authorities will always require assistance from subsidy, and we can say categorically that if an authority gets its rents higher than the guidelines for any reason, then the higher cost of rebates will be met in full by our subsidy. Other tenants will not have to meet it.

Mr. Soley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Chope: I will not give way. I gave way dozens of times.

Mr. Soley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time, please.

Mr. Soley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Chope: I am the first hon. Member to speak from the Government Benches for about four hours. I gave way many times during my opening speech, and I am sure that the hon. Member will understand that I have to reply to the points that have been made, and I am seeking to do that.

Mr. Soley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Chope: No, I will not give way. The hon. Member spoke for 45 minutes and now wishes to deprive me of some of my time.

The hon. Member for City of Durham was one of the many who got things completely wrong about rates rebates. I understand that he actually served on the Committee examining the Bill, so I can be less forgiving towards him than I might be towards an hon. Member who had not done so. The hon. Gentleman has asserted that the housing revenue account will have to bear 3 per cent. of the cost of rebates. He was wrong. Although the present rate of subsidy on rebates is 97 per cent., under the new system we shall take 100 per cent. of the cost of rebates into calculation of the housing revenue account subsidy.

Mr. Soley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Chope: I gave way to the hon. Gentleman on this issue on more than one occasion during my earlier speech, and he is doing his Back-Bench colleagues a disservice in not allowing me to reply to some of the points that they have made.

Mr. Soley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) knows that if the Minister does not give way, he must resume his seat.

Mr. Chope: I see no purpose in mere repetition of points made earlier. The hon. Member intervened on two or three occasions and I gave him the answers about rebates on three occasions.

Mr. Battle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have sat through debates in which we considered amendments from the other place, and I thought that the tradition was that we clarified the detail. In that case, if a Minister makes a statement, surely it is incumbent on him to allow us to challenge it, or it will not be questioned. Some of the Minister's remarks clearly demonstrate that he does not understand the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know, as the House knows, that if an hon. Member, or a Minister, does not wish to give way, then those wishing to intervene must not persist in rising.

Mr. Chope: I shall continue with examples of the way in which Opposition Members have this issue so wrong. The hon. Member for City of Durham asserted that Durham would have a negative subsidy entitlement. That is extremely unlikely. Negative subsidy entitlement arises only when, in the notional account, income from rents plus interest on receipts is more than expenditure on management and maintenance, loan charges and rent rebate. Try as I might, I cannot draw up a notional account for Durham in which that happens. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman goes away and does his sums again.

The hon. Member for City of Durham made another point, about the shortage of resources for investment. If capital receipts have been used for genuine capital works, we have said that we will take that into account in housing investment programme allocations.

Mr. Battle: When?

Mr. Chope: Discussions are taking place at the moment on the housing investment programme allocations for the coming year. Those meetings are taking place at present.

The hon. Member for City of Durham expressed fears about the lack of allocations. I suggest that before he makes such alarmist remarks he waits for the statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The hon. Member also asked about direct labour organisation profits. They should go to the general fund. If they are then transferred to the housing revenue account, that is another form of rate fund contribution. The ring fence will prevent such contributions, but—I do not think that the hon. Member understood this—subsidy will cover the gap caused by loss of those contributions so that there will be no extra rent increase as a result.

Mr. Steinberg: Is that a guarantee?

Mr. Chope: That is a guarantee. I have just told the hon. Gentleman how the new system will work. I find it depressing that so many Opposition Members, although they have served on the Committee, do not understand the way in which the new system will operate.

Many right hon. and hon. Members have talked during the debate about the plight of homeless people. Homeless people, whether young or old, deserve better than to be used as pawns by the Opposition.

The Opposition seem to will the end, but deny the means. They and their local authorities preside over tens of thousands of empty council properties. They fail to collect rents from existing council tenants and thereby deprive the homeless of further resources.

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mr. Chope: I shall not give way. The Government take seriously the plight of the young and the homeless in our major cities—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chope: We have considered a number of reports about homelessness and the problems of the homeless while undertaking our review of legislation on the homeless. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to announce our conclusions shortly.

Planned public investment in housing during the next three years will total nearly £13 billion. The thrust of our housing policy is aimed at helping areas with the greatest need, by extending the role and funding of housing associations and by expanding the private sector, which so many Opposition Members seem to despise. To tackle the important issue of the single homeless, we are encouraging people to take in lodgers.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Chope: Furthermore, we are targeting resources on the greatest need. That is why we have made revisions to the new capital control system.

The new housing revenue account system, which is the basis of the debate, will make local authorities more accountable to tenants, promote efficiency and encourage a fairer, better-targeted means of distributing taxpayers' money to those who need it. That is the best way to help the homeless.

We have a genuine concern for the homeless. If Opposition Members were genuinely concerned, they would try to put something into action at a local level.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not the way that we conduct the proceedings of the House. We often hear things in the House with which we disagree, but we must listen.

Mr. Pike: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely it would be common courtesy for the Minister to give way. He has been given the permission of the House to make a second speech in the debate and he should at least give way once.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member knows that that is up to the Minister.

Mr. Chope: I detect that the House is getting somewhat impatient to vote after such a lengthy debate. I think that we have won the argument, and that, from the Opposition, we have had fluster and filibuster.

9.45 pm

Mr. Soley: With the permission of the House, I should like to make a short supplementary speech. I had not planned on making it. On Report, no fewer than 606 amendments were put before us. Many of them were introduced by the Government. For the Minister to fail to give way to my hon. Friends who wished to intervene in such an important debate is a sign of weakness, and it will

[Mr. Soley]

do him no good. I wished to raise the issue which he failed to deal with in his opening speech, which is that rentpayers in one area will subsidise the housing benefit of people in the same area. That means that the poor will subsidise the poorest. I refer to clause 78, which remains unamended after the Bill's consideration by another place. The Minister's predecessor and the previous Secretary of State for the Environment accepted that what we were saying was basically true although they would not accept the phrase—I understand why—"the poor subsidising the poorest". They accepted, however, that our argument was right.

I shall try to quote as accurately as I can the Minister's words. He tried to slide them through quickly, but I shall repeat them to the best of my memory. We can check my recollection with the report in *Hansard*. He said, "If there is a surplus, they will have to use that to meet rent rebates." The surplus can accrue only from other people's rents. The Bill ring-fences accounts so that rents must be used only for housing. They cannot be used in any other sector. It is not possible to translate money from the rate fund to the rent fund.

In other words, the rebate bill is met in part by using surplus rent money when there is some. The only way in which the Minister is partially right is that, when there is no surplus, that option does not arise. As soon as there is a surplus, however, the local authority has no option but to use it to pay the housing benefit bill. We say that that is a classic example of the poor subsidising the poorest. It was the Minister's failure to respond to that issue that led him into so much trouble.

I understand why the Minister would not give way. I can interpret what he said thereafter only as that somehow the bill would be met. Is he giving the House a commitment that, where there is a surplus which must be used to meet the housing benefit bill, the Government will step in and pay the difference? If the Minister cannot answer that question, he either does not understand it or, more likely, he is deliberately trying to avoid the issue because he appreciates that it is embarrassing for the Government.

Mr. Chope *rose*——

Mr. Soley: I shall give way to the Minister.

Mr. Chope: There is no dispute among my right hon. and hon. Friends. If there is a surplus, it will be taken into account when it comes to a subsidy. If there is a surplus on the housing revenue account, it is likely that there will be less subsidy entitlement than if there is not. I thought that Opposition Members would consider that a sensible and fair way of proceeding.

Mr. Soley: We had to drag the truth out of him but he has now conceded that where there is a surplus, it will be used to pay the housing benefit bill. That will mean that poor rentpayers who are just outside the housing benefit net, will end up paying the housing benefit of their neighbours. That is the truth, the Minister knows it, and in effect he has conceded that it is true.

In his reply, the Minister referred again to rent collection. It was noticeable that he did not answer the question that I put to him in my opening speech about the report that the Audit Commission is about to produce, of which he and his colleagues may be aware. The report states clearly that rent arrears are increasing in local authorities of all political complexions because of cuts in housing benefit. Yet he chose to start the hare that some people who could afford to do so are not paying their rent. Does he think that the Audit Commission report is wrong or right?

Mr. Chope: I have not seen the report, so I cannot be expected to comment on it. The hon. Gentleman has raised the issue for the first time this evening. Under this Government, total payments of housing benefit have doubled. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is because the rents were increased."]

Mr. Soley: This would be hilarious if it were not so tragic. Housing benefit has increased, despite cuts, because the Government have driven up housing costs and cut income support. As the previous Secretary of State conceded, expenditure on housing benefit has increased dramatically in some areas of the south where rents are high. An unemployed person living in a private-sector flat with a market rent of £70 a week—which is not unusual in London, certainly not in my constituency—has all his rent paid through housing benefit. The system is daft. It does not even save public expenditure as the Government wish it to do. It has never helped people to pay their rent, as it should.

The Minister also referred to the old canard of empty local authority flats. He has not heard about this matter before, so he had better remember it well. The average number of empty local authority properties is 2·5 per cent. of the housing stock. For housing associations it is 3·2 per cent.—slightly higher but both are good. For the private sector, it is 4·5 per cent. The worst offenders of all are the Government. Nearly 6 per cent. of their properties are empty. I do not refer only to Ministry of Defence properties. One in five Metropolitan police houses are empty. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) knows nothing about that. His own local authority has built a good housing development which he tried to prevent. That is why he walks by on the other side of the road when he sees the "homeless and hungry" signs. When he was a head teacher, I took my children away from his school because I did not want them to have his morality.

The Minister forgets that 6 per cent. of Department of the Environment properties are empty. [HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] Will the Minister take immediate steps to fill them? No, a year ago, his predecessor said that the Department would try to sell them. It is still trying to do so. The constituency of the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) has more empty Department of the Environment properties than any other. That is the sort of nonsense that the Government get into.

Mr. Chope: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want his remarks to be taken out of context. Does he accept that the number of empty Department of the Environment properties is about 30?

Mr. Soley: I am not interested in that. Someone with a small number of properties should be a good landlord. If a landlord has thousands of properties, I would expect difficulties. Someone with only a few hundred, a few dozen or tens of properties should be a good landlord. The Minister's Department is an incompetent landlord. The properties have been empty for years. In my constituency, no fewer than 30 flats and houses, 60 if we include under-occupied houses, have been empty for nine years. What will the Department of the Environment do with them? It will demolish four and five-bedroomed Victorian houses and flats. At the same time, the hon. Member for Ealing, North is walking by on the other side, away from the homeless and the hungry.

My last point relates to the contraction of the private sector. A few hon. Members, including the Minister, said that the answer to the problems lay in expanding the private sector. Let us leave aside the issue of what happened some years ago and stick to what has been happening recently. We must remember that since 1980 the Government have been saying that they were abolishing the Rent Acts because it would be easier for private developers to let property. In fact, the private sector is continuing to decline. There are 500,000 fewer homes available for rent in the private sector than there were nine years ago. In London, where the Rent Acts have not really applied for several years, well over half the lets are outside the Rent Acts. As the Government make it easier to evict, the contraction of the private sector actually accelerates.

The reason for that is not hard to find. We need only to go back to 1957, when the word "Rachmanism" was introduced into the English language. The strange fact is —it is one that the Minister does not understand—that Rachman was not a bad landlord; he was just a bad property developer. He did not want to be a landlord, any more than Hoogstraten wants to be one. They only want people in their properties for a very short time, and then want to sell, because buying and selling houses is more profitable than renting them. That will remain true even when the Minister achieves market rents, as he has now done, because of the subsidy system for the owner-occupied sector. That is why the private sector is declining. The big mistake that the Government have made is to axe the council house sector without providing an alternative.

Our amendments are an attempt to redress the balance by allowing local authorities to build, repair and renovate. The Government are preventing them from doing that, and that is why we shall divide the House on amendment (b).

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 113 to 118 agreed to.

Clause 77

CALCULATION OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SUBSIDY

Lords amendment: No. 119, in page 81, line 44, leave out from beginning to end of line 9 on page 82 and insert—

"(a) any amounts which fall to be or were credited or debited to the authority's Housing Revenue Account for that year or any previous year;

(b) any amounts which, on such assumptions as the Secretary of State may determine (whether or not borne out or likely to be borne out by events), would fall to be or would have been so credited or debited; and

(c) such other matters relating to the authority, or to (or to tenants of) houses and other property which are or have been within the account, as he thinks fit;

and the Secretary of State may make any determination falling to be made for the purposes of a formula on the basis of information received by him on or before such date as he thinks fit.

(4) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (3) above, a formula may require it to be assumed that the amount for any year of the rental income or housing expenditure of each authority (or each authority in England or in Wales) is to be determined—

(a) by taking the amount which the Secretary of State considers (having regard, amongst other things, to past and expected movements in incomes, costs and prices) should be or should have been the aggregate amount for that year of the rental incomes or, as the case may be, the housing expenditure of all of the authorities (or all of the authorities in England or Wales) taken together; and

(b) by apportioning that amount between them in such manner as the Secretary of State considers appropriate (which may involve, if he thinks fit, inferring the aggregate values of the houses and other property within their respective Housing Revenue Accounts from the average values of any of the houses and other property which they have disposed of);

and in this subsection "rental income" means income falling within item 1 of Part I of Schedule 4 to this Act and "housing expenditure" means expenditure falling within item 1 of Part II of that Schedule or falling to be debited to the authorities' Housing Repairs Accounts."

Read a Second time.

Amendment proposed to the Lords amendment (b), in line 13, leave out 'and' and insert

'but, in determining any formula under this section for the year beginning 1st April 1990, the Secretary of State shall not assume an increase in the average rent payable by tenants of a local housing authority which is greater than the highest local contribution differential for the purposes of section 425 of the Housing Act 1985 for that authority for any year after that ending 31st March 1986 and subject to this requirement'.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 201, Noes 289.

Division No. 370] **[9.56 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald

Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*

Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack

Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard

Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian

Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David

Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas

Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Alastair Goodlad.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Lords amendments stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, at this day's sitting, the Local Government and Housing Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 278, Noes 77.

Division No. 371] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David

Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard

Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*

Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John

Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(C[illegible]y)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin

Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Flynn, Paul

Fraser, John
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridge[illegible])*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Marlow, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan

Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morley, Elliot
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Vaz, Keith

Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Malcolm Bruce and
Mr. James Wallace.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you had any intimation from either the Leader of the House or the Secretary of State for Health about the state of the ambulance service in London? The Secretary of State claimed in the Chamber this afternoon that union members of the London ambulance service were refusing to provide a 999 service, a statement which has been emphatically denied. We now understand that some calls are being routed directly to ambulance stations because the police and the Ministry of Defence, which have been brought in to break the dispute, are unable to cope with the emergency calls. Clearly this is now a serious situation——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have had no such request.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: It is not a point of order.

Mrs. Mahon: On a new point of order, Mr. Speaker. Tonight, on both the 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock news, the Secretary of State for Health said that a letter would be delivered to the ambulance negotiators in respect of the emergency services, which the—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mahon *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is as may be, but it is not a matter of order for me.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: No; it is not a matter of order for me.

Mr. Skinner: Well, on another point of order then, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is an experienced occupant of a chair, so let his point be in order because otherwise I shall deal with it in the way in which I am sure that he would.

Mr. Skinner: You will recall, Mr. Speaker, quite a number of occasions during your tenure of office when there have been important developments—and bringing in the Army is an important development politically. In view of the reports on the 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock news, and since we had a statement earlier today on this in your presence, and because of the contradictory statements that are now flowing from both the Secretary of State for Health and the union negotiators, I should have thought it a good idea for the Government to make a further statement to the House so that the matter can be cleared up and we can support the ambulance——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have been heard by those responsible on the Government Front Bench.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Lords amendments again considered.

Lords amendment No. 119 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 120 to 128 and 318 to 327 agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Clause 98

GRANTS FOR IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIRS

Lords amendment: No. 135, in page 93, line 27, after "required" insert "(a)".

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following Lords amendments: Nos. 136 to 177, No. 178 and Government amendment (a) thereto, Nos. 179 to 215, No. 216 and amendments (a) and (b) thereto, and Nos. 217 to 255.

Mr. Howard: This group of amendments to part VIII falls conveniently into five broad headings, and I shall deal with each in turn. The largest group insert into this part of the Bill provisions to enable grant to be paid by local authorities towards the cost of repairs or improvements to the common parts of buildings and to houses in multiple occupation. These account for 62 of the amendments listed, of which 18 are substantive and the remainder minor or consequential. The main provisions for common parts grants are found in amendments Nos. 140, 151, 162, 186 and 197; and for houses in multiple occupation grant, these are amendments Nos. 142, 161, 201, 203 and 215.

10.30 pm

Three further amendments are proposed to clarify the operation of common parts grants. The first is a consequential amendment to clause 106, which provides for the test of resources to be applied in the case of a landlord's application for common parts grant. It inserts a new subsection which is the equivalent to that part of Lords amendment No. 185 which deals with HMO grants. It provides for the rental income of each dwelling in a building to be taken into account in the assessment of a landlord's income. Without this amendment there is doubt as to whether the aggregate rental income could be assessed.

The second is a minor amendment to Lords amendment No. 216. It clarifies the persons from whom grant can be recovered in the event of the sale of a building in respect of which a landlord has received a common parts grant.

The third is a consequential amendment to clause 117, which provides a similar clarification in respect of voluntary repayment of grant. It was always our intention to introduce these provisions, as was pointed out on Second Reading. The reason why it was not possible to bring them forward in time for consideration in this House at an earlier stage was simply one of drafting time. Both grant provisions were widely welcomed in another place.

The second group of amendments seeks to clarify our intentions as regards the working of the new grant system. I include within these the amendments—principally Nos. 144, 145 and 208—which enable the costs of fees and charges incurred by applicants in preparing their applications to be grant-aided. This is the case at present under the current grant system, but these amendments provide a specific power for the first time to avoid any doubt about the matter.

I also include amendments Nos. 179 and 180 which make clear that in assessing the income of a landlord for grant purposes it will be possible to recognise explicitly the fact that not all landlords are able to let on an assured tenancy basis. This mans that an authority, in applying the test of resources to a landlord letting on a registered rent, will be required to take into account the reduced rental income that will be available to that landlord. It also means, of course, that the tenants of a landlord letting on such a basis stand to benefit from the larger grant that would be available in those circumstances.

Amendments Nos. 181 to 185 also clarify the position as regards landlords who are charities. These have the effect of requiring local authorities to have regard to the income which might reasonably be available to such landlords from other sources, primarily resources which may specifically be earmarked for repairs and improvements within covenants.

Amendments Nos. 163, 187 and 188 form a third convenient grouping which have the effect of requiring a local authority to approve an application made by a landlord where that landlord has been served a notice requiring certain repairs to be carried out; grant entitlement, of course, will be determined by the appropriate test of resources. These amendments very much preserve the status quo in that grants are mandatory under similar circumstances where a notice has been served under the current system.

Amendments Nos. 191 to 195 have the effect of widening the range of purposes for which authorities are required to approve a disabled facilities grant. In particular, works for the purpose of providing a bedroom accessible to the disabled person, and of improving or providing the heating system, would be brought within the scope of the mandatory grant provisions. These amendments were welcomed by all sides in the other place.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): My hon. Friends and I will not oppose these amendments. Indeed, some of them are welcome, in particular those which provide grants for the provision of facilities such as heating systems for the disabled. We also welcome the way in which the new grant system will enable fees to be met partly by local government.

But we cannot welcome the fact that the basic principles underlying the clauses to which those amendments refer have not been changed. In our view, improvement grants generally should have the aim of improving the housing stock. Grants of this kind should relate to property as well as to people. We believe that the Government aim to shift the balance from public grant aid to private finance, as they have done with the social fund and as they propose to do with student loans.

Large parts of the United Kingdom, including Wales, will be seriously disadvantaged by the proposals to which minor amendments have been made because the Government did not change their mind while the Bill was

[Mr. Paul Murphy]

in the other place. Housing in Wales is older and in a worse condition than that elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Wales also has a higher percentage of elderly owner-occupiers and incomes are lower than in the rest of the United Kingdom. In Wales, 77 per cent. of owner-occupiers of unfit housing earn less than £9,000 compared with 62 per cent. in England and 75 per cent. of Welsh people live in poorly repaired housing compared with 45 per cent. in England.

Obviously no one would suggest that the complicated grant system that has operated in the past should continue. Everyone welcomes the simplified system, but the proposals before us are unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. A number of local authorities and local authority associations have already informed the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office that the transitional arrangements from the old to the new system leave a great deal to be desired. There is a substantial backlog of grant applications. In Wales 40,000 applications are still outstanding, but they could be cleared with the capital expenditure of £200 million on a three-year programme. In Britain as a whole there are 300,000 outstanding applications.

Despite the amendments we are considering, it is clear that the costs of the new system will be extremely high. The Institute of Housing reckons that costs will increase by 5 per cent. because of the new system and the unnecessary bureaucracy. The Association of District Councils reckons that 20 per cent. more staff will be needed to deal with improvement grants as a direct consequence of this part of the Bill. The association is right to ask for at least a 90 per cent grant towards those extra costs.

It is also clear that the overall capital for improvement grants will be reduced as a result of cuts and the new capital control system. The Department of the Environment consultative paper, which is all we can go on at the moment, said that the Government contribution towards such grants is likely to be about 75 per cent. or even less. At the moment that contribution is between 75 and 100 per cent. All the local government associations have argued that that contribution should be 90 per cent. at least.

The proposals do nothing to stamp out cowboy builders. Rents for private rented accommodation will also increase despite the welcome changes that the Minister has just announced. Unquestionably the biggest drawback is that the Government have not changed their mind on means-testing for eligibility for improvement grants. That testing is opposed by 19 organisations directly associated with housing. The Association of District Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Institute of Housing, the Chief Environmental Health Officers Association, the Building Employers Confederation and the National Home Improvement Council have told the Government that the new proposals to means-test eligibility for improvement grants will effectively mean that fewer people, especially those who are older, will take up improvement grants in those areas in desperate need of them. The Government should heed that advice as it reflects a wide spectrum of opinion.

Under the present system, one in four applicants are eligible, but in future that will be reduced to one in nine. Only 35 per cent. will be eligible for grant under the new system. A household with an average income that wants £4,000 worth of work undertaken will receive only £300 of improvement grant towards the cost of that work. Those earning more than £13,000 will not be eligible for anything.

We are concerned that first-time buyers in particular will be badly hit in the sense that those likely to receive grant will not get mortgages and those who can get mortgages will not get grants. The unfit empty houses in the north of England, Wales and elsewhere, which are normally purchased by first-time buyers, will be seriously at risk.

The means test will hit the Government's main supporters—elderly owner-occupiers. As the Association of Metropolitan Authorities stated, that group is increasing. They generally have neither the resources nor the interest in large-scale remedial work. The introduction of the means test will be a further disincentive to those people and will be a real deterrent. An old couple in their 60s or 70s will not want to be burdened by the complications of having to go through the new system. Even fewer older people will take up the grant. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends will be able to say in a year's time, no matter where they come from, that, as a result of these clauses, fewer old people will have taken up the improvement grants. That will be to the detriment of our housing stock.

Household income should not be used as a means for determining the level of income for a property. A longer period should be used and mortgages should be taken into account when considering means testing. Despite the improvement which we welcome, the disabled will be hit. Means testing was always excluded from improvement grants for the disabled. We believe that a test of disability should govern eligibility. Savings of £20,000 and not £5,000 should be taken into account and those on the lowest incomes will not receive grant at all.

The Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment have already shown through their surveys that the present system is hitting those who are to be targeted by the Government's present proposals. At the moment, the people in Wales, the north of England and elsewhere who are applying for improvement grants, those who need them most, are receiving them. That is shown in the Government's surveys.

If means testing is to be introduced, why can there not be automatic grants for pensioners and those who claim benefit? We believe that the definition of earnings is too wide, the threshold level for 100 per cent. grant is too low, and the rate at which grant is reduced is too great.

The local authority associations and those who know most intimately and deeply about the problems of housing improvement grants have put those points to the Government and the Government have turned their faces against virtually all of them. The Building Employers Confederation has said that the new scheme will do nothing to restore our older housing. There is no incentive for those on middle incomes to apply for grant.

Despite the amendments which have been made, can the Minister give us examples of where grants have been badly targeted and are being badly targeted now? The Government must also explain the reasoning behind a major switch in policy in allocating grant. There is no question but that the new system will mean that fewer people will take up grant and that seems to be the opposite of what the Government intended. Also, our older housing stock in areas where grants are most needed will deteriorate at a rate that is unacceptable to the community and, I would have thought, to the Government.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful for the welcome given to the amendments by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy). He reserved his criticisms for matters which are not in these amendments. They are matters which have been the subject of controversy in the Chamber and in another place on numerous other occasions.

10.45 pm

It was very touching to hear the hon. Gentleman express his concern that those on higher incomes who need repairs to their penthouses in Mayfair and Belgravia should be entitled to grant.

Mr. Murphy: Would the Minister say that someone earning £13,100 a year was likely to have a penthouse in Mayfair?

Mr. Howard: No; but the hon. Gentleman's root-and-branch opposition to taking resources into account, which lies at the heart of the Government's proposals, would have that effect, too.

The worry expressed by the hon. Gentleman sat badly with his observations about the larger percentage of people on low incomes in Wales. If his figures were accurate, those people should welcome these proposals, because their whole point is to target the money that is available for home improvements on those who are least well off. That is the purpose behind the change in the system. I was also glad that the hon. Member for Torfaen recognised that the present system is extremely unsatisfactory.

There is nothing between us on these amendments, and I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 136 to 177 agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Clause 106

LANDLORDS

Lords amendment: No. 178, in page 98, line 39, at end insert

"and

(b) where an application for an HMO grant is accompanied by a certificate under section 102(7) above; and

(c) where, by virtue of section 128 below, sections 101 and 102 above do not apply to an application for a grant; and

(d) where an application for a grant is a landlord's common parts application"—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Read a Second time.

Consequential amendment made to the Bill: (a), in page 99, line 8, at end insert—

'( ) In a case where the application is a landlord's common parts application, each of the dwellings in the building concerned shall be taken into account under paragraph (b) or paragraph (bb) of subsection (2) above so as to determine an aggregate rent for the purposes of that subsection.'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Lords amendments Nos. 179 to 215 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 216, to insert the following new clause.

Condition requiring repayment of grant on certain disposals in case of landlord's common parts application

" .—(1) This section applies where a landlord's common parts application has been approved by a local housing authority.

(2) It is a condition of the grant that where the applicant makes a relevant disposal (other than an exempt disposal) of the building within the initial period, he shall pay to the local housing authority on demand the amount of the grant.

(3) A condition under subsection (2) above is a local land charge and shall, subject to subsection (5) and section 117 below, remain in force with respect to the building for a period of five years from the certified date.

(4) So long as a condition under subsection (2) above remains in force with respect to a building it is binding on any person who is for the time being an owner of the building.

(5) On satisfaction of the liability arising from a demand under this section, any condition under subsection (2) above shall cease to be in force with respect to the building in question.

(6) The expressions "relevant disposal" and "exempt disposal" have the meanings assigned by section 116 below."—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Read a Second time.

Amendment made to the Lords amendment: (a), in line 12, leave out

'an owner of the building'

and insert

'a successor in title to that interest in the building by virtue of which, under section 105(2)(b) above, the applicant made his application'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Lords amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Consequential amendment made to the Bill: (b), in page 107, line 37, at end insert—

'( ) In the case of a grant condition imposed on a landlord's common parts application any reference in subsection (2) above to the owner of the building is a reference to the applicant or any such successor in title as is referred to in section (*Condition requiring repayment of grant on certain disposals in case of landlord's common parts application*) (4) above.'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Lords amendments Nos. 217 to 255 agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Clause 87

CONDITIONS FOR DECLARATION OF RENEWAL AREA

Lords amendment: No. 129, in page 87, line 14, at end insert "or".

Mr. Chope: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 130 to 134.

Mr. Chope: These amendments are relatively minor. They are designed to amend definitions or to clarify the position of Crown properties and the powers of the Secretary of State in respect of the provisions in part VII.

Amendment No. 131 requires a local authority, having declared a renewal area, to ensure the provision of a service of information and advice on repairs or improvements. It has always been our intention that this sort of service should be provided in a renewal area. This amendment puts that intention beyond doubt.

Amendment No. 133 is also straightforward. It requires a local authority to keep the same sort of records as now when they receive a contribution from the Secretary of State towards expenditure incurred under this part of the Bill. This is a safeguard necessary for propriety and auditing purposes.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The Minister said that the amendments are minor, but they have major consequences for people living in substandard properties.

In 1986 the English house condition survey was carried out, and it was published by the Government last November. It shows beyond any doubt that there has been virtually no improvement to hard core poor housing in the five years since the previous survey.

The survey shows that 543,000 dwellings lack basic amenities, that 1,053,000 are unfit, and that 1,113,000 are in serious disrepair. It is also important to reveal that the report contains a new class of dwellings—those in poor condition. They are defined as dwellings lacking one or more basic amenities, all unfit dwellings, and those needing urgent repair to the external fabric where the cost is estimated at £1,000 or more. Altogether, 2·8 million dwellings were in poor condition and of those 2·4 million were in poor repair. Those outlines are published in the condition of housing in England section of the report.

The survey shows that 463,000 dwellings, which is 2·5 per cent. of the stock, lack basic amenities. One third of those were vacant at the time of the survey and 42 per cent. were in the private rented sector and in very poor condition. That shows what the future holds if the Government persist in passing properties from the public to the private rented sector. It appears that the Government are set on a course of putting more properties from the public sector into the private sector, even though the report shows that the private sector does nothing to enhance the condition of properties.

We have been told about empty properties and fingers were pointed at those owned by councils. The report reveals beyond any doubt that the largest number of unoccupied dwellings at the time of the survey belonged to the private rented sector. The Government should take note of that. It is unfair to criticise local authorities because the report reveals that only 11 per cent. of local authority houses were in poor condition. It is totally unfair to criticise local authorities when the private sector is the culprit responsible for keeping empty and unfit dwellings.

Mr. Allen McKay: Does my hon. Friend agree that because of recent Government actions local authorities are finding it difficult to give grants to people who need them and that slum clearance programmes are being held back? Those two matters are building up problems for the next 20 or 30 years.

Mr. O'Brien: My colleague has touched on a point that I want to make about the resources that are necessary if houses in a poor or sub-standard condition are to be brought back into service. He is right to say that, because of the reduction in HIP allocation, houses are falling into disrepair. Basic amenities cannot be provided by the local authorities or by grants to the private sector and owner-occupiers because of the cuts in grants.

The report says that the proportion of housing in poor condition was higher in the north-west, the west midlands, Yorkshire, Humberside and the south-west than in any of the regions.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is dealing with what the Minister described as only minor amendments, but which my hon. Friend is showing are a factor in the housing crisis. The assembly of all these Cabinet Ministers and more junior Ministers on the Front Bench tells me that, now they have found the Leader of the House and dragged him in here, they are going to stop the business short. I know that my hon. Friend has some valuable points to make, so I give him the nod and the wink that he should make them in the next few minutes, because the debate will be stopped.

Mr. O'Brien: My hon. Friend's experience is showing. The array of Ministers on the Front Bench makes it obvious that my hon. Friend has made a good point. We shall see whether his tip is correct.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Where is the array of talent on the Opposition Front Benches?

Mr. O'Brien: They have gone for some refreshment, because we are going to stay here for quite a long while, if it is all right with the Leader of the House.

No one can deny the urgent need for significant increases in the level of public and private investment in the nation's housing stock. The Government's proposals in the Bill do little to encourage, and more to restrict, investment. The Association of District Councils, which is not a Labour-controlled body, published a report on 30 October which deals with the properties referred to in this part of the Bill. The title of the report is "A Time to Take Stock." It says that one in seven houses in England and Wales are in need of repair, and the bill for those repairs has rocketed to its current estimate of £36 billion. The ADC urges the Government to help to meet the bill by making more public money available to repair both private and council homes. Tory councillors are urging the Government to make money available so that houses can be repaired to a satisfactory condition, so that they can be occupied, which would help to reduce the waiting lists, and meet the needs of the homeless.

Two councillors who are members of the ADC, Lady Elizabeth Anson, and the chairman of the housing committee, Graham Facks-Martin, both appealed to the Government to make resources available because of the drastic shortage of money to improve properties. Page 17 of the report refers to a survey that finds that poor housing is occupied overwhelmingly by people on low incomes who are unable to contribute to the improvement of their properties.

11 pm

Poor stock condition is often regarded as primarily an urban problem, but the report says that, while there is a problem in urban areas, 22 per cent. of housing in rural areas is in poor condition whereas 14 per cent. of urban housing is in poor condition. Conservative Members should consider the report carefully as there is a need for more resources to improve dwellings, more so in rural than in urban areas.

The relationship between poor repair, unfitness and lack of basic amenities in rural and urban housing is only partly explained by a higher proportion of older properties being in rural areas. Almost 40 per cent. of the rural stock was built before 1919, compared with 25 per cent. of urban stock, but some 41 per cent. of pre-1919 dwellings in rural areas are in very poor condition, compared with 33 per cent. in urban areas.

In rural areas, 48 per cent. of dwellings in the private rented sector are in poor condition, compared with 40 per cent. in urban areas. That can be explained by the higher incidence of private renting in rural areas such as East Anglia and the south-west. These statistics speak volumes about the public sector's ability to provide the right facilities in rural and urban areas.

The report says that the worst area is the north-west and that the second worst is Yorkshire and Humberside —the area that I and some of my hon. Friends represent. We have made numerous requests of the Government for additional resources to be made available to local authorities to allow repairs to be made in the private and the public sector. The issues raised by these amendments may be minor to the Minister, but they are major to people in the north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside.

The survey shows that, without additional resources with which to make improvements, the condition of properties, whether owner-occupied or rented in the private sector or the public sector, will deteriorate. I am pleased that the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Leader of the House and the Government Chief Whip are here, as it is most important that we have this matter on notice. Their political colleagues in the ADC are saying that, without additional resources, the condition of properties throughout the country will get worse. I hope that they will note this serious issue.

[Mr. O'Brien]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the debate be now adjourned.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): This is a debatable motion and we should not let it pass as if it were merely a matter of procedure. I suspect that the Government have in mind a change in the business, and that they intend tomorrow to announce guillotine motions on the Local Government and Housing Bill and the Employment Bill. The Opposition are willing to continue debating the Bill. It is 11.5 pm, but that fact should not curtail the debate. There should be strong opposition to the notion that the Government can trample on the rights of Parliament by introducing a guillotine motion on the Employment Bill when the Lords amendments to it have not yet been discussed in this place. Even if the debate on that Bill went all through tomorrow night, that would not justify a guillotine motion.

I suggest that the Government are moving progress on the Local Government and Housing Bill so that they can introduce a guillotine motion on the Employment Bill. It is most unreasonable of them to move progress at this stage and to use their seedy majority to impose two guillotine motions upon the House. That is why the Leader of the House is in his place. Apparently the Government have been scouring the House looking for the right hon. and learned Gentleman. They were intent on getting him into the Chamber with a business statement. Even worse, he might repeat the trick of moving that the House should make progress and linking a business statement with that motion, which would prevent us from questioning the business statement. That manoeuvre broke a convention of the House.

The Government are using their majority to introduce a guillotine motion on the consideration of a Bill when the Lords amendments to it have not yet been debated in this place, and using their power to deny the Opposition the right to question their business statement. I hope that the fact that a junior junior Whip has had the effrontery to move progress is a sign that the Leader of the House intends to make a proper business statement that we can question.

Mr. Skinner: The Government's action is even worse than my hon. Friend suggests because for the past 80-odd hours a group of young men and women organised by Shelter have been taking part in a vigil in Abingdon gardens opposite Downing street, protesting against the housing shortage caused primarily by the Government's policies over the past 10 years and against the cardboard society that the Government have created. The Government will move their guillotine motion tomorrow at about the same time as these young people complete the 100 hours of their vigil. That will be the duration of the vigil, and that will be the Government's response to the young men and women who are trying to draw attention to the plight of the homeless. The Government do not care about the homeless. They now intend to introduce a guillotine motion to stop the debate——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman sought to catch my eye, I would call him to make a speech. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has the floor.

Mr. Skinner: One of the reasons why some of us are reluctant——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows well that an intervention is a pertinent comment or a question. If he seeks to catch my eye, I shall be pleased to call him. At the moment, I have called the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You have said that if an hon. Member catches your eye, you will call him. I have to tell you that the chance of anyone being called is fairly remote. Not too many minutes ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) was making his speech, but in the middle of it he was stopped by the Government Whip. It is all right for you to say that we will be called, but there is not much chance of that. This is gagging and censorship.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) makes an important point. This is a deliberate attempt at gagging and censorship. My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) was making an excellent speech about the standards of housing, but the Minister will not have the opportunity to reply. My hon. Friend made wide-ranging comments about the low quality of housing in many urban areas—cities such as Bradford, where there is need for a great investment in the housing stock.

The Secretary of State visited Bradford and spoke to the Tory group's annual meeting. He tries to put on a cloak of greenery, but I must tell him that the Tory council in Bradford is attempting to push back and destroy the green belt. I hope that he will use his powers to stop the council because already there is not enough green land in Bradford. It will be a test both for the right hon. Gentleman and his pretensions and for the Tory council and its pretensions.

I shall now return to the motion. I will not be distracted by the right hon. Gentleman and his pretensions of being concerned about the environment. We know that it is not true. The aim of the motion is to prevent the House debating an important Bill. There are many hours ahead of us, and many of us are well practised and well versed in raising issues throughout the night and into the early hours of the morning. There is no reason why we should not spend another five, six, seven or eight hours debating the Bill, without even intruding on the Government's business for tomorrow.

I could have understood the Government putting forward a motion of this kind at 7 am, when there had been many hours of debate, but that is not what they are doing. This is a deliberate attempt to block debate. Their followers are disgruntled and the Government do not like it when the Opposition have the opportunity to take the initiative. They are using their majority to trample on the Opposition and to take away our right to debate this important and basic piece of legislation. The fact that the majority of Conservative Members have rushed here to vote for the Government shows how little they care about the provision of housing.

Mr. Battle: Perhaps Conservative Members are here under duress. I have sat through the whole of the debate and not one of them has spoken, other than a Minister. They are not interested in the Bill, but they are being forced reluctantly to support it.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend has a point. The Minister complained that half a dozen Opposition Members had spoken, but that no Conservative Member had done so. The Opposition are concerned about the issues. We have made a number of interventions and comments because we represent the areas of deprivation, not the lush green stockbroker belt and the City spivs so amply represented on the Tory Benches. They do not care about the issues. They do not care about giving the Opposition an opportunity to put forward their points of view. That is why some of us bitterly resent this way of curtailing debate and of preventing the Opposition from properly airing their views.

There has been no attempt to extend the debate. I will not use the word filibuster because filibusters never take place in the House of Commons. There is no question but that every speech made here tonight has been to the point and, in many cases, an expression of heartfelt concern about the deteriorating provision of housing under the Tories. The Government cannot claim that the debate has been extended.

11.15 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I listened to my hon. Friend only a week ago speaking on the same issue of cutting time on major debates on major Bills. The Government cut the time available for debate on the Children Bill and left us with only three hours to debate 441 Government amendments which were crucial to the Bill. On one in particular, concerning the emotive issue of grandparents' rights, it was essential for us to have more time for debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am well aware of the hon. Gentleman's great concern on that issue, but it is not relevant to the motion.

Mr. Cryer: You are absolutely right, Madam Deputy Speaker. But the Government's motion has precedents which have resulted in the curtailment of debate on, as my hon. Friend has pointed out, the Children Bill and the Companies Bill.

The Government have overloaded Parliament with a huge amount of legislation. The Water Bill, which is being advertised in some tasteless, expensive and generally objectionable advertisements, was a huge volume of legislation. The Electricity Bill has landed in a morass because the electricity industry is so difficult to privatise because of its nature and complexity and the way in which the expensive Magnox reactors have had to be excluded. As a result of overloading Parliament and the Standing Committees, the Government are now in deep trouble. The only way in which they can meet their date for the Queen's Speech is by introducing guillotine motions.

If the Government behaved sensibly, obeyed democratic principles and gave the Opposition the right to put forward constructive amendments they would have to postpone the Queen's Speech. In some instances the Opposition reject a Bill outright, but we try, in a constructive and positive way, to improve legislation, and that is what we have done with the Local Government and Housing Bill. It is difficult because it is such a nasty piece of legislation in general. We can only put forward amendments which attempt to relieve the oppression inherent in the principles behind the Bill. We have tried to do that, but the Government are sweeping all that to one side on the basis that if the Queen's Speech does not take place on the day that has been announced, they will be announcing to the world that they are in a mess. I understand that the Queen has a visit abroad, so any delay would be inconvenient.

Mr. Skinner: It is worse than that. Parliament is due to be televised, so they would have to run some old films.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend, as ever, makes a relevant point.

An announcement would have to be made to the public at large that the Government were in a mess, and that is the truth of the matter—they are in a mess because they have overloaded the House with business. If questioned, some of the House's administrators will readily admit that the Government are now introducing so many huge chunks of primary legislation, that legislation is so complex and the House is given so little time to shape it adequately that they are depending increasingly on delegated powers. That is a very bad principle.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend talks of the complexity of legislation. He should remind the House that, as a result of the Government's failure to understand the Children Bill, the Companies Bill or this Bill, they have been lumbered with several hundred amendments on each—many more than is normal practice.

My hon. Friend has said that the Government intend to move a timetable motion tomorrow, coupling this Bill with the Employment Bill, which has not been debated since we returned to deal with the overspill of legislation after the summer recess. I wonder whether that breaks with convention, and whether it is a matter for Mr. Speaker to investigate.

Mr. Cryer: I mentioned that at the outset. I consider it a matter of grave concern that the Government intend to link the two Bills. That is why the Leader of the House is present—he will have to make a business statement. This is probably unprecedented, and is linked to the motion, which has been moved to allow such a statement.

Mr. Soley: As I pointed out the other day in a point of order, 606 amendments do not merely constitute a record for the past 50 or 100 years but probably constitute an all-time record in the history of the House. More importantly, as a result, we have been trying to deal with a Committee stage on the Floor of the House without the normal safeguards. As I pointed out yesterday, if it had been taken on the Floor in the normal way there would have been a vote, and a procedure to follow.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There were more than 400 amendments to the Children Bill, which was a consensus measure. It could be argued—and the Government did argue—that that was because of their response to changes made in Committee, but a considerable proportion of the amendments were due to Government decisions to make changes.

More than 1,000 amendments were tabled to the Companies Bill—an extraordinary number. In a point of order yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) pointed out that that made things extremely difficult for the Opposition, who are assisted by a very limited number of people compared with the army of civil servants on whom the Government can call. Not only do the Opposition have to deal with amendments at very short notice—I understand that the

[Mr. Cryer]

amendments were not available until Monday this week —but we have to look through all of them and marshal our arguments with very limited assistance. The Opposition had to deal with 2,000 amendments on those three Bills, all of which have been subject to the guillotine. The Government are using the House as a rubber stamp. The guillotine leads to the forcing through of amendments without examination by the House.

Mr. Skinner: I should like to put the head of the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) under that guillotine.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

By forcing through without examination such a large number of amendments the Government are saying something else—that the definition of legislation is not to be left to the House. There is merit in examining a Bill in detail. There is merit in a Standing Committee examining a Bill clause by clause. Since then, however, the Government have tabled a flood of new amendments—with the result, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith said, that the Committee stage was wasted.

The unfortunate truth is that the Bill will have to be defined when it leaves this place. It is sloppy in a number of areas. Government drafting is frequently sloppy. There will be no scrutiny here because of the guillotine which will result from the business statement. Where will decisions be made? They will be made in the courts. Whenever there is ambiguity, shoddiness or sloppiness in the legislation and a dispute arises, inevitably it will have to be settled in the courts.

The business statement will lead to examination of the Bill being curtailed. Individuals will be unable to afford to go to court if there is a dispute. It will be too expensive for them. Only the local authorities will be able to do that. No wonder the Minister for Housing and Planning, the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), is smiling. He is a lawyer. He is smiling with the sort of contemplative preen that comes to lawyers when they know that legislation is defective and they can see all those refreshers looming up and cash tills registering as a result of the pages of controversial amendments that the Government have tabled. No hon. Member can examine them because they are all subject to the guillotine. There are days and days of sunny pastures ahead in the courts —and all the other days when the lawyers will be counting up the fees that they will get out of local authorities, which almost certainly will have to go to court to obtain definitions of the guillotined amendments.

The House should try to ensure to the best of its ability that the legislation is well defined. Sometimes we fail, but we are not even being given the opportunity to try. The purpose of the guillotine is deliberately to ensure that the House cannot scrutinise the Bill.

The Opposition's political function is to make clear to the public the defective nature of much of the legislation —for example, the water privatisation legislation, which is another huge chunk of legislation that has got the Government into such a mess. The crooked nature of selling off assets which belong to the people is shown by the Government's spurious argument that people will have a choice if they buy shares in the water industry. That is an example of legislation which is causing an enormous mess. We oppose that on political grounds, but because of the complexity of the legislation, the Opposition have a duty to make legislation as clear as possible, so that the citizenry are not oppressed by legislation which has to be clarified in the courts, often with Tory judges and Tory lawyers lining their pockets as fast as they can.

11.30 pm

Mr. Battle: Perhaps it is a salutary reminder that the last time we considered a housing Bill with a large number of amendments it was guillotined so we were not able to point out the impact of the great heralded proposal for housing action trusts, which were going to be the saviours of areas that needed housing investment, at the expense of local authorities. As a result, local authorities and tenants have been put to a great deal of trouble for nearly two years while they were warmed up to the proposals, which the Government will not carry out because they realised the folly of the proposals in the Bill that was rushed through the House.

Mr. Cryer: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for an excellent and pointed illustration of the difficulties that rushing legislation through causes to ordinary citizens. We legislate not for ourselves but for people at large.

Tonight, my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton raised some useful points about the standard of housing. He pointed out that, among other areas, the lowest standards of housing are in Yorkshire and Humberside, the area that he and I represent. I did not speak in the debate, because I was hoping that the Minister would reply at some length. My attitude was conditioned by the fact that the Minister was very upset when six or seven Labour Members raised points about earlier sections of the Bill. The Minister did not once give way, because he said that he had many points to answer. I thought that I would give the Minister the opportunity of holding forth with only our Front Bench spokesman outlining the position extremely competently and in detail, but as soon as the Minister got up the Government moved progress.

I can understand that, given the Minister's speech. He got himself into a mess. He did not take interventions because clearly he did not know the policy he was pursuing. It may well be that the Leader of the House came in and said, "Christ, it's Chope," or words to that effect, and told the Whip, "Get that motion for progress moved as fast as you can." So he strode towards the Dispatch Box and the Whip leapt in and stopped another calamity. That would explain it.

However, we are entitled to make a judgment. If the Under-Secretary of State, or whatever he is now—I am never quite sure about the moves that take place in Tory circles these days—was about to make a speech, we were entitled to make a judgment on it, and the Whips should not interfere. After all, the Minister might have read out the defensive briefing that the civil servants had prepared for him. We should be entitled to hear that. It is quite wrong for the Government Whip to stop the House hearing what the Minister has to say, because it is put on record. We often use the information in *Hansard* to clarify the position. Yet the House is denied that by the Whips' interference.

A number of important points have been made tonight, and I know that a number of my hon. Friends are very keen to speak on this matter, because they feel as aggrieved as I do at the piratical nature of the Government. Many of us have criticisms of this place and recognise that there could be improvement. None the less, in general elections, about 70 per cent. to 80 per cent. of people on the electoral register turn out and vote because they believe that this place represents some sort of democratic endeavour. The Government Whip moved the motion because the Government are running out of patience with democracy—not that they had much—and they are prepared to trample on it.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. One of his jobs is to clear up the mess after the Lord Mayor's parade. The result of guillotined legislation is that the orders that come before the House must be dealt with by my hon. Friend later on in Committee. Can he envisage the extent to which the legislation of this week, last week, and probably next week will be guillotined and will cause difficulties for the Joint Statutory Instruments Committee?

Mr. Cryer: I would like to spend a moment or two speculating on that point. Now that my hon. Friend reminds me, I raised this very point when the Government Whip moved the closure during my speech on the Children Bill. I received several understanding and sympathetic comments. Many hon. Members were interested in the points I was about to make. Inevitably, if this motion is passed, and if, as one supposes, the Leader of the House is to move a change of business—that is presumably why he is still hanging round—two Bills will be guillotined. Hon. Members have plenty of time in which to debate this issue. This debate is open-ended, so hon. Members can continue to speak for some time, unless the perfidious Tory Whips move another motion.

The difficulty is that the legislation will not be properly examined, and therefore problems will arise. I mentioned earlier that one of the sad reflections on the Government's legislative programme is that they are handing over too much power to Ministers. They are seeking to fill the gaps by handing delegated powers to Ministers so that they can produce a great number of statutory instruments. Because I was interested in this subject as Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and of the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments, I looked at the figures relating to the production of statutory instruments. After a hesitant start in 1979, the number has increased virtually every year. This Government were to take legislation off the backs of the people, but they are producing more ministerial orders than the 1974-79 Labour Government about whom they bitterly complain. If that is a consequence of the motion, the facilities for dealing with delegated legislation on the scale that has arisen in the Government's legislative programme are totally inadequate.

On one day before the last recess, there were 15 statutory instruments, three of which were reported to the House by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, because they were in varying degrees ultra vires, badly drafted or ambiguous, or because the Minister made an unusual use of power. There was no time for a proper debate, because so many statutory instruments were involved.

That is an illustration of the way in which time is soaked up by Ministers using their powers in primary legislation. They do not give the House adequate time in the first instance, so that the House can deal with legislation instead of saying, "Here are some powers. The Minister can virtually produce whatever statutory instruments he wants." Before such a principle is adopted on any wider bases, the House must consider the procedure for the scrutiny and examination of statutory instruments. That is not involved in the business motion, and is therefore one reason why I oppose it.

Suppose the Whips had said, "We should finish the debate on the Bill, but we will come back to the House with a whole programme for changing the nature of legislation in this House. We're not going to have detailed debate and discussion; we're going to have regular guillotines. We're fed up with dealing with amendments and with staying here after tea-time. We want to get home, get to the City or go to see our stockbrokers for advice, because if we don't, we get into difficulties—and at the same time, because we're going to extend delegated powers, we'll have a whole new look at the scrutiny." If they had said that, we could have formed a different judgment; we would have had to have an entirely different scale of values. But they did not say that, so I feel that I must oppose the motion——

Mr. Skinner: The first point that I want to make quickly is that Ministers do not see stockbrokers very often. That is a principle. Stockbrokers can just get rid of about £50,000 and not tell anybody about it until about 12 months later. I know that it sounds strange, but apparently that is the rule.

On the question of changing the system, is my hon. Friend putting forward the view—I should like to hear his views on this because people change their minds about legislation—that it would be better to guillotine Bills before they start on this merry road—or what?

Mr. Cryer: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. What he said about stockbrokers worries me a little, because it suggests that the lack of communication between Ministers and stockbrokers is spreading to Parliament. What they want to do is to——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have given the hon. Gentleman a lot of rope this evening. I hope that he will not hang himself.

Mr. Cryer: I am certainly not going down that road, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was simply saying that cutting the debate and moving this business motion prevents a proper exchange of views—and that seems to be present elsewhere—between Ministers and stockbrokers. But I will not repeat that view any more, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I can see that it would not be a fruitful course of action.

Mr. Skinner: Why not guillotine stockbrokers?

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover asked about delegated legislation and about whether a Bill should be guillotined from the beginning. He suggested that the business motion might be linked to that sort of idea. We cannot change the rules in mid-stream. It would be exceedingly wrong, and a major and radical change for Parliament to undertake. We cannot do that at this stage, which is why, since we have an existing system of dealing with Bills—on Second Reading, in Committee, on Report, on Third Reading, in the Lords and during our consideration of Lords amendments—we must maintain that system, but for it to work we must give legislation

[Mr. Cryer]

adequate time on the Floor of the House. That is why it is an outrage for the Government to try to curtail matters in this way.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend and I have complained in the House about the manner in which the Bill is moving towards the statute book. Is my hon. Friend aware that we have had a Committee stage on Report, with large numbers of Government amendments, and then a further Committee stage during our consideration of Lords amendments? It is a crazy way to put legislation together. It is clear that Ministers do not know what they wanted to try to achieve, the Bill was so badly drafted.

As a consequence of this inefficient manner of dealing with legislation, there will be all sorts of problems in the future for local government. Therefore, we must insist that the Government carry on debating the Bill tonight, because we need to ensure as best we possibly can that what goes on to the statute book is at least explicable to those who will have to try to implement it in local government.

Mr. Cryer: I spoke earlier about the effect of shoddy legislation and measures passed in haste. Although we have spent many hours debating the Bill, it is now largely a different measure from that which we originally discussed. After all, 600 amendments tabled at this stage must result in ambiguities and difficulties.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Six hundred and fifty.

11.45 pm

Mr. Cryer: The number is increasing all the time. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith said at the outset this afternoon, the complexities of the Bill are such that we need more, not less, time to debate it. I fear that, because the Government are not making concessions and because the debate is being restricted, certain provisions in the measure will end up being tested in the courts. Consider the *Private Eye* libel case, in which the costs have been over £300,000—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that does not apply to the motion that is before the House.

Mr. Cryer: The fact that the debate is being curtailed will mean that the law will not be drafted as well as it might have been.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend is making important points and we are listening to him with interest. Shall we be able to continue the debate once he resumes his seat? I fear that at that stage the Leader of the House will move the closure. Are we to be restricted even from debating the motion?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Cryer.

Mr. Cryer: Curtailing the debate will lead to confused legislation, and that will be bad legislation. I was giving an idea of the scale of costs that might be incurred in clarifying the Bill in court, and I mentioned by way of example the fact that in the *Private Eye* case the costs had amounted to nearly £350,000. Imagine how many houses a local authority could build for that money, or perhaps £500,000 if the issue were taken to the House of Lords on appeal. On the other hand, one wonders how the lawyers have the nerve to ask for such huge sums.

When one hears some of the lawyers in this place, one wonders who on earth would pay them, at any price, for some of the comments that they make.

Mr. Skinner: A theory advanced by a few people is that, rather than have legislation go through in its normal slap-happy way and rather than finish up with lawyers making vast sums in court, there should be in an ideal situation a revising committee in the House. That committee would be made up of lawyers, and they would tidy up the legislation while working as Members of Parliament. They would be unable to work in the courts or make any money from the Yorkshire Ripper case or the *Private Eye* case. They would be slogging away in the House. They could start at 10 am, although if the House started earlier we could get them started at 8 am. That committee could deal with all the complicated legislation and possible Government amendments while we dealt with Question Time in front of the cameras.

Mr. Cryer: I must warn my hon. Friend that when he murmured about the abolition of fees and lawyers doing work without any remuneration, the Leader of the House woke up. Obviously that suggestion came as a great shock to him. We should proceed carefully on this matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was right to mention the courts, as the cost of going to court is not inconsiderable. As the Bill concerns local government and housing, it is clear that such costs will fall largely on local authorities. Those authorities are already badly strapped for cash. It is unfair that, as a result of the business motion, the potential implication is that local authorities will be forced to find large sums of money to finance actions to gain clarity on the Bill.

There is a great deal of argument over the proposed salary increase for hon. Members to be effective from January.

Mr. Skinner: No increase for ambulance crews.

Mr. Cryer: Indeed. Hon. Members are not badly paid; most of them get more than most of their constituents. If hon. Members are willing to stay here to examine legislation to try to make it clear and free from the festering examination of lawyers, we should stay here to do just that—that is what we are paid to do. The Government are denying us that opportunity by moving the closure.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend is right to say that we should give these important matters detailed examination. I hope that he appreciates that we are talking about 152 pages of amendments. Some people outside might think that we are talking about the odd word or so and minor matters, but some of the amendments are several pages long. We need considerable time to discuss those matters in detail.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*—

Mr. Cryer: I shall deal first with the important point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) before I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for the Back Benches.

My hon. Friend for Burnley is right. No doubt the Government would argue outside that they moved the motion to curtail the debate because the amendments, although in their hundreds, were technical and minor.

Perhaps an amendment deletes "may" and inserts "shall", but such a change would represent a major change of policy rather than a minor amendment. That argument would not wash with hon. Members.

My hon. Friend is also right to argue that some of those amendments do not simply delete one word and insert another, but are several pages long. The Government have put down a sufficient number of amendments to constitute a book full of amendments. Those amendments constitute a greater amount of wordage than in many Bills. The Government are denying us the right to discuss amendments in detail, but those amendments constitute more words than we see in many of the Bills put before us.

I cannot imagine a better illustration of the way in which the Government are trampling on the democratic rights of this House. They are trying to oppress us by denying us the opportunity to speak out. If the Government Chief Whip wants to intervene and tell us that the Government want to withdraw the business motion, I will be happy to give way. However, the Government are more intent on curtailing democratic rights than on entering into any spirit of understanding with a constructive Opposition.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): My hon. Friend referred to the Government trampling on the democratic rights of Parliament. Does he believe that we could learn from what has happened in East Germany today, where I understand that the Cabinet has resigned and——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Interesting though that may be, it does not relate to this business motion.

Mr. Home Robertson: With respect, Madam Deputy Speaker——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have heard what the hon. Gentleman has to say. I found it very interesting, but he must relate his intervention to the motion before the House. If he can do that, I will hear him.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are dealing with the procedure before the House and the power of Parliament to control the actions of the Government. My interesting point is that in East Germany, apparently, the Parliament is to have an opportunity to elect the Cabinet. Would that not be useful in this country?

Mr. Cryer: That is a very interesting point. One of the reasons for Parliament is to give us an opportunity to control and scrutinise the Executive. When that opportunity is denied through the use of business motions of this kind, when the Opposition is run roughshod over because the Government have a majority of 100 or so, the message goes out to the people on the street that our democracy is crumbling. We have seen what can happen in those circumstances in other countries.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is my hon. Friend aware that we should have reached Lords amendment No. 266 and amendments (a) to (d) to that amendment tonight? That amendment deals with emergency planning, particularly in London. I was hoping to move some of those amendments, because we have no civil emergency planning in London. Surely that should concern this House from a personal as well as from a local, strategic point of view. Something disastrous might happen to the House of Commons tonight, but there is no co-ordinated emergency planning in London. Is my hon. Friend aware that London is the only capital city in Europe that does not have a co-ordinated—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a very convoluted intervention. The hon. Gentleman is a very skilled parliamentarian and I have no doubt that he can relate what he has to say to the motion before the House. Have another try—Mr. Tony Banks.

Mr. Banks: I have not had such a nice thing said about me since 1983, Madam Deputy Speaker. I love you dearly for what you have just said. I will treasure it in my heart for ever.

I was trying to explain that this motion will curtail a reasonable debate on a subject that is of prime importance to the capital city and therefore of some passing significance to the House. I want my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) to take that into account as he opposes this motion.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is particularly distressing that the Government should try to curtail debate on such an important issue. As I have an interest in a London constituency and am concerned about it, I would have urged the Government to accept the amendment, because one of the great cities in western Europe—indeed the greatest city—has no emergency planning——

Mr. Banks: In peacetime.

Mr. Cryer: Yes, the greatest city has no emergency planning in peacetime.

Mr. Winnick: It is appropriate that my hon. Friend should speak of the restrictions on parliamentary debate when it seems that the Leader of the House is going to restrict it even further by denying us the chance to debate this motion.

Does my hon. Friend consider it odd that the Prime Minister goes around boasting about the need for democracy and lecturing other countries on the subject while here at home there is no democracy in the Cabinet and there are severe restrictions on democracy in this place? When my hon. Friend sits down, the Leader of the House will try to stop us debating.

12 midnight

Mr. Cryer: That is a good point. I understand that the Government are going to try to move the closure.

Mr. Skinner: It is going to be a Cinderella job.

Mr. Cryer: I have heard that it will be done at 12——

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): The hon. Gentleman is to be the pumpkin.

Mr. Cryer: I hope that any attempt at a closure will be rejected. Many of my hon. Friends are anxious to join the debate.

Before my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) made his interesting point, I was talking about emergency planning in peacetime, which is the sort of matter that Parliament should discuss. I have already said that the Opposition have been prepared to put forward constructive and helpful amendments, but I have not yet touched on policy. My hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Cryer]

Newham, North-West could not have brought this important subject to the attention of the House in any other way. If I had not questioned this routine motion to adjourn further consideration, my hon. Friend would not have had the chance to point out that the Government are trying to deny us the right to debate emergency planning in the greatest city in the United Kingdom—a city of 14 million people.

I dare say there are more efficient and effective measures in Bradford than those available to the citizens of London. It is outrageous that this opportunity to discuss emergency planning in peacetime is being curtailed. It is interesting that, on the very day when, on one of his rare trips to the House, the Secretary of State for Transport spoke about a major railway disaster, this issue should have come up. Labour Members representing London boroughs would have dealt with the matter, but the chance to do so has been denied them——

Mr. Allen McKay: It was strange that the motion to adjourn consideration was moved when we were talking about aspects of rural areas. Coincidentally, the next group of amendments affect us all—they deal with the sale of old people's flats and bungalows without the possibility of their replacement—and that is serious.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend raises two important matters. There is a notion that the Labour party does not take a deep interest in rural areas, but this set of events gives the lie to that. The Government intervened to stop discussion of certain aspects of rural housing. We shall certainly get votes——

Mr. David Hunt: We are debating the motion that the debate be adjourned and I have not heard any arguments from the hon. Gentleman about why that motion should not be carried. There are 606 amendments before the House but 90 per cent. of them are technical and consequential. The amendments are in 22 groups of which we have managed to complete only two. It is clear that we have not made the progress that we had reasonably expected, and I strongly urge the hon. Gentleman to accept the motion and let us adjourn.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Tim Renton) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Winnick: I spy strangers.

Mr. Tony Banks *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is the second time on a point of order that I have found myself caught short when you have decided to take an interrupted motion. Do you not have any discretion at all in relation to an interrupted motion? My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was making a number of valid points in which the whole House was interested. Every hon. Member was listening with great attention. I would have thought that discretion could have been exercised. I know that you do not need to explain, and I am not asking you to explain, but could you tell me for the sake of the future whether you can exercise such discretion?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I must tell the hon. Gentleman and the entire House that the Chair certainly has discretion in these matters.

Mr. Winnick *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I moved that I spy strangers. Were you not willing to accept that motion?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Question had been put first. I must be honest with the hon. Gentleman: although he has a very good voice and I often hear him, on this occasion his voice was drowned by the voices of Conservative Members.

Mr. Pike *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I ask whether you have been given any indication by the Government that they intend to make a business statement following the Division? Alternatively, have they said when they intend to bring the business that we have been debating back to the Floor of the House?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Chair has not been told the Government's intentions in those matters.

The House having divided: Ayes 165, Noes 46.

Division No. 372] **[12.05 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Brazier, Julian
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael

Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Alton, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bradley, Keith
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Fearn, Ronald
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Golding, Mrs Llin
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lewis, Terry
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Wallace, James
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly:—

The House divided: Ayes 161, Noes 47.

Division No. 373] **[12.16 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Brazier, Julian
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Alton, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bradley, Keith
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Fearn, Ronald
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Golding, Mrs Llin
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Kennedy, Charles
Lewis, Terry
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Salmond, Alex.
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Wallace, James
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Debate to be resumed this day.

Notice being taken that Strangers were present, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of Strangers from the House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House divided: Ayes 0, Noes 151.

Division No. 374] **[12.27 am**

AYES

Nil

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Banks and
Mr. David Winnick.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Brazier, Julian
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clay, Bob
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Illsley, Eric
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Terry
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclean, David
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mans, Keith
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Paice, James
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pike, Peter L.
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Fallon and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Business of the House

12.38 am

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement about the rearranged business for tomorrow. It will be as follows:

WEDNESDAY 8 NOVEMBER—Timetable motion on the Local Government and Housing Bill and the Employment Bill, followed by completion of consideration of Lords amendments to the Local Government and Housing Bill and consideration of Lords amendments to the Employment Bill.

The rest of the week's business will be as already announced.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Is the Leader of the House aware that his statement is totally unacceptable to the Opposition? I do not believe that the Leader of the House, who left his previous high office in a shambles after the Government reorganisation—*[Interruption.]* I do not mean that the right hon. and learned Gentleman left the Foreign Office in a shambles. I mean that the reorganisation of the Government was a shambles and that his removal from his previous office was a shambles, not his conduct of foreign affairs. Could he, however, have envisaged the business shambles for which he was about to become responsible?

The Bill has been before the House for 10 months—since February of this year. We are still considering it because the Government have tabled more than 600 amendments at this late stage in the proceedings. There has been no Opposition filibuster—neither in Committee nor in another place, where Opposition amendments were accepted by the Government. This state of affairs exists solely because Ministers have tabled more than 600 amendments and in effect are trying to enact a replay of the Committee stage on the Floor of the House.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has already created a record during his short tenure of office as Leader of the House. In a few short weeks he has already had to move four guillotine motions. It is an unenviable record for him to have to defend. Not only is the Prime Minister's conduct of government demeaning government in Britain, but the conduct of the Government's business in this House is demeaning the reputation of Parliament.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Seldom can anyone have heard a more war-weary and less convincing presentation of a case than the one that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has just given. The Bill has been considered for a total of 210 hours. The amendments that were under consideration both yesterday and today were, as to 90 per cent. or more of them, technical and capable of very expeditious consideration. The crucial point is that yesterday 317 amendments were disposed of entirely as foreseen through the usual channels, whereas today, for some unexplained and unacceptable reason, there has been no comparable progress. In the face of that, it was absolutely right that the Government should take this step.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I thank the Leader of the House for giving notice that he proposed to make a business statement. As a distinguished lawyer, I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman must have considerable reservations about the fact that many of the amendments were introduced at a very late stage in the other place and were not sufficiently scrutinised through lack of time. They are now being scrutinised here without adequate time for debate. Does not the Leader of the House hanker after the days when the Conservative party believed in lightening the legislative load?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The central point is that well over 300 amendments were dealt with yesterday in perfectly good order. Had there been comparable progress today, there would have been no problem; but there has not been comparable progress today.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Has the Leader of the House considered the implications of his business statement on the discussion of Scottish business? There are important amendments to the Bill that affect Scotland and will receive inadequate consideration because of the guillotine motion. A further guillotine motion is poised over the Scottish education legislation next Monday. We are entitled to ask whether the Government are prepared to allow any discussion of Scottish business in this Chamber.

Has not the Leader of the House something of a brass neck to come to the House and announce the curtailment of the discussion of Scottish business when there is not one Scottish Conservative Member in the Chamber to hear him—*[Interruption.]*—with the sole exception of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton)—and occasionally we are not quite sure whether he is with us?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman has some difficulty in espying my hon. Friend at this time of night, but he is here, alert and watchful as ever. The Government will ensure that the interests of Scotland are well and effectively looked after.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Instead of introducing the guillotine motion tomorrow, would it not be a better idea for the Leader of the House to call upon the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement about the ambulance crews and the introduction of the Army——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I do not see how this relates to the statement by the Leader of the House.

Mr. Skinner: Whenever a business statement is made, it is right and proper for hon. Members on either side to call for other statements instead of the statement that he has made. That is the practice in the House.

The Leader of the House should call upon the Secretary of State for Health to make a further statement about the ambulance crews and the Army being brought in, in view of the continuing controversy. It has now been revealed that the negotiations on the trade union side——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. These matters do not arise out of the statement.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Cryer.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Leader of the House accept that since he has been Leader of the House he has made more business statements after

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

midnight than before midnight? Does he further accept that we condemn such trampling on parliamentary rights? Will he ensure that tomorrow the Secretary of State for Education and Science makes a statement to the House on capital expenditure on schools which is——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman just heard me say that questions must be related to the statement and not to other matters.

Mr. Cryer: It is related. Before this change of business is implemented tomorrow, I want a statement from the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Children in my constituency of Bradford, South are being sent home because of the lousy Tory council in Bradford not spending enough money on schools. The children in my constituency deserve better than that from this rotten Government.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Even the hon. Gentleman is surely subject to the rule of courtesy that I want does not get.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that if there are to be restrictions on debate when there is no question of filibustering—*[Interruption.]* The Conservative Members who are shouting were not present during the debate. Is the Leader of the House aware that if such restriction of parliamentary rights and privileges continues Back Benchers will fight it with every conceivable parliamentary device to ensure that our voices are heard? After the Leader of the House announced the procedural motion tonight was one illustration of that.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If the hon. Gentleman reflects upon the swift progress that was made yesterday and the non-progress that was made tonight, he will see that there is no foundation for his threat.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Before I ask a question of the Leader of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you say whether Conservative Members' claim that there has been a filibuster—if that is their accusation—is a criticism of whoever was in the Chair at the time?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair will judge whether any speeches or statements in the House are in or out of order.

Mr. Banks: I remind the Leader of the House that, when I congratulated him on becoming Leader of the House, I said that in his new position he would find life far more convivial than he did when travelling around the world with the Prime Minister, being feted and drinking gin and tonics. He sees exactly how interesting the times in which he lives are when he proposes guillotine motions.

I advise the Leader of the House that 650 amendments are far too many for hon. Members seriously to consider in the constricted timespan that he is now to give us. Why could not hon. Members be allowed to continue discussing the amendments in a measured way through the night and into the next day? We are quite prepared to do so. What is the right hon. and learned Gentleman afraid of? Can he not muster his troops to put forward a reasonable argument on the Government's amendments?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman knows that our troops are mustered and ready to uphold the Government in all these matters. There is no realistic prospect of measured consideration of the kind that the hon. Gentleman talks about. There was measured, sensible consideration on the previous day. There has not been any this evening.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Is the Leader of the House aware that I have now completely lost faith in him? Last Thursday, I suggested that he should watch the Government Chief Whip. He has now joined in the right hon. Gentleman's activities. Is it any wonder that the opinion polls are in our favour? People can see the mess that the Government are in. I suggest that the right hon. and learned Gentleman should go to No. 10 tomorrow and resign.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The whole House will want to reflect upon the hon. Gentleman's gentle ruminations, but the Government will continue to prevail upon the support of the people of this country.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Will the Leader of the House explain how on earth the House will be able to give adequate attention to Lords amendment No. 277 to the Local Government and Housing Bill, which deals with housing action trusts?

The Minister for Housing and Planning, the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), went to Sunderland on Monday to discuss housing action trusts, and then issued a press release which appears to claim that he has caved in to a Labour council on that matter. Other local authorities threatened with housing action trusts will want to know what the amendment is about, what its implications are for them, and exactly what deal the Minister has struck with my local authority. How are hon. Members to debate that matter in the pathetic amount of time that the Government have allocated, if that amendment is ever reached?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: A great deal of time could have been devoted to it tonight had there not been so much time spent on dilatory matters. As it is, we shall have to see how much time is available tomorrow.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): As the Leader of the House is not prepared to go along with any other suggestions, and as he referred more than once to Monday's proceedings, saying that he was happy with the progress that was made, will he guarantee that he will provide similar time tomorrow as was available on Monday so that all the issues may be debated?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House will have to recognise that it is a question to which a large amount of time has been devoted today, including the extended discussions that we are having at this late hour. One must take full account of that.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Why is the Employment Bill being caught up in this procedural mess? It is a hideous Bill, but in terms of procedure, it went readily through Committee, readily through the Lords and readily through the rest of its proceedings in this House. There have been no previous problems with it, but it is now being curtailed because of the procedures affecting other measures. We are not being given a proper chance to look at the Lords amendments to the Employment Bill.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It has not been caught up in any kind of procedural mess whatsoever. It is important—and recognised by hon. Members of all parties to be important—that we should try to preserve the rest of this week's business, including the debate fixed for Thursday on parliamentary pensions. I am anxious to achieve that, as well as this.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The Leader of the House has started 8 November with an unscheduled statement to the House. He has announced that the House is to have a substantial additional workload during the coming day, or tomorrow, or whatever it is. Does he anticipate that either he or any other Minister will want to make any other statements on any other difficulties that the Government may stumble into during the next 12 hours or so in tomorrow's business, or today's business, or whatever it is?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Let us see how we get on with tomorrow's business when it comes.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The Leader of the House has made several suggestions about a filibuster tonight and has referred to yesterday's business and to today's business. I suggest two things. First, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has not looked at what yesterday's business was and why it went through. The contentious items were, in fact, on today's business. Secondly, I refer to the fact that yesterday, through the usual channels, the voting pattern was decided, yet there have not been any consultations through the usual channels today on that. If there had been, we could have told the Leader of the House when we would vote.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman should know that there has been consultation through the usual channels and that the original layout of business in the two days provided was in accordance with matters discussed through the usual channels, and it is that which has not been fulfilled.

PETITION

TUITION FEES AND LOANS

12.57 am

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of Mr. Robert Bertram, the president of the University of Liverpool Guild of Undergraduates, other officers of the union and 1,562 petitioners who are students in Liverpool.

I share the concern and determined opposition of my constituents to the introduction of the student loan system. The petitioners believe that such a system would deter many young people from seeking higher education and believe that loans would be a millstone round their necks. They further believe that it would be a regressive measure, and educationally and socially damaging.

The petition

sheweth that any proposals to introduce the payment by students of tuition fees and student loans, whether partially or fully, will further limit access to higher education.

Wherefor your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do reject any proposals to introduce the payment by students of tuition fees or student loans.

To lie upon the Table.

Beef

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

12.58 am

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I am grateful to the Minister for coming to the House at this hour to help me, I hope, with a vexed problem that has been giving me great cause for concern since I established the nature of the practice some time ago.

I refer to the question of the pre-slaughter tenderising of beef. My hon. Friend will be aware of the process, involving the use of chemically modified papains for the pre-slaughter tenderising of beef. He will also be aware of the decision by his predecessor in office not to accept the recommendation of the Farm Animal Welfare Council that the practice should be banned on ethical and welfare grounds. He may also be aware of the defence of that decision by his fellow Parliamentary Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), in the BBC's "The Food Programme" recently.

In a letter to me, my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon referred to research carried out in the light of a Farm Animal Welfare Council report designed to find out whether animals suffered pain after injection, especially if there was to be a delay before stunning and slaughter. I presume that he was referring to a paper published in *Meat Science* in 1987 entitled "Clinical biochemistry and pathology of mature beef cattle following ante-mortem intravenous administration of a commercial papain preparation." Since neither I nor the House of Commons Library could find any other work that has been done, I presume that that was the work to which reference was made.

For a number of reasons, I am far from happy with that paper. One of the authors who participated in the work was an employee of the firm promoting the practice involved, so he would have a distinct interest in the result. The maximum duration of observation—it related to just one beast out of the 10 involved—was 315 seconds between the administration of the papain and the time of slaughter, when the manufacturer's recommendation is for slaughter to take place at between two and 20 minutes. What then, I thought, of the period of between five and 20 minutes, or even longer? In the discussion section of that paper, the observation was made:

> "However, for this study we are unable to predict the outcome if a period longer than 315 seconds elapsed between treatment and slaughter."

The fact that that aspect has not been addressed is a travesty in the light of the Farm Animal Welfare Council's statement:

> "We were also told that if, for any reason, a treated animal could not be put through the slaughter line, it would be placed back in the lairage under observation and slaughtered the following day without being reinjected."

Lines break down, and slaughter in six minutes cannot be guaranteed even in the best run establishments.

My next objection is that the work on rats and sheep to which reference was made in the paper is surely relevant in the light of the potential delay problem to which I have referred. It is clear that there is an effect on the metabolism of animals, even though the enzyme may be rapidly excreted through the kidneys. I am advised by Professor Webster of the animal husbandry unit at Bristol that the effect on the liver would be akin to having a bad hangover and would leave any animal, as it does a human being, feeling very depressed. It seems that the beef animal that has been injected and is feeling thoroughly depressed is shoved out into the lairage with a heavy hangover, only to be knocked off the next day. I cannot see any humanitarian or welfare considerations in that. In fact, it could be positively cruel.

The handling of the animals prior to injection is given only peremptory attention in the paper to which I have referred. My veterinary friends tell me that one of the big pluses to flow from the EEC licensing of abattoirs is that the vets are able to exercise supervision over the welfare interests of the animals. They point out that knuckles must be rapped from time to time and that slaughtermen must be brought up short and told the errors of their ways if they get sloppy or take short cuts with procedure. In such an exercise, with a formal demonstration, as we had when the Farm Animal Welfare Council witnessed the procedure in this case, the demonstration of the techniques involved would be carefully managed. I imagine that great care would be taken to ensure that everything was right. After all, the promoters had a lot at stake.

The paper talks about "a well organised abattoir," but I have not been able to find any reference to any criterion in the use of papains which says that it must be done in a well organised abattoir. When the pressure is on for throughput, will the animals be so carefully handled? I have strong reservations, especially in the light of the observations of those vets who have had to witness that process. They are of one mind—they do not like what they have to witness.

The size of the sample was also extremely small. A mere 10 beef animals with nine as controls is not a firm foundation for the conclusions drawn from that particular research, or alleged research, paper. Given that it represents the only research around, it may comprise the best scientific advice, but I was frankly surprised to find such a superficial paper being taken so seriously against the advice of the Farm Animal Welfare Council, which stated clearly that the practice should be banned on ethical and welfare grounds.

A constituent farmer arrived at a slaughterhouse to find that the gates which were normally open were locked. Shortly after his arrival he described how he heard the dreadful sounds of cattle "screaming". It was the abnormal noise of acute pain. While he was listening to that, another visitor to the abattoir—also a farmer—appeared from within the complex. My constituent asked what on earth was going on and the other farmer told him that the cattle were being injected with a tenderising substance, adding that he had been told to keep quiet or the slaughter men would not accept his stock. I find that particularly bothering. What kind of practice is this which leads to furtiveness, operations behind closed doors and blackmail? It cannot be healthy.

On "The Food Programme" my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary compared the experience of the cattle to that of humans giving blood at a donor session. From time to time I have given blood and I must confess that I do not find it a particularly comfortable experience. However, I am not in an unknown and hostile environment, nor am I physically restrained in a crush. My head is not yanked to one side to expose my jugular for the best part of a pint of fluid to be pumped in. Above all I know what is happening. The poor beast in the abattoir does not know what is happening. In welfare terms the slaughter process, to have any dignity, must be quiet, orderly and stress free. I cannot see how those requirements can be complied with under the present practice. I cannot see how the welfare of the animal is enhanced in any way as the whole process is palpably not to its benefit. There is nothing therapeutic about it—the practice is purely for the benefit of the trade.

I hope that my hon. Friend will carefully review the welfare aspect of this unnatural practice and that he will take wider advice. I am sure that that action would lead to his wishing to withdraw Ministry approval. When my hon. Friend reconsiders the matter he should also take into account the future dimension—the single European market. We are approaching 1992 and from what I have been able to find out it is clear that, for a variety of reasons, other member states are not all of an easy mind about the practice. By 1992 commonality must exist in the meat trade if there is to be free trade in carcase meat. It would be most helpful to know the Government's thinking in that respect.

In the meantime, what should we do? I believe that consumers show a considerable interest in the food processes involved in the provision of staples and I consider beef to be a staple. The consumer should be able to make an informed choice. In his capacity as Minister responsible for food, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would go along with that.

The 1980 food labelling regulations call for such meat to be labelled as tenderised, but that description does not differentiate between post-mortem tenderising such as pounding, partial chopping or electrical techniques and ante-mortem tenderising such as the method of which I am complaining. As fas as the consumer is concerned, cooking times and storage techniques are different. Get those wrong and the meat might disintegrate in cooking, and if the meat is not stored properly there may be problems with food poisoning. It is essential that the product be properly identified at all times.

Such meat should be described for trading purposes as

> "Pre-slaughter enzymic treatment tenderised meat."

I know that that is a mouthful, but it must be clear that the treatment is pre-slaughter and involves a chemical. I trust that my hon. Friend the Minister will give an undertaking tonight to amend the food regulations accordingly. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give strong advice to trading standards officers so that traders offering the product for sale over the counter in the high streets know what it is all about. When I asked someone what the expression "tenderised meat" meant, I was told, "Oh yes, sir, it is more natural like—been kept in the open and fed lots of barley." What greater travesty of the truth could there be?

The claim is that the proportion of joints that can be grilled or roasted increases from 35 per cent. in an untreated carcase to 75 per cent. after treatment. The economic advantage moves to the meat trade as the market demand is for the hind-quarter cuts. The logic of the argument is that fewer beef animals would be required for the prime beef market if the practice became more widespread. My hon. Friend the Minister knows that my part of the world rears darned fine beef. A practice might grow up of trying to upgrade cow beef and passing it off as prime beef. At the time when the beef industry—both the suckler cow herds and dairy herds—is under pressure, it seems crazy to espouse a practice which is highly dubious in welfare terms and has no economic benefits for primary producers.

I hope that I have said enough for my hon. Friend the Minister to reconsider the Government's position, to commission more searching research from independent sources and to amend the food labelling regulations and give that vital advice to trading standards officers to make certain that proper standards are maintained in this respect. I am revolted by what is happening in the trade now, and I believe that I am not alone in my revulsion.

1.12 am

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) on securing the debate and on choosing this subject. I know of my hon. Friend's long attachment to animal welfare. I believe that he is still an honorary associate of the British Veterinary Association. That is a great honour and privilege which I was able to share for a short while.

Like my hon. Friend, the Government attach great importance to securing the proper welfare of animals at slaughter and at all other stages of their lives. If we are to have meat to eat, animals must be slaughtered, and in large numbers, but we are determined to ensure that that is performed as humanely as possible. There is already extensive legislation governing the welfare of animals at slaughter. This provides substantial safeguards. Nevertheless, procedures and techniques have changed since detailed rules were introduced in the 1950s, and we propose shortly to introduce new regulations on the welfare of animals at slaughter which, in giving effect to recommendations of the Farm Animal Welfare Council, will strengthen and improve the protection now afforded by the law.

I understand why anyone who has the welfare of animals at heart should view with concern a process for administering before slaughter an enzyme solution to tenderise the meat from the animal. Indeed, the Farm Animal Welfare Council recommended that such treatments before slaughter should be banned. The Government do not reject lightly any recommendation by the council, which they appointed as an independent body to advise them on matters relating to the welfare of farm animals. The decision to do so in this case was not an easy one, but those who wish to use this process have a right to expect that it should not be condemned on suspicion alone but that it should be evaluated objectively and scientifically. That is what the Government have done, and very carefully. I therefore welcome this opportunity to explain to the House and to my hon. Friend the detailed consideration which the Government have given to this process. In doing so, I hope to reassure the House that some of the concerns which have been expressed about it by my hon. Friend are unnecessary and also, perhaps, to clear up some of the misconceptions which are held about the treatment.

The foremost consideration for the Government when considering any process or treatment relating to the food we eat must be the safety of the consumer. That is paramount. The enzyme administered to the animals is papain, a natural vegetable enzyme derived from the paw paw fruit, which is commonly consumed by humans. It has

[Mr. David Maclean]

a long history of medicinal use for the treatment of chronic dyspepsia and gastritis among other things, and it is used in the production of beer. It has been carefully evaluated for safety in use by the Department of Health's committee on toxicity, as well as by international scientific bodies, which have approved it for use in food. When used as in the tenderising treatment, papain is present in the meat before it is cooked at a level of less than five parts per million. Cooking first activates the enzyme so that it tenderises the meat and, as the temperature rises, it then largely destroys the enzyme. I can assure the House that its use in this process for tenderising meat presents no risk whatever to public health.

Before I deal with the welfare concerns surrounding this treatment, it may be helpful if I explain the process. It involves the intravenous administration of a solution containing oxidised papain into prime beef animals immediately before stunning and slaughter. The amount administered is generally about 250 to 300 ml, but this is varied according to the size and weight of the animal. The solution is introduced into the vascular system in accordance with accepted veterinary practice and it is circulated throughout the animal's body by the blood stream. The solution remains inactive and has no effect upon the live animal. It remains in the meat until it is cooked, when it is activated by the heat and acts to accelerate the breakdown of the protein molecules in the meat, making it tender.

The process was developed in the United States and has been used in this country since the early 1960s. The company holding the patent rights to the process in the United Kingdom uses it in its own plants and also licenses other operators. Unlike in the United States, however, use of the process in this country is not widespread and I understand that only about 2 per cent. of the total number of cattle slaughtered each year are thus treated.

One common misunderstanding is the belief that the treatment is used to improve what would otherwise be tough or poor quality meat. That is not so. In fact, its application is confined to prime young animals—to steers less than three years old and heifers up to two years old. The treatment is said to increase the recovery of meat which can be grilled or roasted from 35 per cent. in an untreated carcase to 75 per cent. in a treated one. Although other methods of tenderising meat are available, this process is particularly effective and achieves a uniform distribution throughout the meat of a relatively small quantity of the enzyme.

I shall now turn to the welfare aspects which were the main concern of my hon. Friend. I understand well the concerns that the process raises. The Farm Animal Welfare Council and other welfare interests expressed concern that the enzyme might begin to operate on the tissues of the animal while it is still alive. The council was concerned that there was a real risk that this might cause suffering, especially if slaughter is delayed for any reason. In practice, the time between administration and slaughter is generally no more than about five minutes. Nevertheless, the concern that the animal's tissues and organs might be affected by the enzyme is easy to understand. In order to test this, the Ministry carried out research which established that there is no evidence that deterioration of tissue occurs during the few minutes before animals are usually slaughtered. If slaughter should be delayed for any reason the fluid is excreted.

Officers of the state veterinary service who participated in the study concluded—and I accept their evidence and judgment—that there was no evidence that animals suffer any pain as a result of the presence of the enzyme in their bodies, and that if the recommended procedures are followed no welfare problems should arise. The results were published in *Meat Science* in 1987 and, as my hon. Friend said, a copy has been placed in the Library in case any hon. Member should wish to examine it as closely as my hon. Friend has done.

My hon. Friend spoke about some of the bad practice that he has encountered or has evidence of in abattoirs. I am aware that there have been a number of reports and articles in the press criticising welfare standards in slaughterhouses. Obviously, the treatment of an animal is open to abuse at any stage of its life. As I have already explained, there is extensive legislation designed to safeguard the welfare of farm animals at slaughter. That gives local authorities responsible for enforcing the legislation sufficient powers to ensure that standards are maintained and enables them to take any action if they consider that an animal has been mistreated.

The press articles made various claims about poor welfare which we took very seriously. However, in spite of extensive inquiries none of the claims has been substantiated. Perhaps I could assure the House that it is the view of my veterinary advisers who visit slaughterhouses that conditions are generally satisfactory and they do not witness the conditions that I have seen described rather vividly in press articles.

Another welfare concern has been that some animals suffer adverse reactions to the enzyme. I am aware, for example, of reports, about this, such as one in the *Veterinary Record* of 5 January 1985. Although we know that such reactions have occurred, confirmed cases are known to be extremely rare. The risk has now been reduced virtually to zero by refinements to the process. The company holding the patent rights maintains a record of such cases and I am pleased to be able to say that none has been reported in recent years.

Perhaps the main welfare concern, however, is the view expressed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council and by other welfare interests that, while it may not cause pain, the process represents an additional interference with or indignity to the animal at what is already a stressful time, and that this interference is not in the interests of the animal. I respect that view and, as I said earlier, I take very seriously the concerns of the Farm Animal Welfare Council. That is why ministerial colleagues in the past and my veterinary officers have seen the process being carried out. It is performed by trained operatives who handle the animals carefully. The administration of the solution causes little discomfort and there is no evidence that the animals suffer undue stress. There is, of course, some added interference with the animal immediately before it is slaughtered which welfare interests find objectionable. However, the Government do not believe that the treatment can be considered inhumane and on balance we do not feel that we would be justified in banning the use of a process that is otherwise perfectly safe.

I hope that what I have said will show that we have given very careful attention to the concerns that have been expressed about this treatment. We have not found it to be inhumane and, on the evidence available, we still believe that we would not be justified in prohibiting it on welfare grounds. So long as the process is employed, I shall continue to keep the welfare aspects under review and will look carefully at any relevant new information which may become available.

There is, however, another dimension to this matter, which my hon. Friend touched on, and which is very important. It concerns the rules of the European Community for trade in meat between member states. The present Community legislation does not apply to the production of enzyme-treated meat within member states for supply to their own domestic markets, but it does not generally permit trade in such meat between member states. At present, however, they may enter into bilateral agreements for trade in treated meat and the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland have such an arrangement. Other member states do not employ the papain process and have never favoured its use, although for reasons which have never been really clear to us.

I understand that Commission officials are even now preparing draft proposals for the production and marketing of meat under single market conditions, and are proposing that the marketing of enzyme treated meat should not be permitted. The Commission has not yet made a formal proposal to this effect but we expect it to do so and that it will have the support of the majority of our European partners. The adoption of such a rule would prevent the use of the pre-slaughter enzyme treatment. The question arises, therefore, as to whether the Government should seek in negotiations to obtain special arrangements which would permit the treatment to continue. We are anxious that the common rules for meat should be agreed and applied as soon as possible as this will be in the best interests of our consumers and of our industry at large.

I do not expect that it will be easy to reach agreement in Brussels speedily, but it would not be to our advantage to delay matters by making an issue of a process of which only limited use is being made and which may also be open to some criticism on animal welfare grounds. Indeed, as my hon. Friend knows, the United Kingdom is at the forefront in pressing for higher welfare standards throughout the Community. We are seeking to improve welfare standards for pigs kept in intensive farming systems and to get the veal crate ban, which will apply here from 1 January next year, adopted on a Community basis. For battery hens, we shall be urging improvements in welfare when the Community provisions are reviewed. It will not assist our case in pressing other member states to improve animal welfare standards if we leave open any possibility, however remote, of being accused of not practising what we preach.

I have to say now, therefore, that for these reasons we have decided not to seek provision for the continuation of the pre-slaughter enzyme treatment under the single market rules. In these circumstances, those now using the process—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-eight minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 8 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Lead

1. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the reduction of lead in the atmosphere over Britain since 1985.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): The report by the Warren Spring laboratory on airborne lead concentrations in the United Kingdom 1984-88 shows a decrease from 408 nanogrammes of lead per cubic metre of air (ng/m^3) in 1985 to 190 ng/m^3 in 1988—that is a decrease of 53 per cent.

Mr. Davis: May I be the first to welcome my hon. Friend to his first Question Time and to say how glad we all are to see that his Trappist vows from his previous job as a Whip have not reduced his customary eloquence? I am pleased to hear the figures that he cites because they reflect a marvellous performance. Does he agree that that is a first-class demonstration of the effectiveness of the policy of light regulation, combined with price and tax incentives, as a way of protecting the environment? What does he expect to see in the future in this area?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind welcome. The figures on airborne lead are, indeed, encouraging, but we continue our efforts to persuade motorists to switch to unleaded fuel. Already the switch to unleaded fuel is preventing 65 tonnes of lead per month from being emitted into the atmosphere. That shows the importance of our continuing campaign. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is a first-class example of co-operation between the Government, the trade and the public.

Mr. James Lamond: In joining the welcome to the new Minister, I wonder whether the Prime Minister is aware of his appointment because this week she wrote to me telling me that inquiries about textile matters should be addressed to Mr. Alan Clark, the Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, although he was moved from there in the reshuffle before last.

Many motorists are still uncertain whether the instructions that they have read in the booklet issued by the Department are correct or whether the instructions suggested to them by the agents for the motor cars are correct. It is sometimes suggested that motorist should use an occasional fill of leaded petrol. Does the Minister have any views on that point?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome. On his point about advice from the trade, it is true that in certain instances new cars designed to run on unleaded petrol can benefit from small doses of leaded fuel during the running-in period, but that is highly incidental. To clear up any misunderstanding, my Department has just reprinted more copies of the excellent booklet, "Adjust to Unleaded", which I commend to the hon. Gentleman's constituents and the public. It will remove any confusion or misunderstanding about the importance of unleaded fuel.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I, too, welcome the Minister to his new job, but why have questions been planted by his hon. Friends on the Back Benches only on the issue of lead pollution in the atmosphere when the other pollutants from motor cars are far more significant factors in the pollution of the environment and there has been an increase in them, not a reduction? About 3,000 tonnes of lead and 1,031,000 tonnes of nitrogen dioxide are emitted annually from motor cars, and there has been an increase of 33 per cent. in the amount of carbon dioxide—the major greenhouse gas—emitted by cars in the past 10 years. Two Budgets ago the Government said that they would cut subsidies to company cars, yet 6,000 new cars per day come on to our roads, 50 per cent. of them company cars with Government subsidies. When will the Government switch resources to support public transport and actually reduce emissions of carbon dioxide?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman apparently belittles our campaign to persuade motorists to switch to unleaded fuel. We also have in train measures to reduce other forms of harmful emissions. They will be dealt with by the introduction of catalytic converters, which will greatly reduce emissions of carbon monoxide, unburnt hydrocarbons and nitrous oxides. I remind the hon. Gentleman that catalytic converters require unleaded fuel.

Acid House Parties

2. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend the powers of local authorities to regulate the holding of acid house parties.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): My Department is currently consulting local authorities about the possible need to extend their powers to prevent or control acid house or similar parties. We will consider further action in the light of that consultation.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for saying that he is having consultations. Given the genuine danger of death or serious injuries at such parties, particularly when they might move indoors during the winter months, will he try, for the benefit of environmental health officers, to clarify the existing regulations further? Will he also do his best to extend them as the difficulty arises from the fact that the organisers use secrecy to evade anticipation by local authorities, which makes prevention extremely difficult?

Mr. Chris Patten: I very much agree with what my hon. Friend has said. I also agree with the chief constable of Surrey who said that uncontrolled parties represent a disaster that is waiting to happen with the possibility of fire risk, blocked exists, blocked roads and so on. At the moment we are consulting local authorities and I have no doubt that we must give them greater guidance on the powers already open to them. It is, of course, for the courts to decide ultimately, but I want to issue that guidance as soon as possible.

Mr. Skinner: If there are so many dangers attached to the possibility of holding acid house parties in this enterprise culture, and if the Minister agrees with his hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) that the consequences could be disastrous, would it not make sense for the Government to get their act together and for the various Departments, including the Department of the Environment, to make it plain to the Secretary of State for Health that, in the event of such a disaster and the need for ambulance crews to get to that disaster, those crews should be paid the money instead of being kept out on the streets?

Mr. Patten: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, like me, was able to hear the wholly convincing answers to that question made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health yesterday.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the success of the police intelligence unit in Gravesend, which co-ordinates with local authorities to deter acid house parties such as that suffered in Meopham in September? What hope is there of extending outside Greater London the penalty of imprisonment for those organisers whose actions represent non-compliance with local government licensing of such events?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right that proper co-ordination between the police and the local authorities is vital. At the moment we are considering with the Home Office, which is in the lead, the issue of penalties as well as guidance for local authorities. We shall make a statement as soon as possible.

Mr. Michael: Is it not ironic that the Minister is having to respond positively to a request from a Conservative Back Bencher for the extension of local authorities' powers when the Government of which he is a member have spent the past 10 years trying to undermine the authority of those local authorities in all sorts of ways, including on planning and licensing matters?

Mr. Patten: We have consistently tried to support and to strengthen responsible local government action and to deter irresponsible local government action. Unlike the previous Labour Government, we believe that the party was over for local authorities in the mid to late 1970s and that they should behave as responsibly and prudently as possible.

Unleaded Petrol

3. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much sales of unleaded petrol have increased since the 1988 Budget.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In the month to mid-October, unleaded petrol accounted for nearly 26 per cent. of the market. Demand has increased more than 250-fold since March 1988 when uptake stood at less than 0·1 per cent.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is extremely good progress, which has been partly brought on by this year's excellent Budget changes? How many more cars could be converted to take unleaded fuel?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We estimate that there are still about 9 million cars on the road which are not run on unleaded fuel and could do so with minor adjustment or in some cases with no adjustment.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Is my hon. Friend aware that in my constituency of Gedling only three garages were selling unleaded petrol at the start of the year, but now virtually every garage in my constituency sells it? Is not that a tribute both to the wisdom of using the market mechanism to achieve this important environmental objective, and to the wisdom, good sense and responsibility of my constituents?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have heard about my hon. Friend's campaign for unleaded petrol in his constituency and I am glad that he has succeeded. Throughout the country, unleaded fuel is available in about 80 per cent. of petrol stations.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: We all welcome the large number of people who have transferred to unleaded petrol, but will the Minister accept that the price cut was an effective weapon in persuading them? If so, has he considered the possibility of persuading the Chancellor to introduce similar incentives to encourage people to buy ozone-friendly household goods such as furniture polish?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Further tax changes are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but the hon. Lady is right to point to the success of the price difference of about 12p between leaded and unleaded petrol. The average motorist, who travels about 10,000 miles per year, will save £40 a year by using unleaded petrol, which is much more than the cost of adjusting the car.

Tenancies

4. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the operation to date of the assured tenancy and shorthold tenancy schemes.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): The new schemes have been in operation for less than a year, but there are already encouraging signs—for example, more than £350 million has been invested in business expansion scheme companies letting homes on assured tenancies.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for his reply. Does he agree that in the short term the new scheme is unlikely to do a lot to help young people who come into London looking for low-cost digs and end up sleeping on the streets? Is he aware of what happened in Sweden, where there were similar problems of a shortage of accommodation for young people? A conscious decision was taken to make new property coming on to the market entirely free from restrictions. That has produced a flood of accommodation and, therefore, the Swedes have solved the problem without Government intervention or spending.

Mr. Howard: I do not share my hon. Friend's pessimism about the effect of the changes that the Government have already made. In particular, I hope that she will join me in publicising the extent to which last Session's Act, the Housing Act 1988, has made it easier for people to let rooms in their houses. Under the Act, the charge is purely a matter of agreement between the parties and when the lodger shares accommodation with the owner, the owner no longer needs a court order for repossession.

Mr. George Howarth: Does the Minister accept that the point made by his hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is the opposite of the truth? No matter how much deregulation the Government bring into the rented housing market, the problems related to the expansion in that market lie elsewhere, as he well knows. How many additional units of rented accommodation does he expect to come on to the market in the next 12 months?

Mr. Howard: The business expansion scheme investment to which I referred could provide 6,000 to 7,000 extra properties. We are prepared to look at a range of initiatives to improve conditions in the housing market, unlike the hon. Gentleman and his party who are interested only in turning back the clock.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that many private owners of empty property are still put off renting it because they have heard the scare stories about people losing accommodation in the past due to the regulations brought in by Socialist Governments? Could we do more to publicise the excellent changes that we have made to the housing regulations to get so many empty properties back on the market?

Mr. Howard: I am certainly looking at the possibilities of giving additional publicity to the changes that have been made. It is a sad fact, as my hon. Friend so correctly points out, that the Opposition's only contribution to the debate has been an irresponsible one.

Mr. Soley: Given the decline of 500,000 homes for rent in the private rented sector since 1980, and given that the rate of decline in that sector has accelerated in the 1980s, can the Government explain why their policy has failed so consistently and has accelerated the decline? If not, will the Minister take a walk round to just opposite Downing street and talk to the Shelter workers and the people sleeping rough there, who will tell him what I have been telling him in the House for more than two years?

Mr. Howard: As I explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), the changes about which she has asked have been in force for less than a year. One cannot reverse long-seated trends in as short a time as that. When will the hon. Gentleman join us in looking at new initiatives to deal with the problem rather than adopting this negative attitude? The changes that his party would introduce, if it were ever returned to Government, would undoubtedly aggravate the problem.

Local Government Finance

5. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the outcome of his recent discussions with representatives of the local authorities on the introduction of his recently announced amendments to the community charge arrangements.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. David Hunt): Officials are discussing operational aspects of the community charge transitional relief scheme with the local authority associations. In addition, individual local authorities have been invited to make representations. In the light of the response from local government a paper setting out full details of the scheme will be issued shortly.

Mr. Jack: If Labour's control of Lancashire county council results in its exceeding his spending limits for next year while Conservative-controlled Fylde spends within its limits, would the county's action deny pensioners and other vulnerable groups the full benefit of the package of measures that he has just described?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend raises a serious problem —that of the prudent district council and the spendthrift Labour county council, but I give him this pledge. I shall bring regulations before the House prescribing the form of the bill and that bill will make it absolutely clear to every chargepayer which council is the overspender.

Mr. Madden: As the Minister visits Bradford with the frequency of a revolving door, does he agree that it would be a disgrace if my constituents living on the Lower Grange estate had to pay the poll tax before Bradford council kept its promise to build new homes for rent on that estate? In the unlikely event of question No. 80 being reached, will the Minister give a commitment to agree to the grant so that those houses for rent can be built before he introduces his poll tax charges?

Mr. Hunt: The poor hon. Gentleman! To continue the revolving door analogy, whereas in Bradford the Conservatives are well on the way in, he is well on the way out.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that the most helpful transitional arrangement that he can discuss to overcome the despair of community charge payers in counties such as Avon is community charge capping?

Mr. Hunt: I would greatly regret having to do that, but we shall not hesitate to cap overspending councils.

Mr. Gould: Does the Minister agree with Mr. Roy Thomason, the Tory chairman of the Association of District Councils, that his notional average poll tax figure will lead to "false expectations"? Will he or his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State undertake to revise that figure upwards when the Chancellor in his Autumn Statement concedes, as he must, that his inflation forecast was too low? If the Government persist in using the bogus figure, does he agree that the so-called safety net will not save many people from paying more than the £3 extra once the poll tax arrangements take effect?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman quotes Mr. Thomason out of context. The real victims of the fact that Labour councils generally overspend will be those unfortunate charge payers who live in those local authority areas, who are having false expectations thrust on them by spendthrift Labour councils.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend will know that Cleveland has some of the highest rates in the country. When considering the arrangements, will he examine the possibility of putting law into practice so that the recommendations of the Audit Commission, which in Cleveland has identified savings of £307,000 in the highways department alone, will have the backing of law and will not be flouted by the Labour-controlled Cleveland county council?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend, with characteristic accuracy, has identified a serious problem. The independent Audit Commission has recognised that in addition to the savings that my hon. Friend has mentioned there exists for local government a savings potential of £900 million of which only £350 million has so far been brought into effect. That is the challenge presently facing Labour local government.

Countryside (Access)

6. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about what provisions for access to the countryside will be included in the proposed green Bill.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Trippier): The Government have stated their intention to legislate on a wide range of environmental issues as soon as parliamentary time allows, but it would be premature at this stage to confirm detailed proposals for the forthcoming Session.

Mr. Bennett: I welcome the Minister to his new responsibilities. He will agree that may people enjoy walking as a leisure activity. However, over the past 20 years opportunities to get out into the countryside have been reduced because of house building, motorway extensions and other such matters. We need far more land to which people can gain access. Will the Government give careful consideration to including in the green Bill a walkers' charter which will allow people to have access to all mountain and moorland without having to go through the present complicated procedures?

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his initial remarks. I welcome what he says and recognise that access to the countryside is an important recreational pursuit. We have asked the rights of way review committee to examine certain proposals that the hon. Gentleman has discussed with my colleagues in the Department. They will report by the end of the year and we hope to take the matter forward. I also welcome initiatives that are being taken by the Countryside Commission to try to draw together the sometimes conflicting interests of land owners and land users.

Mr. Knapman: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that the man on the Clapham omnibus has no more reason for walking around the average farm than the average farmer has for walking around the back garden of No. 879 Tottenham Court road?

Mr. Trippier: I touched on the very point that concerns my hon. Friend when I said that occasionally there can be conflicting interests between land owners and land users. That is precisely why I welcome the initiative taken by the Countryside Commission in relation to the setting up of local liaison groups to reconcile the differences between the two. Conciliation and not confrontation is by far the best way to resolve the dispute over rights of way.

Ms. Short: The Minister must know that the Countryside Commission and people throughout the country are desperately worried that some of our most beautiful land will be disposed of after water privatisation. What does he intend to do to protect our rights to use that land?

Mr. Trippier: I reject the hon. Lady's suggestion. We went to enormous lengths to introduce into the Water Act 1989 powers to ensure de facto access to water authority land. Water authorities have an excellent record for providing for that kind of public access and the Act has carried forward and improved those duties.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my hon. Friend confirm that far from our country being covered in housing as the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) suggested, 87 per cent. of the south-east of England is still green land or green belt, and the percentage in other parts of the country is much greater? The Conservative party is doing all in its power to preserve that situation.

Mr. Trippier: I welcome the opportunity to confirm that since the Government came to power in 1979, the extent of the green belt has more than doubled, and this is widely welcomed. I give my assurance that the Government are committed to continue to protect public access to the countryside, through any means possible, but principally through rights of way.

Product Labelling

7. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress was made towards the adoption of a Communitywide eco-labelling system at the meeting of Ministers on 19 September.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am pleased to say that the Environment Council on 19 September asked the Commission to bring forward proposals for a Communitywide scheme of eco-labelling as soon as possible.

Mr. Hughes: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is some danger that in their rush to appear environment friendly, retailers are either over general or misrepresenting in their labelling, as manifested by a sign that I saw outside a garage in Southwold in Suffolk when I was on my holiday, which said, "Environmentally free food for sale"? Given that we need accurate information, can the Secretary of State assure us that the Government will take the view that we need specific rather than general information, and that it should be substantiated by fact, and that the Government will not continue their opposition to the inclusion of food and drink in the system of European Communitywide eco-labelling?

Mr. Patten: As the hon. Gentleman will concede, the consumer can move forward the environment cause far more effectively in many ways than regulation is able to do, although regulation also has its part to play. We put out a consultation document in the summer, and we are looking at the responses to that. We have also suggested, which I am sure is right, that we should have an eco-labelling scheme on a Communitywide basis, particularly with the single market in 1992. It is important to protect people from the rip-offs to which the hon. Gentleman referred. As to whether food and drink should be included, there are, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, initiatives covering organic food. In the next few weeks, we shall be discussing whether we should go beyond that.

Ms. Quin: Will the Secretary of State confirm that while it would be a good idea to get European agreement on an environmental labelling scheme, there is nothing to prevent the Government from introducing one here as early as possible, along the lines of those in West Germany and Canada? Is it not essential to do something along these lines quickly? Otherwise, consumers will continue to be conned by bogus green claims.

Mr. Patten: I agree with both the points that the hon. Lady has made. We want to get ahead with the scheme, but if we can have a Europewide scheme, so much the better. We need to deal with bogus schemes. There are some criticisms made of the German scheme—for example, that it does not take matters from cradle to grave—but it has set the pace in many ways.

Environmental Groups

9. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any official engagements he has between the present time and the end of November with environmental groups.

Mr. Chris Patten: I regularly meet a wide variety of environmental groups. My next such meeting will be with the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution on 16 November.

Mrs. Ewing: Has the Secretary of State considered meeting CAND—Caithness Against Nuclear Dumping—an environmentally conscious group? Will he take congnisance of the fact that yesterday, the people of Caithness voted three to one against nuclear waste being stored at Dounreay, thereby ensuring that the people, the district council and the regional council all come out on the same side of the argument? Will he take a more positive attitude than that of Nirex and recognise that the views of the people are ultimately the most important aspect of this debate?

Mr. Patten: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland meets many groups, that he has met many of the individuals referred to by the hon. Lady, and that he has given them effective and robust answers.

Mr. Squire: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his announced willingness to meet a considerable range of environmental groups. Does he agree that his critical role is to ensure that the environmental option is considered in each and every decision, rather than that it should invariably be the option adopted when sometimes other issues will overtake that issue and so make it better for it not to be adopted?

Mr. Patten: That was an interesting question, which I am still following as best I can. I think that my hon. Friend was making the reasonable point that we must be increasingly aware of the environmental impact of every decision that we make both as a Government and as individual consumers. To that extent it is obvious that a sensible environment policy does not stop at the front door of the Department of the Environment. It affects all Government Departments, and that is something to which we shall be drawing attention in our White Paper next year.

Mr. Morley: How does the Secretary of State react to criticisms from environment groups about the Government's reaction to the conference in Holland on global warming? Other European countries are willing to accept target limits for a reduction in emissions from cars, factories and power stations but the British Government, along with the United States, have refused to join other European countries in dealing with the matter. Does this not give the claim that the Government are leading the campaign on global warming a somewhat bogus front?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman's supplementary question might have been difficult to answer if it had been based on the truth. We accepted emission targets at the Netherlands conference. My hon. Friend the Minister of State played a leading role in brokering a consensus on emission targets at the conference, and he deserves the congratulations of the House rather than uninformed criticism.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: When my right hon. Friend meets environment groups, does he find that they share the views of my constituents that he was wise to say that planning considerations should be left to democratically elected local authorities and should find their way to his desk and the desks of his inspectors only as a last resort?

Mr. Patten: It remains one of my ambitions to take fewer planning decisions myself. I want to see local planning authorities taking decisions as far as possible. Obviously they need to take account of regional and national interests when they are drawing up local plans for example.

River Soar

10. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the River Soar within the city of Leicester.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): No representations have been received specifically concerning the River Soar within the city of Leicester. However, a total of 44 representations have been received as a result of advertisements by Severn Trent Water of applications for time-limited discharge consents for certain sewage treatment works which discharge into the Soar upstream of Leicester. These are to allow the completion of capital improvement schemes to raise effluent quality standards.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that the River Soar, which runs through my constituency and our beautiful Abbey park is becoming an eyesore? Does he understand that it is clogged with weeds, mud and filth? Will he as a rower, albeit a cox, appreciate the complaints that have been made by Leicester rowing club, fishermen and boatmen and by the general public about the state of the river? Will he take steps to have it cleaned up now?

Mr. Moynihan: As a cox I would have to avoid many floats on the River Soar not least because it is one of our leading cyprinid waters.

Mr. Skinner: What?

Mr. Moynihan: I am sure that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) knows all about cyprinid waters. He will inform the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) that as a result of this it is recognised to be a fine, pure river and one that has extremely effective coarse fishing that is among the best in Europe, and is designated as such by the European Commission.

Litter

11. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much he intends to increase the fines for dropping litter.

Mr. Trippier: We propose to increase the maximum fine for littering under the Litter Act 1983 from £400 to £1,000. We propose also to allow district and borough councils to operate fixed penalty schemes for littering, similar to that currently operating exclusively in Westminster.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for the information that he has given the House. I and others, I am sure, will welcome the increase in fines. Does he agree with me that there is no question but that Britain has become a filthy, mucky place where public places are like rubbish tips? The increase in fines is a long overdue measure and we welcome it. Will he consider extending the Westminster scheme in a way that would enable traffic wardens and others to exercise the powers that it provides? In that way we would restrict more thoroughly the activities of litter louts.

Mr. Trippier: Until litter louts can be persuaded to give up their dirty, inconsiderate and unsocial behaviour, the problem will remain. That is precisely why we are introducing legislation that will include very tough proposals to deal with the problem. We are also hoping to replicate the example set by the City of Westminster so that local authorities can appoint litter wardens, who will be responsible for fixed penalty fines.

Ms. Armstrong: Are not local authorities concerned about the way in which the Government are tackling the problem? Would it not be much better to enable local authorities to employ people in villages for example who could work with the local people to prevent the dropping of litter and to ensure that the whole area is cleaned? Have not the Government caused part of the problem because they have cut the resources of local authorities so that they have had to sack those who could have done the job?

Mr. Trippier: I wholly reject the hon. Lady's suggestion. I could take her to two local authorities in the north that are both controlled by the Labour party, but where the difference in their efficiency and their attitude towards litter collection is absolutely stark. Unless many local authorities take a different attitude, the position will not improve.

I could make some suggestions about areas in which local authorities could save resources. Many of them would do well to abandon their wasteful expenditure on campaigns and nuclear-free zone signs and instead concentrate more on litter-free zones.

Mr. Tracey: Has my hon. Friend considered the low fines imposed for dropping litter? Is he aware that the heaviest possible measures that the Government might take would be welcomed by the public and would encourage magistrates to impose heavy fines?

Mr. Trippier: I welcome my hon. Friend's comments. I hope that magistrates will take note of the growing public anger about litter when they are considering imposing fines. Paltry fines will send out the wrong message.

Mr. Gould: Are not the filthy streets and the litter-strewn public places, which are now the daily depressing experience of millions of people, in many ways the most visible evidence of what has gone wrong in Thatcherite Britain? Does the Minister understand that that malaise will not be cured by silly slogans or fiddling with fines? Unless the Government provide real resources so that local authorities can tackle the job, the Minister might as well take his green Bill and bag it and bin it.

Mr. Trippier: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new responsibilities. I am sure that I speak for all my colleagues in saying that I hope that he remains an Opposition spokesman for a very long time.

It is interesting that there have been two questions about resources for local authorities. Is it not amazing that Westminster, Canterbury and the London boroughs of Sutton and Wandsworth are showing that determination coupled with efficiency can produce excellent results within existing budgets? I give notice to the hon. Gentleman that during the passage of the so-called green Bill, I shall be looking to him for 100 per cent. support. He will ignore that caution at his peril.

Mr. Hill: As my hon. Friend has explained that some local authorities are not dealing with the litter problem, should there not be a reverse system of fines? Not only the public but local authorities do not fulfil their duties. It is often the case, especially in the south coast resorts, that local authorities do not empty the litter bins. Should there not be a system of fines for local authorities and, perhaps, even a list of the worst offenders?

Mr. Trippier: I am glad to say that I can give my hon. Friend the comfort that he seeks. We shall introduce powers in the forthcoming legislation which will allow any individual citizen or collection of individuals to take the local authority to court if they are not satisfied with the standard of cleanliness in its area and that is precisely what my hon. Friend is asking for.

Pollution

12. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions have been initiated this year against companies responsible for pollution; and what is the total of fines imposed.

Mr. Trippier: Information on prosecutions in respect of offences under legislation controlling polluting activity is published annually in the Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics and other sources. Comprehensive information for 1989 is not yet available centrally. I understand, however, that since one regulatory agency, the National Rivers Authority, fully assumed its responsibilities on 1 September this year, 53 court cases in relation to pollution offences have been heard and 83 similar cases are pending.

Mr. Alton: If the principle is that the polluter should pay, does the Minister agree that the fines that have been imposed during the past decade, and the number of prosecutions, have been derisory? Does the Minister agree that it is not right to allow 200 companies to pollute the River Mersey? That is crazy. For example, Shell recently discharged 150 tonnes of crude oil into the River Mersey. Does he agree that his Department should have initiated a public inquiry? The failure to do that showed that, in the face of big companies, although the Department talks green, they haul up the white flag.

Mr. Trippier: I have a great deal of sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's earlier comments. That is why we are toughening up legislation in the forthcoming green Bill and the powers we are giving to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. We are also giving greater powers to local authorities. I am sure that they will assume them responsibly.

The hon. Gentleman is sorry that we did not have a public inquiry, but I remind him that we had a full investigation by the Department of Energy and a full investigation by the National Rivers Authority, which decided to take legal action against Shell. I understand that, from Monday, the case has been transferred to Liverpool Crown court. Those are tougher measures than a public inquiry. In addition to that, Professor Bradshaw, an eminent scientist and expert in nature conservation from Liverpool university will study the effects of oil spillages, not only on the Mersey but in a wider brief. We shall all learn from that study. The combination of those three measures is effective and, in many ways tougher than the measures the hon. Gentleman is suggesting to the House.

Mr. Brazier: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the Government have implemented the bulk of the clauses relating to water pollution in the Control of Pollution Act 1974, in sharp contrast to the last Labour Government which introduced the law and did nothing with it?

Mr. Trippier: I could not agree more. If we in the Department of the Environment discover that some gaps remain in the COPA legislation, we hope to close them with the forthcoming Bill.

Mr. Loyden: Is the Minister aware that people on Merseyside felt that the Government's action, or inaction, over the pollution of the River Mersey by an oil spill left a lot to be desired? Should we not congratulate the local government workers who responded immediately to that problem and who probably reduced the effect of what must be the worst environmental problem that Britain has faced since the Secretary of State came into office? I was surprised that the Secretary of State did not make himself available on day one to make a proper assessment of the situation on the Mersey, and I have to agree with the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), who said that the oil company ought to pay the maximum amount of money necessary for clearing up the oil spillage for the damage and for the money that has already been spent on cleaning up the Mersey basin.

Mr. Trippier: I would be the first to compliment not only the local authorities—both elected representatives and officers—but the workers, whom I had the opportunity of meeting, who cleaned up the oil spillage caused by the fracture of the pipe owned by Shell. Their

Two Ministers of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) and myself, paid speedy visits to the site. As the hon. Gentleman is well aware, we were effective in bringing about Professor Bradshaw's inquiry. As a result of the spillage, the National Rivers Authority decided to take the action that has now put Shell in court. I do not know what more the Government could have done: we responded very positively.

Council House Sales

13. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in England since May 1979.

Mr. Howard: From April 1979 to June 1989 almost 1·1 million tenants bought their homes from English local authorities and new towns.

Mr. Knox: What is my hon. and learned Friend's assessment of the potential for future council house sales?

Mr. Howard: I believe that there is significant potential for an increase in the trend, and we are doing all that we can to encourage that.

Mr. Winnick: What about allowing local authorities, in financial terms, to build council houses? Is it not the case that more people will be homeless this Christmas than at any time since the end of the war? Are not the Minister and the Secretary of State disgusted that so many people should be living in squalid accommodation, homeless—or virtually homeless—in bed-and-breakfast dwellings? That state of affairs arises directly from Government policy.

Mr. Howard: Planned public spending on housing this year and over the next two years amounts to nearly £13 billion. Of course we are aware of the problems, and we are mounting a tremendous effort to overcome them.

Mr. William Powell: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that the figures that he has announced are marvellous news for the country as a whole, as well as for those who purchase their council houses? Is he aware that there are still many thousands of people with applications in the pipeline who are looking forward to purchasing their homes as soon as they can, and that the trend is accelerating in many parts of the country?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right. The advantages of home ownership are apparent to a growing number of people, and, as he has said, the trend is increasing.

Mr. O'Brien: I have noted the Minister's replies. Will he enlighten the House, however, by telling us how many houses will be built for rent this year? Will he take note of the requests from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of District Councils, housing associations and Shelter, which have said that there is a shortage of houses for rent? Will he allow local authorities to use their receipts from the sale of council houses to build houses which can be let at an affordable rent, so that the waiting lists can be shortened and homeless people can be accommodated?

Mr. Howard: Some 2 million additional houses have been built over the past 10 years. The budget of the Housing Corporation, on planned figures, will increase by about 60 per cent. over the next three years, and the resources generally to be made available—as I have just said—amount to some £13 billion over this and the next two years. That will enable a large number of houses to be built to deal with the problems to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Water Industry (Investment)

14. **Mr. Carttiss:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what announcements were made during the summer adjournment about the future investment programme of the water industry.

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning anounced a major new capital investment programme over the next 10 years designed to improve our drinking water, to renew sewers and sewage treatment works and to clean up our beaches.

Mr. Carttiss: My constituency has enjoyed the advantages of a private-enterprise water supply company for the past 150 years. Does my hon. Friend agree that the promising prospect of future investment is possible because of the financial framework that the water industry will have after privatisation? Will he confirm that the much brighter future water investment picture contrasts sharply with the savage cuts in investment made by the last Labour Government?

Mr. Moynihan: I confirm what my hon. Friend has said. As he will be aware, the 10-year investment programme secures compliance with the regulatory requirements taken into account when setting price limits. It provides a secure framework for achieving service objectives and it will allow the water industry to maintain and extend the operating capability of relevant assets.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Minister confirm that the announcements made in the summer about debt write-off and the so-called green dowry mean that taxpayers will be net losers to the tune of £1·3 billion in the water sell-off? Does this not mean that 10 years of Conservative Government have left the water industry in such a precarious position that the Government have had to provide the largest bribe ever to get the industry off their hands?

Mr. Moynihan: The statistics and factors that the hon. Lady brought before the House are not a fair comparison. She will be aware that the Government's 10-year investment programme of £24·6 billion will be a major boon to all customers, not least because they will be aware that only last week the Labour party announced its prospectus estimate of £22 billion. Customers will receive better service, more environmental safeguards and improvements, better sewage treatment facilities and improved bathing water quality. The public would be sold short by the Labour party by £2·6 billion.

Mr. Trotter: When my hon. Friend considers the investment programme of Northumbria water authority, will he bear in mind the almost unanimous opposition of the people of Tyneside to its proposal to build a toxic waste plant at Howdon in the middle of a built-up area? Will he bear in mind that any such proposal should be deleted from the investment programme?

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. Friend has worked assiduously on this issue on behalf of his constituents. The Tyne and Wear development corporation refused planning permission for a sewage sludge industrial waste incinerator at Howdon on 11 September. The applicants, Northumbria Water and the International Technology Corporation, have the right of appeal to the Secretary of State against the refusal of planning permission. I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate that in the circumstances I cannot comment on the proposal, but I understand fully that it has caused considerable local anxiety. That anxiety has been brought to the attention of the House and of the Ministers responsible, mainly by my hon. Friend's assiduous work.

Local Government Finance

15. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to introduce further modifications to the poll tax regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government have no plans to introduce further legislative changes in the community charge arrangements beyond the announcement made by my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in another place on 11 October.

Mr. Fearn: Does the Minister agree that further modification is needed for people living in sheltered accommodation? If such people still have property, they will be liable for the poll tax in two places, unless the 12-month limit is applied to them. Who will pay the poll tax? Will such people pay twice?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman will know that on the standard community charge, we recently announced that local authorities will not only have discretion over which class is subject to which multiplier, but will be able to separate within a class for different types of property. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question lies with the local authorities.

Mr. David Shaw: Does my hon. Friend agree that the modifications that he has made to the way in which the community charge will operate will make it a wonderful new system for the elderly and disabled, particularly the blind?

Mr. Hunt: I am very pleased to be able to announce to the House that, following representations that have been made to me by my right hon. and hon. Friends, disabled people will be singled out under the transitional relief arrangements for special treatment and that we have decided that the test should not only be receipt of one of the recognised disability benefits but that it should also include all people who are registered blind.

Mr. Salmond: Can the Minister explain why it is that although the Government have been imposing this iniquitous poll tax on the Scottish people during the last eight months and have been meeting massive resistance from the population, it was only when English

Conservative Back Benchers started to squeal about their seats and their majorities that they decided to introduce these panicky changes to the poll tax regulations?

Mr. Hunt: If the hon. Gentleman would give my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland the opportunity, I am sure that he would welcome the chance to explain to the hon. Gentleman how well the community charge is going down in Scotland.

Green Belt

16. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much land in England and Wales now has green belt status; and what was the position 10 years ago.

Mr. Colin Moynihan: In 1979 there were about 1·8 million acres of approved green belt in England. Today there are around 4·5 million acres. There is no green belt in Wales.

Mr. Cran: My hon. Friend and the Government generally are to be congratulated on the doubling of the green belt, in contradistinction to the propaganda that I hear outside the House, according to which one would have thought that the amount of green belt was falling instead of increasing. That said, will my hon. Friend look favourably on any application that he receives from Humberside county council for green belt status, particularly against the background of my constituency of Beverley which now resembles a large building site?

Mr. Moynihan: I am aware that Humberside county council is discussing the idea with the districts concerned in my hon. Friend's constituency. Subject to the outcome of the discussions, the county council may decide to publish a draft structure plan alteration formally launching the green belt proposal in the spring of next year. My hon. Friend knows that the Department has no formal standing in the matter. I am sure that he appreciates that I cannot express any view at the Dispatch Box today on the merits of the proposal, since that might prejudice my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's position, should a structure plan alteration come formally before him for consideration.

Eastern Europe

3.31 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important issue that requires urgent consideration, namely,

> "the effect on the European policies of Her Majesty's Government of the current events in eastern Europe."

A year ago it is doubtful whether anyone would have predicted that Hungary would now be on the threshold of Western-style democracy. Who, six months ago, would have imagined a non-Communist Government in Poland? Who, even one week ago, could have conceived the fall of the politburo in that most orthodox of all Communist states, East Germany?

The political map of half our continent is melting and re-forming before our very eyes, yet the business of this House goes on as though nothing has changed, as President Mitterrand seeks to drag us in accelerating haste into his version of a federal Europe—a naive and doomed device aimed at preventing the inevitable reunification of Germany. It seems that the more rapidly the European certainties diminish the more manic becomes the barrage of directives to which we are continually being subjected. At a time when we should be considering the future of Europe as a whole, our Ministers are instead daily confronted with coercive pressures to subscribe to the increasingly irrelevant political confetti of the social charter and Delors parts 2 and 3.

There are major movements under the earth's crust of our continent. The final geology is unknown and unpredictable. This is hardly the time to embark on an atlas of new treaties and the transfer of powers to that part of our continent that is centred on the Berlaymont.

Twice a year we debate the last six months in Brussels. Twice a week we powerlessly pore over its latest edicts. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that before we move any further down this narrow road, the House must have an opportunity to debate the historic events that are so dramatically and rapidly unfolding before us.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the effect on the European policies of Her Majesty's Government of the current events in eastern Europe."

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20, I have to announce my decision without giving reasons to the House. I listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman said, but, as he knows, I must decide whether his application falls within the Standing Order and whether the debate should be given priority over the business already set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that the matter that the hon. Gentleman has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order, and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Ambulance Dispute

3.35 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the current state of the ambulance dispute."

It would be difficult to conceive a matter more urgent than the grave crisis that confronts the ambulance service in London. Management have withdrawn the emergency cover provided by professional ambulance staff and their 450 ambulances. Emergency cover for London is being provided by 53 police vehicles, which may be joined this afternoon by 50 Army vehicles. Yesterday, the Secretary of State accused ambulance staff of pretending and posturing. Today, it will be he who is pretending if he claims that that represents adequate emergency cover.

There are two questions on which it is vital that the House should have the opportunity of challenging Ministers. First, why have they insisted on calling in the Army when ambulance staff are available at every ambulance station in London? Yesterday, the Secretary of State claimed that the 14 points of the work to rule prevented ambulance staff from providing emergency cover. I have those 14 points here, and nearly all of them relate to non-emergency work. Yesterday, the Secretary of State claimed that the 14 points included a ban on radiophones, but there is no ban on radiophones for emergency use. The text specifically states:

> "Crews will now return to ambulance stations for next instructions unless contacted by control to answer an emergency call."

It is not ambulance staff who have suspended emergency calls but management who have decided to escalate the dispute.

The second question to be addressed is how can Ministers be so convinced that 6·5 per cent. is the right award for ambulance staff, yet at the same time be so terrified of putting that case to arbitration? The country knows that this dispute could end today and that full cover could be restored if the Secretary of State would call in the arbitrators instead of the Army.

The budget of the National Health Service, the pay of its staff and the maintenance of the ambulance service are all matters for which Ministers are responsible, yet since the start of the dispute eight weeks ago they have not once met the staff side in an attempt to find a solution. It is the Secretary of State, not Duncan Nichol, who is responsible for the cash limits on the National Health Service, and this House is the place where he must be held to that responsibility. I submit that this is a proper matter requiring urgent debate.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

> "the ambulance dispute."

I am satisfied that the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman is proper to be discussed under Standing Order No. 20. Has the hon. Gentleman the leave of the House?

The pleasure of the House not having been signified, MR. SPEAKER *called on those Members who supported the motion* *to rise in their places, and not fewer than forty Members having accordingly risen, the motion stood over under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) until the commencement of public business tomorrow.*

3.39 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It might be helpful following your ruling, Sir, if I were to say that the debate on parliamentary pensions, which was arranged for tomorrow afternoon, will need to be postponed. The House will regret the need for doing that, but obviously it follows from the ruling that you have given. I hope to find time for that debate as soon as possible.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Further to the point of order Mr. Speaker. Of course we accept that the debate on Members' pensions should be postponed. The Opposition, at least, recognise that, although that matter is important, the dispute in the ambulance service is far more important.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A number of us heard the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), who has chosen to leave the Chamber, say clearly —indirectly addressing you, Sir—"You grant that and you lose your job."

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I need hear any more. Fortunately, I did not hear that remark.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the hon. Member's application under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Marlow: This is on a different point. I was sitting next to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) and I did not hear him say anything. What I did hear was the Leader of the Opposition, in his agitated and florid way, inciting his Back Benchers to raise points of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that we can now get on with today's business in a parliamentary fashion.

BILL PRESENTED

STUDENT CHARTER

Mr. Simon Hughes, supported by Mr. David Alton, Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mrs. Ray Michie, Mr. Richard Livsey, Mr. Matthew Taylor, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Menzies Campbell and Mr. James Wallace, presented a Bill to provide for the appointment and set the functions of a committee to ensure access to further and higher education establishments; to provide for the welfare of students at such establishments; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 218.]

National Missing Persons' Register

3.41 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require police forces to submit standardised information to a national missing persons' register within a prescribed time; and for other purposes.

Anxiety is growing over the way in which we handle the problem of missing persons. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to leave the Chamber quietly if they are not remaining for the submission.

Mr. Arnold: Research by the Church of England Children's Society shows that, in 1986, 98,000 people were reported as missing. Although this includes individuals who go missing more than once during the year, it is calculated that some 50 per cent. of disappearances go unreported. Although a significant number of people are recovered in days or within a week, many remain missing. Far too many of these head for the bright lights of London. The Central London Teenage Project reports that, although some 40 per cent. of teenagers coming into the capital originated in London and the south-east, 16 per cent. were from the north and north-west and 12 per cent. were from Scotland. These are young people who arrive at King's Cross or Euston, many of whom fall prey to the predators of crime, prostitution or commercial exploitation.

In the circumstances, the British Transport police do a valiant job in coping with these runaways, but they have to waste an immense amount of time trying to establish the identity of many of the young people whom they pick up. The teenage project, which assists young people in its centre, always makes checks with Scotland Yard's missing persons register and has made the disturbing discovery that only 39 per cent. of runaways are registered as missing and 61 per cent. are not. We should ask, why not?

We have a haphazard system of recording missing persons. The system has grown like Topsy. We have 53 police forces, each with its own policy. In my county of Kent, missing persons are classified as vulnerable or not vulnerable. These are basically minors, pensioners or those with medical, psychological or suspicious records. The rules require them to be registered as missing within four hours of report and details are forwarded to neighbouring divisions or forces that are thought relevant to the case. They are reported to New Scotland Yard only if the person is thought to have headed for London. All cases are reported to New Scotland Yard after three days.

I have also looked at the position at my own Gravesend police station. It has had 103 cases of disappearances so far this year. Overwhelmingly, those have been solved within 48 hours. When I made my inquiries, there were only two cases outstanding—one from the previous night and one reported six days previously. To what extent do other forces follow suit? Are they as tight in informing New Scotland Yard? Why is it that the Central London Teenage Project found that 61 per cent. of runaways were not registered centrally? Could it be loose policy by some police forces? One Welsh force, for example, only forwards details of vulnerable people to Scotland Yard after 14 days. Could it be that the two thirds of runaways from home come from families who do not bother to notify the

[Mr. Arnold]

police or are scared to do so? One third of runaways come from social services care. Could that reflect the supervision and sense of responsibility of a number of those departments?

This is not a new problem. Dick Whittington came to London to seek his fortune and in the 19th century, Charles Dickens's Fagin displayed in a genteel fashion the way in which young runaways could be led into crime. However, the scope for the international exploitation of young, vulnerable people is new. With a vast increase in travel, there may be an expansion of white slaving and of the involvement of young people in drug running. Clearly, that motivated the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to recommend the co-ordination of national offices responsible for tracing missing persons. But if international mobility and, possibly, the sophistication of criminal exploitation have increased, so too have the technological aids available to the police.

Scotland Yard has operated a police national computer at Hendon since 1974. In addition to a variety of registers, it has run an index of wanted and missing persons since 1978. Last year, it held files on 9,951 missing people. They included 495 boys and 425 girls aged under 14, 980 youths and 1,172 girls aged 14 to 18, and 3,696 men and 3,183 women over 18. By the end of the year, 2,156 of those people were still missing. Of those reported missing, 5,000 returned home voluntarily. Nearly one third were found as a result of police inquiries or publicity, 2 per cent. were found dead and 3 per cent. were held by the police because they were accused of offences.

The police national computer has several hundred terminals held by force headquarters and some divisions. They can be used for viewing and entering data, although only about one half of the forces can interface them with their own computers. The index is essentially a passive and voluntary aid to our 53 police forces. If it were to become a standard requirement to enter specified data within an obligatory time frame, a more complete and systematic response could be achieved.

We require a framework that establishes an obligation to register all minors, pensioners and those considered vulnerable on medical or psychological grounds. Experience shows that immediate inquiries following clearly established leads tend to produce a contact with the overwhelming majority of missing persons within 48 hours. It is, therefore, reasonable to require notification to the national register within that time limit for those cases whose lack of solution demonstrates potential seriousness. A requirement for cancellation and for frequent case review, perhaps fortnightly by originating forces, is clearly essential to avoid clogging the system.

Clearly, all this will involve resources, both to operate the enhanced national register of missing persons on the national police computer and to develop methods to take advantage of the wider scope of information. The Association of Chief Police Officers has submitted a report to the Home Office, which has yet to pronounce upon it. I stress to Home Office Ministers the urgency and importance of addressing the matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Jacques Arnold, Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. James Paice, Mr. Frank Field, Sir George Young, Mr. Stuart Bell, Mr. John Marshall, Mrs. Llin Golding, Mr. Ronnie Fearn and Miss Ann Widdecombe.

NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS' REGISTER

Mr. Jacques Arnold accordingly presented a Bill to require police forces to submit standardised information to a national missing persons' register within a prescribed time; and for other purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed.—[Bill 219.]

Local Government and Housing Bill and Employment Bill (Allocation of Time)

3.50 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Local Government and Housing Bill and the Employment Bill:

Lords Amendments

1. The remaining proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments to the Local Government and Housing Bill shall be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of those proceedings.

2. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments to the Employment Bill shall also be completed at this day's sitting and, if not previously brought to a conclusion, shall be brought to a conclusion three hours after the commencement of those proceedings.

3.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 or 2 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion moved by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to the Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

4. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on either Bill.

5. The proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

6. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair,

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

7.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

8.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further Message from the Lords on either Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration), the time at which, under this Order, any proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

9.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion moved by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before the time at which proceedings on either Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Last Thursday when I announced the business for this week I told the House that we would spend Monday and Tuesday considering the Local Government and Housing Bill and that today we would deal with the Employment Bill as amended in another place. I hope that the whole House—certainly a large part of it—will regret that it has not proved possible to keep to that arrangement, which was agreed through the usual channels as a sensible division of the time available.

It became clear yesterday that we were not making progress at anything like the pace—a perfectly possible pace—implied by those arrangements. That is why last night I had to inform the House of this revision of the business.

I recently had cause to remind the House of the Government's entitlement to achieve—after due consideration and debate—the passage of its business. We are now at the last stages of that process for both Bills. Both

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

are major parts of our programme on which both Houses have expended much thought and energy. We should not have introduced these Bills had we not been sure that they were necessary and valuable to the country. The House has confirmed that opinion at each stage. It would be a waste of the House's time and a failure in our duty to the electorate not to take sensible steps to safeguard both of the measures.

There are good, important measures in both of the Bills to increase democratic accountability and freedom. I shall, therefore, leave it to the Opposition to use dramatic and bloody metaphors about guillotines and slaughter. I shall continue to refer to this elegant motion correctly, as a timetable motion, which is absolutely necessary to dispose of the remaining business in a reasonable way.

Let me at this point pre-empt another argument that may be heard from Opposition Members, who usually assure us at this stage of their willingness—indeed, incredibly, their enthusiasm—to stay up all night and half the following day to consider any and every Bill. We all accept that there are times when we have to sit through the night. But neither I nor the country at large think it the most sensible way to give proper consideration to legislation. I see no reason to sit all night for the sake of a few self-proclaimed enthusiasts on the Opposition Benches who feel that spinning out the proceedings instead of allowing the business to be completed in a practical way somehow proves—as they would love to believe—that they have the Government on the run.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House accept that women who are being discriminated against and cannot obtain proper employment and young people who will be affected badly by the Bill will take exception to the way in which he trivialises their concerns and the concerns that some Opposition Members feel on their behalf?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not in the least trivialising real concerns about those real issues. The hon. Lady is right to point out that the second of the two Bills before us is intended to promote equality of opportunity in employment and vocational training and to repeal the discriminatory legislation that exists. There is no argument about the merit, purpose and quality of the Bill and it should be possible to discuss it sensibly along the lines originally agreed or those now foreshadowed.

I should like to remind the House that following the representations made on a similar occasion not long ago, I was able last night to ensure that we had both a debate on the Adjournment motion and an opportunity to ask questions on the business statement. Since Opposition Members have already had those two opportunities to express their indignation I venture to cherish the hope that we may be able to dispatch this timetable motion in less than the three hours potentially available for it and so get on to the substantive business.

We have been considering the Local Government and Housing Bill for the whole of the past two days and we should have completed consideration by now. We are not therefore curtailing debate on that Bill but, having reviewed progress made, have added two hours to the time already spent—and on to the more than 210 hours already spent on the Bill here and in another place.

Of course, there have been a large number of amendments to the Bill. That is not surprising: it is a major piece of legislation which completes essential reforms to the framework within which local authorities operate. All our efforts in that area have been directed to ensure that every council meets the standards of efficiency, accountability and fairness to which the best councils already adhere. The Opposition have made clear their lack of enthusiasm for that. Even so, on Monday we managed to deal with more than 300 amendments on important subjects such as councillors' allowances and the community charge and still get home not much past midnight. Last night, in contrast, we dealt with less than half that number in five hours, with four and a half hours spent on the first group of amendments,

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Leader of the House has no defence on that. There was a clear understanding that it would be possible to complete the first day's consideration of the Local Government and Housing Bill by midnight because the amendments tabled were largely concessions or changes that we saw as moving in the right direction. The difference is—I pointed it out last week—that the clauses dealing with housing are infinitely more complex and disputed and the Government have not moved at all, and in some cases are trying to reverse the Lords' amendments.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his judgment on these matters just as I am entitled to offer mine. We had fair warning that the rate of progress was not likely to improve although Opposition Members assured us, when we moved to adjourn last night, that all the amendments that really interest them come at the end of the Bill.

We have not had the chance to hear the House's views on the Employment Bill since it returned from another place but we shall have three hours to do so tonight. I will not pre-empt my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by detailing all its manifest merits. However, I will remind the House that the Bill contains important measures to promote equal opportunities, to remove restrictions on young people's employment and to reduce the burden of regulations on employers. Those are entirely beneficient propositions. The Bill has had 85 hours of parliamentary consideration and a further three should be sufficient because there are only two significant fresh propositions among the amendments. The first, relating to Sikhs and safety helmets in the construction industry, was introduced as a matter of urgency and great concern to the Sikh community. The second, relating to industrial training boards, has been discussed extensively with interested parties over the past few months and the general policy was announced as long ago as last December. It was not included in the Bill until the policy detail had been agreed.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Why, then, is the Employment Bill to be timetabled? There was no timetable on it in Committee or during its other proceedings in this House and the other place. The Leader of the House has stated that only two main items remain to be discussed. Those debates could be open ended so that all hon. Members who wish to do so can participate in them, and the Government's disastrous Employment Bill would still be able to progress through the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It might once have been possible to take that charitable and optimistic view, but it is not a view that one could sensibly risk at this stage in the passage of these Bills through the House.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Can the Leader of the House cite any precedent for a timetable motion being applied to a Bill on which there has never been any suggestion of filibustering or any timetables applied to its earlier stages, and being applied solely for the convenience of the business timetable as we approach the end of a Session?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In all these matters precedents develop for the purpose identified by the hon. Gentleman to ensure the efficient management and dispatch of our business in the light of the state of the business timetable when the question arises.

I realise that we had initially planned three hours for debate on these amendments, but I must have regard to the business that was already laid out for the rest of the week. When I first introduced the motion, I had to have regard especially to the much-awaited and often, postponed debate on parliamentary pensions. That has yet again had to be moved because you, Mr. Speaker, have ruled that there is business of even greater importance for tomorrow. We have to manage these measures in a fashion that will dispatch them today.

Finally, I remind the House, if it needs reminding, that subject to the progress of business the House will prorogue on Thursday 16 November. Any alteration of that would, I am sure, be a great inconvenience to the House. As Leader, I feel a special responsibility for ensuring that hon. Members get a short but not entirely undeserved rest when we have completed another full and successful programme. As a member of the Government, I feel an equal responsibility for ensuring that we secure these two important reforming Bills. For both reasons, I commend this motion to the House.

4.1 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): When the Leader of the House was appointed to his new post, there were great hopes—I stress that they remain great hopes among Opposition Members—that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would be a reforming Leader. However, if he does not mind my saying so, he has sounded more like a recidivist than a reformer this afternoon.

What the Leader of the House is asking us to accept is baldly and bluntly that a long, complicated and contentious Bill—the Local Government and Housing Bill—should be curtailed to no more than two hours' further discussion, and that the Employment Bill, which is equally contentious in some respects, should be curtailed to a maximum of a further three hours' discussion. We cannot accept that and there is no point in disguising our opposition to what the Leader of the House has suggested.

I was touched by the right hon. and learned Gentleman's desire to give us all a short autumn break. Coming so soon after a very long parliamentary recess and a relatively short working period of about four weeks, in which he has nevertheless felt obliged to introduce two motions encompassing four different timetables on four Bills, people outside the House—our constituents—will look a little askance at the apparent need for us to have yet another few days off work so soon. Of course, the real reason for the motion has nothing to do with the amount of time that has already elapsed in our discussion of these Bills; it is simply to ensure that the Government wrap up their business—whether or not there has been proper discussion of it—in time for the state opening of Parliament and the Queen's Speech. That is the driving force behind the motion and everybody knows it.

The Leader of the House will not be disappointed in at least one hope that he expressed as he will not get any foaming blood-red speeches from me about the need for the House to sit day and night to discuss legislation. In the almost 20 years that I have been a Member I have never thought it sensible to sit through the night. I do not believe that the overwhelming majority of our people think that that is sensible. Frankly, they think that it is barmy and I share their view. Although it is not possible to do so on this occasion, I hope that the Leader of the House will give practical effect to what he said about seriously considering a reform of our procedures. I assure him that he will have my support if he does so.

The Leader of the House has made some play, as he did in the early hours of this morning, about the difference in the rate of progress on the Local Government and Housing Bill between Monday and Tuesday. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has already pointed out that there were significant differences in the issues before the House on those days. At about 1 am today I gave a rather whimsical smile when the Leader of the House remonstrated with us all and said that on Monday we had managed to get through 300 amendments, as though there had to be some daily quota of amendments of which we should dispose.

It appeared that, because we had not got through another 300 on Tuesday, our behaviour was outrageous and that was an end to the matter.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Is the hon. Gentleman arguing that the introduction of the community charge and the circumstances in which it will be introduced, which we debated at great length on Monday, is not a significant issue between the parties?

Dr. Cunningham: Of course not. Its more accurate name, however, is the poll tax—certainly that is how it is known outside the House and outside the Conservative party. If any Conservative Members believe that their constituents talk about something called the community charge they are deluding themselves. The poll tax is one of the most controversial issues in contemporary politics, but some of the aspects of the Local Government and Housing Bill which were before the House yesterday are also controversial.

I remind the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) that 20 groups of amendments—not 20 amendments—remain to be considered on that Bill. That means that 10 groups must be discussed per hour given the timetable laid down by the Leader of the House, which is equivalent to six minutes per group. In total there are about 150 amendments still to be considered. I remind the Leader of the House that, in the main, those amendments are not Opposition ones. It was the Government who came back from the House of Lords with more than 600 amendments to their own legislation. For the Leader of the House to try to convey the impression that, somehow, all this extra parliamentary time is the fault of the Opposition is grossly misleading. We are talking about Government

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legislation that has been amended 600 times by Ministers, but we are expected simply to acquiesce to those changes. Apparently we are expected to speed the passage of the Bill. Whatever else the duties and responsibilities of the Opposition are, they are not to secure Government legislation—quite the reverse. The Leader of the House was on shaky ground when he advanced that argument.

The reason why we have had two timetable motions from the right hon. and learned Gentleman in four weeks and four timetables on four different Bills is that he has inherited a business timetable that is in a shambles. The Government's business programme has run——

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. David Hunt): The only shambles here is on the Opposition benches.

Dr. Cunningham: Would the Minister like to intervene?

Mr. David Hunt *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Cunningham: Well he would be wise not to make sedentary interventions or I might just take advantage of him and respond.

The Government's business programme is in difficulties because large numbers of important amendments have been made against the Government's wishes in the other place. I recognise and admit that we worked hard for and supported some of those amendments, and, therefore, some of them are welcome. However, it is also because the Government brought much of this legislation to the House in such a badly prepared state that it has been necessary over and over again, at every stage of proceedings, for Ministers, in Committee, the other place, and on the Floor of this House, to seek to change, correct and improve their own legislation.

Slowly but surely, the timetable of Government legislation has run into greater and greater difficulties. That is due to incompetent business management by Ministers as much as, if not more than, the Opposition or deliberate delaying tactics in this House. There has been no sign of any attempt to filibuster any of the legislation. That is why, until now, no timetable has been imposed on it. Therefore, from whichever angle we look at this matter, the Government's irresponsibility and incompetence have led us to this position today.

We have had 50 local government Bills during the Government's term of office. The one before us today is the fiftieth. Even after 50 attempts to get things right, the Government have come along at the 11th hour with more changes and corrections. They are in such a mess over local government policy because they have no underlying, cohesive principles about it. Therefore, they will never get it right and are unlikely to get much, if any, support from the Opposition on local government legislation.

As the House knows, I have, inevitably, had less to do with the second Bill affected by the timetable proposal: the Employment Bill. The Secretary of State for Employment, who is present, will know better than I what the major points of opposition to the Bill have been. It has not been thought necessary to curtail discussion on that Bill, which has been strongly opposed at various stages, but has nevertheless progressed. However, now, suddenly and abruptly, discussion of it is being curtailed simply for the convenience of the Government's legislative timetable, and no other legitimate reason.

If the positions of Government and Opposition were reversed—as certainly they soon will be—and nothing about parliamentary procedure had changed in the interim, Ministers and shadow Ministers would almost be making reverse speeches. An irony of this system is that it goes on and on. The next Government, a Labour Government, will almost certainly find it necessary, because of the arcane procedures of the House, to insist on timetable motions at some time. There is no point in disguising that. It is in the interests of all hon. Members, the Government and certainly our constituents, that we get together to do something about it. Sooner or later, people who, with the advent of television, will have more opportunity than ever before, thank goodness, to scrutinise the affairs of the House, will say that the system has been brought into disrepute.

I have no reservations about opposing the motion on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends. However, I hope that the new Leader of the House will look at the matter, his own position and difficulties, learn some of the lessons and seek to reform our procedures.

4.14 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) refreshingly frankly said that if the roles were reversed the same speeches would have been made. There is something of a ritual about these debates——

Dr. Cunningham: Unless there was a change of procedure.

Mr. Wallace: Quite so. Perhaps it falls to me to call down a plague on both Houses—the Government and the Opposition are as bad as each other.

Although there has always and rightly been some outrage about guillotine motions, I notice that in a speech on such a motion in 1988—on the Education Reform Bill—the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure, the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), said that about 20 years ago debates on timetable motions lasted a full day, the House was packed for them and relationships between the usual channels were strained to breaking point. It is a sign of the times that now, when guillotine motions come along, they produce an almost empty House. The ritual speeches of outrage are made, but the usual channels appear reasonably fluid.

Be that as it may, important issues are at stake. For a change, the Leader of the House did not cite the precedent of the occasion when the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) guillotined five Bills in one day—no doubt that will come up at some stage in the debate. However, the right hon. and learned Gentleman responded to my intervention by saying that precedents have developed. Today we are setting a precedent. The right hon. and learned Gentleman could not cite a previous occasion of a timetable motion being introduced on a Bill such as the Employment Bill on which there has been no time wasting or filibustering. I was a member of the Standing Committee on the Bill and spoke on Report and I know that the debates were constructive and, on the whole, good.

The timetable motion has been brought in merely because of the deadline of the end of the Session and it will be used as a precedent for similar motions. Thus are the rights of Back Benchers and of the House eroded.

The motion provides that after certain Questions are put Mr. Speaker will take all the remaining Lords amendments together and ask the House whether it agrees with them. It is breathtaking to ask hon. Members to agree with everything when they might want to disagree with some amendments and agree with others. We will be asked to agree to them on the nod, with no attempt having been made to separate them.

I also note that the Question on the appointment of a quorum and the membership of a committee to draw up reasons why the House might disagree with a Lords amendment will be put forthwith. Nothing is said about an amendment to that motion being taken forthwith. These committees are usually devised by Front Benchers from both sides without consulting other parties. It is interesting to speculate on what might happen if my right hon. and hon. Friends and I or a member of the other minority parties tabled an amendment to change the composition of the committee. It appears that there is nothing to stop a lengthy debate on such an amendment. I should be grateful if the Leader of the House would confirm that.

Many of the amendments were tabled at a very late stage in the other place. I understand that the other place resumed business on the Local Government and Housing Bill on Monday 9 October. On 6 October, 192 new Government amendments had been tabled, one of them 17 pages long. Included in the batch were amendments to the poll tax legislation. Many of their Lordships complained bitterly about the lack of time that they had been given in which to consider important Government amendments.

Not only were amendments introduced on the Employment Bill to deal with the winding up of many of the industrial training boards, but the Bill's long title had to be changed to enable the Government to do that. So another Bill was tacked on at a late stage in the other place; it has been brought here; and it is now being nodded through in only three hours. Far from having the normal proceeding of three Readings plus Committee and Report in the House and a similar process in the other place, we are being asked to pass this important employment measure with the minimum of discussion in the House and in another place.

The measure deals with the winding up of industrial training boards and will involve consequences, not least about pensions, for the staff of the training boards. It does not enhance the reputation of parliamentary democracy when legislation can be dealt with in such a shorthand and off-hand manner. We are dealing with an unusual case because we are not being asked to deal with legislation that has been considered at great length in another place. There, it was virtually passed on the nod without close examination and we are being asked to do the same.

One of the most contentious points in the Local Government and Housing Bill relates to staircasing, and in that context the Government have tabled an amendment to disagree with the amendment tabled in another place. Some of today's newspapers have reported that the Government intend to respond to the Lords amendment with a package of measures. That is important, and if the House is asked to disagree with the Lords amendment on the basis of such a package I hope that in the remaining two hours of the debate the Minister or the Secretary of State will put the package on the record. I hope that we do not find that time has run out before we hear about that.

The amendments are tantamount to tacking a new Bill on to the Employment Bill and we should view that with some concern. Increasingly as Bills go through this House or the other place, some issue arises for which it is convenient to use the legislation that is going through. The result is that the nature of the legislation changes because of the addition of clauses. Insufficient time is then allowed when it comes back to the House for detailed scrutiny. Perhaps we can look at some ways in which such situations can be avoided. I should like to suggest a simple solution, although it is fundamentally different from our constitution. It is that the House should be relieved of all Scottish legislation through that legislation being referred to a Scottish Parliament. That would provide much more time for consideration of other measures in this Parliament.

Secondly, as the hon. Member for Copeland has suggested, perhaps we should start to look at proper timetabling from an early stage. There could be a legislative committee to do that. I understand the objections to it, not least the advantage that the Opposition could be said to be giving away because they could not exert pressure of time on the Government. However, given the way that the Government have acted, that does not amount to much of a weapon.

Thirdly, the Government could put their own house in order and not overload the legislative programme. We were always led to believe that the Conservative party came to power committed to reducing the burden of legislation and to rolling back the state. However, year after year more and more legislation seems to tumble out. We have passed legislation that allows Ministers to make orders and other secondary legislation. That must make life difficult for the ordinary citizen, not to mention accountants and lawyers, although in the case of lawyers it possibly also makes life profitable. That does not enhance our reputation. As I have said, it puts more burdens on the citizen who has to try to keep up. If the Government wish to avoid that they should calculate at the beginning of each Session how much legislation they wish to bring forward.

It is a matter of profound regret that we are being asked to railroad legislation. Again, that damages parliamentary democracy. Before the 1983 general election Lord Pym said that a large majority often carried some large problems. It has caused a profound problem for parliamentary democracy because with their large majority the Government think that they can do what they like. When it appears that there might be some procedural inconvenience they bring forward a timetable motion and use their large majority to pass whatever they like. These things do not promote the idea or concept of parliamentary democracy. For those reasons, we shall have no hesitation in voting against the timetable motion. I hope that, in another Session, we can arrange our procedures in such a way that legislation is not passed on the hoof as it is now.

4.25 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I am not in favour of timetabling Bills from the beginning. Apart from the other arguments, it would deny the Opposition of the day

[Mr. David Winnick]

opportunities that they should have. Being a generous sort of person, I have in mind the Tory Opposition that we shall have after the next general election. I would imagine that when the Tories are in opposition, as they will be, they will not be in favour of the kind of reform advocated by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace).

It is often argued that the anger on the Opposition side over a guillotine motion is artificial and does not amount to anything. I assure the House that there was nothing artificial about our anger last night. It was genuine, because we believed that we were debating Lords amendments and our own amendments to an important Bill. No Tory Member could surely deny the importance of the substantive matters that were either being debated, or would have been debated had we been allowed to do so. Instead, at 11.30, the Government decided that enough was enough.

Nobody has seriously suggested that there was any filibustering. I spent 10 minutes speaking about ring fencing and related housing matters. I have looked at what my hon. Friends have said, and all their speeches were brief and relevant. What is interesting is that not one Tory Back Bencher considered it appropriate to speak, even on these matters of substance such as ring fencing and the way in which council tenants will be faced with even more substantial rent increases on top of those of the past few years.

We were dealing with the housing crisis and the plight of people who cannot afford a mortgage and so are denied adequate accommodation because over the past 10 years, local authorities in the main have not been able to build. Are these matters that can be considered minor or trivial? Are they not matters that should concern not only the Opposition but the House as a whole?

What I find surprising is a factor that came up again in Question Time today—the lack of seriousness with which Tory Members regard the homeless. *[Interruption.]* Some Tory Members are having a laugh, but what is funny about being homeless? What is amusing about the continuous vigil, taking place opposite Downing street, organised on behalf of the homeless by Shelter? What is amusing about so many of our fellow citizens having to spend time, often with children, in bed-and-breakfast hostels? Is it amusing that many will be spending Christmas in such accommodation? Should we dismiss that and say that it is of no great interest?

What is the House of Commons for if it is not willing to debate such serious matters as the plight of our fellow citizens, whether that is caused by lack of housing or lack of employment? Many people are denied adequate housing because they cannot now, and are not ever likely to be able to, afford a mortgage. These are serious issues, and that is why we believe that it is necessary to debate the other aspects of the Bill on planning, grants, repairs of council dwellings and houses in multiple occupation. We could not debate those issues last night, and we shall not be able to debate them at any length or at all today because of the timetable motion.

To us, if not to Tory Members, these are matters of great interest. We are not hypocrites. If we say to our constituents, when we respond to letters and to those who come to our surgeries, that these matters concern us, we mean it. When we say it during an election, we mean it. When we say that we shall raise certain issues if we are fortunate enough to be elected to the House of Commons, we mean it. If we did not mean it, there would be no reason and no justification for electing Labour party candidates to this place. We are genuine over these matters. Conservative Members may disagree with us as much as they like, but let them not deny our genuine commitment to housing, employment and other social and economic issues.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said from the Opposition Front Bench—I would not disagree with him for one moment—all Governments try to ensure that guillotine motions are carried. It would be kindergarten politics to pretend that when a Labour Government are in office they never try to carry guillotine motions. It would be wrong to say that a Labour Government would not try to do so in future. All Governments introduce and implement such motions, and they have done so for the past 100 years or so. I would not try to pretend otherwise. If I did, it would be easy enough to go to the Library and find the appropriate copies of *Hansard.*

We are arguing that guillotine motions should not be introduced in the way which the Government have adopted. The Government have an ample majority, but they should be more reluctant to act as they are acting. They should show respect for the Opposition's wish to discuss issues.

There is undoubtedly a difference, even if Conservative Members are not willing to concede it now, between a Government with a majority of five or even fewer be it Labour or Tory, and a Government with a majority of 100 or more. There is a feeling outside this place that this is a Government who have a strong authoritarian approach. It is considered that they are led by a Prime Minister who does not show much respect for democracy. Moreover, it is considered that the Prime Minister does not show much respect for her Cabinet colleagues. It is unfortunate that the Government are displaying those same attitudes when dealing with the House. They are riding roughshod over our rights and privileges.

I do not mess around with procedure, and last night was the first time that I used the "I spy strangers" device. I did so to ensure that the Government's supporters would remain in this place for another 15 minutes. I do not pretend otherwise. I had no wish that the motion should be carried. The Minister appears to be shocked. He should be shocked when he is confronted with genuine issues. I do not know what the Minister is muttering, but I make no apology for moving such a motion last night for the reasons I have stated.

I give a warning which follows the concern that I voiced last night to the Leader of the House. If a Government are to show such a dictatorial attitude to the House and show contempt for it, there are ways for Opposition Members —if not those on the Front Bench, certainly those on the Back Benches—to make life extremely difficult for the Government. We all know that Tory Back Benchers are eager to be home at 10 pm, 10.30 pm or midnight at the latest.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Whose homes are they anxious to be in?

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend has made an irrelevant comment.

I feel certain that many Tory Back Benchers, unlike many of my constituents, have adequate accommodation. They are not the sort of people for whom the vigil outside Downing street is being organised. Many Tories on the Treasury Front Bench and on the Back Benches have more than one home.

If the Government are to adopt a dictatorial attitude, Opposition Back Benchers will then find ways and means of making life difficult for the Government. The new Session will begin shortly, and my hon. Friends and I are determined, notwithstanding that the Government have an ample majority, to find ways, as far as we are able, to ensure that important issues are debated at reasonable length. We shall not filibuster. We shall engage in proper debate, as we did last night. If the Government seek to deny us the opportunity to do so, we shall find ways and means. It takes only 25 Members—30 at the most—continually to make life extremely difficult for the Government.

The Leader of the House is not here, but I hope that the Minister will ask him to make that point very clear to all Ministers. We will not be fooled around with or treated with contempt, day in and day out. We have our rights. We were elected to voice our concerns about housing, employment and many other issues and we shall find every opportunity to do so.

4.35 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): The kindest comment that I can make on the speech of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) is that he failed to deliver it with a straight face, and I can understand why. It is evident from the number of Opposition Members wishing to speak that they intend to prove the rule that speeches expand to fill the time available for their completion. I see no reason why I should not give them a hand in doing so. There is no reason why this debate should be a one-way process, and I very much hope that some of my hon. Friends will also intervene and put the other side of the coin.

It is clear from what the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said that he does not consider it to be any part of the Opposition's duty to help the Government get their legislation, and I would have been amazed had he said anything different. However, I am not sure whether he endorses the shrill threats of the hon. Member for Walsall, North to do everything possible to bring the proceedings of Parliament to a standstill. I do not think that that would raise the public's opinion of those on the Opposition Back Benches.

Dr. Cunningham: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene so early in his speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) did not threaten to bring the proceedings of Parliament to a standstill. He said that this place works by consent, and that if the consensus breaks down, it is easy for a small group of hon. Members to make life very difficult for Ministers. The chairman of the 1922 Committee knows that, because of his long experience in the House. I refer him to my constituency neighbour, the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) who, as Conservative Chief Whip, often did that very successfully during the period of the last Labour Government.

Mr. Onslow: Some of us have long memories of other Labour Governments and what happened in those days. I do not know whether, ultimately, it did any good for those who set out to keep the House up all night. I first came to the House in 1964, when the Committee stage of the Finance Bill was still taken on the Floor of the House. As I left the House for a shave and a wash at 7 am, following one all-night sitting, I was greeted by one of my colleagues who said, "Well done, you will be glad to know that two of their side had heart attacks during the night." I did not think that that was the way to conduct parliamentary business.

If the hon. Member for Walsall, North reflects on that, I do not think that he will think it to be a good way to conduct parliamentary business. It is street hooliganism on a parliamentary level—but, of course, the hon. Gentleman is a street hooligan on a parliamentary level. I hope that he is not typical of the new, enlightened and ambitious Opposition leadership. Perhaps the same ritual and synthetic speeches that we hear on such occasions from Opposition Back Benches will be repeated again today——

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are told by the Chair that parliamentary language should be observed. I resent being described as a parliamentary street hooligan; I am nothing of the sort. I make no apology, and neither would my hon. Friends, for doing my job. I am not sure that the term "street hooligan" should be used or even whether it is in order. Perhaps you could guide us on that matter.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I should certainly prefer not to hear that sort of expression, but I have no authority to ask for it to be withdrawn at this stage.

Mr. Onslow: I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I prefer not to be provoked into using such language —but if I am, I will.

The Opposition, having filibustered, have been caught out. Having sought to burn up time in a way that has had a predictable result, they are now complaining because their whiskers are being singed. There is nothing strange or new about that. As I do not wish to prolong the proceedings, I shall not make a long speech, and I shall not give way to the hon. Member for wherever it is again.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will assure us that we have not had so many amendments to consider because of a defect in the draftsmanship of the Government's legislation. As an educated man, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will remember the quotation from Gilbert and Sullivan, which says:

> "I'm the parliamentary draftsman,
> I draft the country's laws.
> And of half its litigation,
> I'm undoubtedly the cause."

That quotation goes back a bit, but I am not sure that things have changed. I do not wish to be unfair to the parliamentary draftsmen, but I wish to be assured that there are enough of them to discharge their duty to present legislation to the House in a form which does not require amendment. I hope that the House can be reassured on that matter by the Minister when he replies to the debate. It is an important issue for all right hon. and hon. Members. It is a great waste of our time to have to go over legislation because it has not been brought before us in a good enough form.

[Mr. Onslow]

Opposition Members may be surprised, but I believe that we are more likely to move towards the timetabling of Bills in Committee than many of them believe. I was not a member of the Select Committee on Procedure that recommended that there should be a Committee timetable for many Bills. Therefore, I cannot claim to have gone through all the arguments which brought its members to that conclusion, and I shall not comment on the Government response to the arguments that were then presented.

However, the House should consider the likely effect of televising the proceedings of Standing Committees. I believe we will soon come to a point where it will no longer be accepted as the role of Government Back Benchers to sit quiet, while Opposition Back Benchers spin out time, however familiar with that we may have become. Government Back Benchers have also been elected to speak. The hon. Member for Walsall, North does not seem to understand that.

We shall enter into the debate. We have a precedent for doing that in the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill. A number of my colleagues from south of the border were fortunate enough to be invited to serve on the Committee stage of that Bill. They felt that they might as well enter into the debate and they did. I am glad to say that they trounced the Opposition thoroughly. I heard that in Scotland, so it must be true. That will not be the only occasion when that happens.

The Opposition should understand that the cherished right to burn up time in Committee will not be theirs for ever. That will be a great disappointment for many Opposition Members whom I see on the Back Benches. We are about to enter a different dimension, and I think that it will be a better one.

The proposition that we have to endure a battering from the arguments, or non-arguments, of Opposition Back Benchers in Committee before a guillotine can be obtained seems likely to go by the board. In 10 years' time it will be an accepted part of proceedings in the House to ration and allocate time sensibly and to keep speeches short, and I do not suppose that we will get many more debates like this. It will be good riddance to synthetic rubbish.

4.44 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I deeply resent the assumption that Opposition Members wasted time on the Employment Bill. As my right hon. and hon. Friends know, we wasted no time.

I was looking forward to a thorough debate on some of the Lords amendments. There are 33 amendments that we have not yet had a chance to debate in the House, and we oppose 23 of them. That is a considerable number. The amendments are concerned with issues which greatly divide the two sides of the House. For example, there are fundamental differences on questions of deregulating health and safety and exploiting young women and young people, and I do not agree with the definition of equality given by the Leader of the House. I am not impressed when a former Foreign Secretary tries to instruct me on equal rights. We have different opinions about that.

I wanted the House to be able to discuss further the underlying emotion that has been expressed constantly by the Government—the job-at-any-cost mentality. People should not have to settle for jobs regardless of pay, terms and conditions. We need to discuss the health and safety at work provisions for young people in some detail. A longer debate would have given us an opportunity to air that thoroughly and to let the nation know some of the shocking statistics for young people at work.

Young people are often inexperienced, and they are not fully mature. They receive lower wages than adults. However, the Government are repealing protection for young workers in the Employment Bill. It would end the maximum 48-hour week for young people in factories, abolish compulsory breaks and remove the limit on overtime. As a result of those changes, approximately two thirds of the 900,000 young people concerned will no longer be protected by legislation, despite the undisputed evidence that people under 25 have a greater chance of being injured at work.

The House could usefully spend time debating these amendments if we had a chance. We oppose many of them, but it is important to discuss them.

I particularly wanted to discuss our amendment to clause 9, as it would extend help to where it is needed—to many parents on incomes below the Department of Employment's estimate of a full-time employee's earnings for the first month of that financial year. I wanted a long debate on that because I hoped that I could change Conservative Members' minds. I know that that is difficult, because Conservative Members have closed minds, but one lives in hope and it is always worth having a go.

If we intend to be serious about training people to re-enter the labour market, and to make full use of their talents and abilities, it would have been useful to give that amendment an airing. We have a dearth of trained workers and if we are to respond, it is important to go into the details and to look at the evidence that suggests what a badly trained work force we have. A debate on our amendment would have given us that opportunity.

The Government have made a mess of both these Bills —although one is more disgraceful than the other. Because of the drafting of the Bill and the large number of amendments, we will not be able to discuss vital issues.

I do not want a large number of people to be forced into employment training, as it is a dreadful scheme. It is just over one year old and it was hyped up by the Government as a massive investment to train today's unemployed. I have had evidence in my surgeries of some of the distress the scheme has caused.

The evidence to date shows all too clearly that the employment training scheme has failed to achieve any of its objectives. We could appropriately have discussed that failure had we dealt with a lengthy amendment relating to training. We all know of the scheme's miserable failure to recruit the numbers predicted by the Government, and to provide adequate work experience placements. My hon. Friends and I had hoped to discuss all that in detail. I feel that we have a particular duty to debate the failure of the ET scheme to meet the needs of the unemployed, but clearly no such debate will be possible before the end of the current Session.

The Government probably slotted in the timetable motion on the Employment Bill with that on the Local Government and Housing Bill to lose us a major opportunity to discuss their disastrous training record. We should have liked to debate the implications for the single market in 1992, particularly those relating to manufacturing industry.

I also wanted to discuss the new clause dealing with the transfer of assets and staff to the industrial training boards, which has been touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott). The Lords new clause on the ITBs is simply another Bill tacked on to this one. It is disgusting; but, if we are lucky enough to catch the eye of the Chair, we may have five minutes at the most in which to discuss it.

Many other important issues need to be brought into the glare of publicity, in the interests of democracy—not least the extra powers that yet another Tory Minister has given himself. In employment and training, as in so many other contexts, we are seeing a worrying centralisation of power. The guillotining of two such important Bills is outrageous. My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) is right: the Government are holding the House and the rights of its Members in contempt, and I wish to add my disgust to that of other Opposition Members.

4.52 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): I wonder why the Opposition tried to delay discussion of the amendments yesterday. The Opposition, along with the House of Lords, have made a tremendously good job of looking after their friends throughout the country. Having lived in Yorkshire for many years, and having been involved in local government through liaison between my association and councillors there, I have had an opportunity to study the twin tracking and double tracking that went on there. The Lords amendments to the Local Government and Housing Bill, which this House has accepted, were clearly designed to ensure that those who currently earn large salaries while supposedly working for one authority can continue to work in another, as elected members. I find it rather upsetting that we allowed that concession.

I was amazed to hear what was said on Radio 4 by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett): I am sorry that he is not in the Chamber. He described as "minor" the work done by party officials who earned their living in a separate authority. The hon. Gentleman must know a good deal about that, having worked as a lecturer in Barnsley while working effectively full time as a council leader. He knows how the system works. He knows that Derek Hatton, that great militant who was employed for many years as a local government officer, did not attend to his duties—indeed, he hardly knew where his desk was—in the authority that was supposed to be employing him. While being paid by ratepayers in one area, he was engaged full-time in Militant activities in another.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The hon. Gentleman mentioned my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), who worked as a lecturer for my authority in Barnsley. As a member of the education committee, I was virtually one of his employers. What the hon. Gentleman evidently does not know is that his contract contained a minimum contact time and an arrangement for any money that he earned as a councillor to be paid back to the authority. My hon. Friend was not paid twice.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful for that vague assurance. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman has produced no figures in regard to the pay-back arrangement, nor has he mentioned the number of contact hours for which his hon. Friend was contracted to work.

If Opposition Members want to get on to names and personalities, there is a long list of them. If they want to play that game, we shall be happy to do so. We need only take the example of any Yorkshire council, particularly when there were both county and district councils. John Cornwall and Clive Betts are two interesting names from Sheffield district council and South Yorkshire county council. The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay), speaking as the employer of his hon. Friend the Member for Brightside, has just told us how these things are done: the jobs are in the gift of local authority members, who are able to appoint people and then write contracts allowing them to do all sorts of things.

Mr. Allen McKay: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruce: No, I will not.

Well over 50 per cent. of Labour members of South Yorkshire county council were also employed either by other local authorities or in nationalised industries: that is a fact. I remember that the Labour leader of the Kirklees authority was supposedly a plasterer working for Leeds city council. Although he did not do a day's plastering in seven years, he retained his salary.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman is indulging in a smear campaign. If he made some of those comments outside the House, he could be taken to court on a libel charge. Let me ask him to respect the fact that people outside the House cannot answer: they cannot come in here and put forward a defence. To say that someone was "supposedly" a plasterer implies that he was deceiving people deliberately, and drawing money from his deceit. That is a serious allegation.

I also ask the hon. Gentleman to consider what some of his Conservative colleagues in local authorities have said. There is the case, in south London, of a Conservative council leader who offered a job to a Labour councillor because of the possibility that he would lose his job under this legislation. To his credit, that Conservative councillor recognised that what was afoot was a nasty attempt to get Labour councillors out when they were doing ordinary jobs for ordinary people in a perfectly legal and proper way.

Mr. Bruce: I was challenged to name names; now the hon. Gentleman takes me to task for having done so. I was also challenged to cite more examples. Examples are manifest. It is some years since I was in a position to observe such occurrences, but when they were going on I was not a Member of Parliament, and I spoke to the press outside the House.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruce: No, I have answered the hon Gentleman's point. I am now answering the one that has just been made.

Mr. Battle: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is in some difficulty. He is making allegations with the protection of the House. He has named people and their jobs—jobs which, for his

[Mr. Battle]

information, they are still trying to do, although he claims that he speaks of the past. His comments are a slur on the professions of those people.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is attempting to use a point of order for the intervention that he wished to make. It is not a point of order. I remind all hon. Members that they have responsibilities when they speak in the House. We are dealing not with personalities but with a motion on whether there should be a time limit on the legislation that the House is about to enact.

Mr. Bruce: Thank you for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. When we talk about the time that we have to discuss the Bill, we should remember that many issues have not been properly considered, to the great disappointment of many of my hon. Friends on the Back Benches.

Abuses have occurred within the system, not only in Labour councils, but in Conservative and Liberal ones. One could cite examples—as Labour Members often do—of individuals who will be caught by the legislation. In recent times no one has challenged the fact that civil servants are required by their contracts of employment not to take part in party political activities. I am trying to set the record straight. Real problems occurred which caused real fraud—[Hon. Members: "Fraud?"]—on ratepayers, particularly in Yorkshire. Opposition Members attempted to delay the Bill so that they could make further inroads into the clause designed to deal with that problem.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has just made a serious allegation which casts a slur not only on Opposition Members but on the integrity of the Chair. He suggested that Opposition Members tried to delay the Bill. I am sure that you will not permit that, Madam Deputy Speaker, and nor would any other occupant of the Chair.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I believe there is no slur on the Chair. I remind hon. Members that there must be tolerant language and common courtesy in exchanges during debates.

Mr. Bruce: It is common currency that we are here to discuss a guillotine motion because the agreement reached through the normal channels to take two days to discuss the Bill was not observed by Opposition Members. Hon. Gentlemen are entitled to take further time, but they should not complain about the guillotine, because they did not get on with the substance of what had been agreed.

I have made my point. Although the Bill has been amended, it attempts to show that it is wrong for people to engage in twin tracking.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley) *rose*—

Mr. Bruce: No. I am about to finish.

All parties should acknowledge that twin tracking is wrong. Someone who wishes to represent the community as a member of a local authority should not expect to earn his pay as a senior officer of another local authority, even more so when he or she is not turning up to do that job or, in the case of lecturers, are not in the timetable. I hope that that message will reach such people and that they will start to work in a more moral manner. However, I suspect that the legislation will not be tight enough and that the Government will have to return to the matter in another Bill.

5.4 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The speech of the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) was both disgraceful and disreputable. I doubt that he would have the courage or, indeed, the purse to repeat those statements, appending those names to them, as he did, outside the House. If anyone abuses the rights and privileges of the House, it is not Opposition Members but Conservative Members like him, who do great disservice to the House by attacking decent, honest people outside the House who cannot defend themselves.

It ill behoves the hon. Gentleman and many other Conservative Members to attack local authority councillors who work for other local authorities when so many Conservative Members have directorships. I am surprised that they have the time to come to the House, never mind the nerve. There is more than a whiff of hypocrisy on Conservative Benches and it is whirling round the head of the hon. Member for Dorset, South. He should be ashamed of himself.

I am disappointed that the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) is no longer in his place. It was inappropriate for him to attack my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). I have always regarded the right hon. Gentleman as a fine example of a political thug. When a guillotine motion is moved, he plays his usual role as chairman of the 1922 Committee. He is a Uriah Heep in residence to the Conservative leadership.

The right hon. Gentleman took no part in the debate. I did not see him here during the debates on the Bill, yet as soon as the guillotine motion was moved he came here saying, "The Opposition waffled, spent their time abusing parliamentary privilege and tried to talk the Bill out." How the hell does he know? He was never here to listen. He just came to play the role given to him. I suppose that he does it fairly well, but his sincerity does not come over to me in great waves. He should have saved us his speech tonight. He did not bother to stick around to hear the rest of the debate on the guillotine motion.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I heard what the hon. Gentleman said about my right hon. Friend's interest in the Bill. Although I cannot swear to it, my recollection is that my right hon. Friend expressed some interest in it. Has the hon. Gentleman checked *Hansard* to ensure that his remarks about my right hon. Friend are true?

Mr. Banks: I would not willingly do a disservice to any hon. Member, even a Conservative Member. I sat religiously through the debate yesterday and on Monday on the Local Government and Housing Bill. There were few Members here and I know who they were. It is no great feat of memory to remember which Conservative Members were present, because so few were here.

Mr. Jopling: I repeat my question: has the hon. Gentleman checked that my right hon. Friend did not take part in the earlier debates?

Mr. Banks: I know that he was not present, so I do not need to check. I know because I was here, so there is no need for me to waste my time reading *Hansard*. The right hon. Gentleman was not here. He may have wandered in and out, treating the debate as a buffet where he could pick up a little nibble here and there.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I reminded the House earlier that the motion does not relate to personalities. It is a serious motion and must be debated seriously. I am sure that the hon. Member will oblige me.

Mr. Banks: Obliging you, Madam Deputy Speaker, is one of the great things that I want to do in life.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is enormously difficult to oblige me and it is extremely difficult to do so this afternoon.

Mr. Banks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. People will start talking about us soon, I am sure. All I want to do is to reply to some of the points that have been made. If hon. Members make comments, I feel that it is incumbent on me to defend my hon. Friends who I believe have been unjustly and unfairly attacked both inside and outside the House.

I oppose the guillotine motion. I am not worried very much about contempt of the House. I accept that the Government need to get their business through. The position will be reversed very soon, I am glad to say, and then, no doubt, I shall support guillotine motions. I am not, therefore, opposed to guillotine motions as such, but I am worried about the contempt that this motion shows not for the House but for the homeless in London and the nation as a whole.

We dealt on Monday with a number of issues that did not relate to housing. We dealt with local government issues and the hon. Member for Dorset, South spent a lot of time talking about something that had already been dealt with. What we have not had a chance to debate properly and that we are now being prevented from debating properly are the housing aspects of the Bill, the Lords amendments and our amendments. Many Conservative Members are prepared to close their eyes to the reality of this enormous housing and homelessness crisis.

It was wrong for the hon. Member for Dorset, South and the right hon. Member for Woking to suggest that the Opposition were deliberately dragging their feet. I could talk with feeling for hours about the plight of the homeless, both in my constituency and in London as a whole. I do not need to feign anger about that. My sincerity is not synthetic. I do not need to drag out the proceedings just for the sake of doing so. I see homelessness on a daily basis and it angers me deeply. I wanted to carry on making my contribution last night.

I accept that the Government want to get their business through, but there was no need for them to step in as early as they did. We could have sat through the night or into the early hours—until 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. It is a damned sight more comfortable to make speeches here at 4 o'clock in the morning rather than to sleep on the embankment at that time, so I do not consider that I would have been deprived or that my comfort would have been greatly endangered or impaired if I had had to be here then to debate these important issues. For some reason or another, however, the Government wanted to pull up stumps and get away as early as possible.

Mr. David Hunt: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was here when his hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, but he directly criticised the sort of conduct that the hon. Gentleman now advocates. Does he disagree fundamentally with his hon. Friend the Member for Copeland?

Mr. Banks: I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend on virtually everything that I hear him say. I have sat behind him during the proceedings on God knows how many Bills and I have watched him see off so many Ministers of State and Secretaries of State for the Environment that I have lost count. I am sure that my hon. Friend will continue to do that. He has already seen off five, and I am sure that he will see off a few Leaders of the House before the next election.

The Minister said that the time may well come when Bills have to be timetabled. I was not filibustering last night and I am not attempting to do so now. I do not believe that any Opposition Member was filibustering. How, therefore, were we abusing the procedures of the House last night?

Mr. Hunt: I do not want to make too much of this. I know that the hon. Gentleman could talk and talk. I am in no position to criticise him, because I made one of the longest speeches in the House since the last war. Therefore, I do not want to enter into competition with him. However, I recall that the hon. Member for Copeland directly criticised those hon. Members who felt that one of their duties was to take the House through the night.

Mr. Banks: But that was only if it was a deliberate ploy just to drag out the proceedings on the Bill. I said that that was not the case. If the Minister had approached us and said, "Let's finish at 4 o'clock in the morning," I feel sure that he would have had a reasonably sympathetic hearing. That would have provided us with an opportunity to discuss at some length and in some detail 650 amendments. It is very difficult to set them aside, just like that. One has to make an attempt to structure the debate around them so that we can understand what is going on and perhaps, even at this late stage, prevent the Government from committing a gross folly by the passing of ill-drafted legislation. It was not a question of talking through the night just for the sake of talking, but if we had had a few more hours we could have used them constructively.

Ministers, however, did not come forward with that proposal. They decided that things were looking a bit tough and that they were not sure how it was going to go, so they got in very quick last night. Consequently, there is a whole mass of amendments that we shall have to discuss in a miserly two hours. That does not do justice to the terrible housing crisis, nor does it do credit to the way that we conduct our business or to the way in which legislation reaches the statute book. The Minister knows that. I have said before that his is the most acceptable face of extremism that has surfaced in the environment team since 1983. I hope that I have done him no disservice by saying that.

The Minister was reasonably co-operative in the early stages. That is accepted. It is not that we want to connive with the Government. Wherever possible, however, we want to ensure that debates are held at a time when people outside can hear them. In many cases, what we say in this place falls on deaf ears on the Government side and is never heard outside the House. That is a great shame, not because of the value of what we say per se but because of

[Mr. Banks]

the importance of these decisions to the homeless, to those who are waiting for a house and to those who are living in sub-standard accommodation. That is what this part of the Bill is all about.

It is an awful and apposite comment on the attitudes and standards of today's Tory party that virtually no Conservative Members were here last night. A few of them came into the Chamber when they thought that there was to be a Division. The rest of them kept away. I think that some of them kept away because their consciences were troubling them. They did not want to hear the arguments. The feeling abroad in the Conservative party is that, if Conservative Members do not listen to the arguments and if they try to sweep the evidence under the carpet, the problem will solve itself.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Banks: I will give way to the representative of the Mafia.

Mr. Holt: To pursue the hon. Gentleman's line of argument, if he is suggesting that the Labour Benches are more frequently occupied than those on this side of the House, and if we were to take a count during every hour that every Bill is discussed in this place, I can guarantee that, although he individually would come out very high on the list—because I, too, am an assiduous Member of Parliament and sit here for long hours—his party would lose handsomely.

Mr. Banks: I thank the hon. Gentleman for some of his remarks. There are many debates that I do not attend and I do not take part in the proceedings on many Bills, not because I am not interested in them but because they are not necessarily relevant to my constituency. However, on crucial issues such as social security, housing, education and the National Health Service that affect millions of people, including those who have been dispossessed and put in a much worse position, both economically and socially, by this Government's policies, he will find that these Benches are very well filled, because the Opposition concentrate on issues that affect working-class people most particularly. This is one of those issues. That is why, last night, the Labour Benches were well attended, but the Conservative Benches were green acres of emptiness.

Mr. Ian Bruce: I hate to take issue with the hon. Gentleman, but 10 Labour Members are present. The hon. Gentleman told us that the Bill is of much importance to the Labour party. Are we to believe that only 10 Labour Members are interested in it?

Mr. Banks: We are discussing not the Bill but the guillotine motion, which is intent on allowing only two hours for debate. I hope that when we debate the Bill the hon. Gentleman will make a speech.

It is noticeable that Conservative Members always debate guillotine motions because they want to use up time. Yesterday, we had an important debate on housing for four and a half hours, yet not one Conservative Member spoke. The Minister had the gall to complain that he had had to listen to Labour Members' speeches for four and a half hours, but that complaint should have been directed at Conservative Back Benchers and not at Labour Members. I was prepared to sit down in the hope that I could tempt the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) into saying something about homeless people in London. Conservative Members are ready to make speeches on the guillotine motion because they want to eat up the time.

Mr. Harry Barnes: My hon. Friend was challenged about whether he had checked *Hansard* to see whether the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) had spoken on the Bill. I have done some research on my hon. Friend's behalf, and I can tell him that until 10.45 pm yesterday —*Hansard* is not printed after that—he had not spoken, although he had voted in three of the four Divisons.

Mr. Banks: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend, who is an assiduous researcher. I pledge that, when I am a Minister, my hon. Friend will be sitting next me in my ministerial office as my personal adviser. I promise not to sack him.

Mr. Barnes: It might be the other way round.

Mr. Banks: That is not very nice. My compliment deserved a better return than that. This is a cruel place, even on the Labour Benches.

I shall vote against the guillotine motion, and I hope that, if Conservative Members have no great interest in the Bill, they will do what they did last night—sit it out and let us speak for the homeless in this country, who are not represented here and who are not looked after by Conservative Members. We do not want Conservative Members to waste the precious two hours that we have, which will not be long enough to make the case that we want. We shall have years in the future to undo the damage that the Government and this wretched Bill will do to the homeless.

5.23 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I want to comment on the guillotine motion because I am in two minds about it. I have much sympathy with the Government moving the guillotine motion in view of last night's time-wasting. I spent four years in the House in enforced silence and developed acute sensitivity to time-wasting. Few hon. Members are more alert to it than I am.

I am sorry that the motion has been introduced because the Government are doing themselves a disservice by causing some Lords amendments not to be discussed and explained. I am thinking of Lords amendment No. 269, which, knowing the ways of the House, I expect will be cut out in the two-hour debate on the remaining Lords amendments, which will follow if the motion is agreed.

Lords amendment No. 269 deals with the vital matter —I know that this view is held by hon. Members on both sides of the House—of rural housing. It closely follows an amendment that I moved on Report, which caused me to do something that I had not done for many years—to vote with about 20 of my right hon. and hon. Friends against the Government. I was therefore most anxious to speak to Lords amendment No. 269, which is similar to the one that I failed to persuade the House to agree to in June.

Lords amendment No. 269 deals with the problems experienced by organisations that are anxious to maintain a stock of houses in rural areas for people of modest means who cannot afford to take on a mortgage for 100 per cent.

home ownership. The intention of the moves in this House and in the other place was to ensure that such a stock of houses remains available to people of modest means as a first step on the ladder through shared ownership with a housing association or other body.

I have had a difference of opinion with the Government. At the suggestion of a number of organisations outside the House, I wanted to ban the staircasing of ownership to 100 per cent. We have had arguments across the Floor of the House about maintaining houses for shared ownership, and I have had arguments with the Government.

When I failed to get my way in June, I gave notice that the Government would hear more about the issue. I said that the battle would be taken up again in the other place, and it was. Three weeks ago, Lords amendment No. 269 was debated in the other place and the Government were defeated by 111 votes to 38—a heavy defeat; hence the Lords amendment.

If nothing had happened since that vote I should be taking a poor view of the timetable motion and should be encouraging my right hon. and hon. Friends once again to take on the Government and insist that something be done for rural housing. However, that is not necessary because the Government have taken some excellent and most welcome steps to help to ensure that a pool of housing will remain available for people of limited means as a first step to part ownership. The Government do not want to ban staircasing up to 100 per cent., as I do. They prefer that part owners who staircase ownership up to 100 per cent. and wish to sell their house must sell it back to the housing association from which they originally bought it. I found the Government's preference unattractive when it was announced by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State because it was not properly backed by undertakings that sufficient and appropriate sums of money would be made available to organisations to use their pre-emptive right of repurchase rather than to allow the house, as currently happens, to be sold into the open market and therefore lost to the next generation of young couples in rural areas to start on the first step of home ownership. I am glad that the Government have given those clear undertakings that adequate funds will be available. My attitude has therefore changed.

I warmly welcome the Government's proposal. As I understand it, the cash will be available through a separate budget. I was pleased to hear that the Government have announced that they are inviting the Housing Corporation to propose a significant increase in its special rural programme for rented housing to allow 1,000 approvals next year, 1,200 in 1991-92 and 1,500 in 1992-93. The Housing Corporation is being invited to identify separately, for the first time, a rural element within its low-cost home ownership programme to allow 250 approvals next year, 300 in 1991-92 and 350 in 1992-93. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning said:

> "This will be welcome news for young people in rural areas who want affordable housing without having to move away."

I strongly endorse that comment.

Mr. David Nicholson: My right hon. Friend knows the strong support that I and other Conservative Members have given him during this period. What have the organisations concerned with rural housing said about the arrangements?

Mr. Jopling: I thank my hon. Friend and others for their support, and I shall come to that point.

In view of the Government's welcome change of mind, I have decided that I will not oppose their intention to remove Lords amendment No. 269 from the Bill. I do so on the basis that we try the Government's option for an experimental period of 18 months. I give notice that I shall expect the Government to carry out a review at the end of that period and that, if it has not worked out, I shall return to the matter.

Mr. Holt: I wonder whether my right hon. Friend has noted that, contrary to the parliamentary convention that a Member remains in the Chamber during the speech following his, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is not present.

Mr. Jopling: That is interesting, but given the hon. Gentleman's attack on my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) without checking the facts, it does not surprise me.

I come to the point about which my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) asked. I am supported in my view by many of the organisations that first drew the problem of rural housing to my attention. I shall quote only the National Agricultural Centre's Rural Trust which, referring to the period since the Government's defeat in another place, said:

> "In the short time available, we have achieved the maximum possible with regard to guarantees concerning the financing of repurchase. We have therefore agreed that an 18-month trial period will help to ascertain whether Planning Committees and landowners—or their legal advisers—will find these guarantees sufficient."

I welcome the Government's action. It follows my efforts last year in the debate on the Local Government and Housing Bill to assist rural housing. On that occasion, I was backed by 65 of my right hon. and hon. Friends on an amendment to the right-to-buy provisions to ensure that council houses that had been sold to their tenants and had restrictive covenants placed upon them—whereby they remained occupied by local people—did not get out of that net through a loophole in the law, resulting in those houses being let as holiday homes. We closed that loophole. I am glad to say that this is the second year running when I have been able to do something to promote rural housing for local people.

Having been able to get off my chest a good many of the comments that I would have made had we not had the guillotine motion, I am glad to support the motion.

5.35 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): I shall try to observe your strictures, Madam Deputy Speaker, about not engaging in comments on personalities. I must remind hon. Members that the House began to engage in such matters when the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) attacked my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and suggested that he did not deliver his speech with a straight face. My hon. Friend is a naturally pleasant person and his pleasant demeanour should not be mistaken for joviality. At least my hon. Friends have only one face, which is more than can be said for many Conservative Members.

The hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce), who has left the Chamber, referred to the Local Government and Housing Bill and the activities and employment of

[Mr. David Clelland]

councillors. I do not know what other jobs the hon. Gentleman has, but he certainly displayed all the qualities necessary to become a journalist for the *Sun*.

The Local Government and Housing Bill is a controversial and massive Bill. It will affect the housing of people in our constituencies and the administration of local government. It will place restrictions on elected members of councils. It will attack democracy by limiting the number of people who hold elected offices and restricting the political affiliation and activities of people employed by local government.

The Bill is an important piece of legislation on which, as one who has had some experience in local government, I should like to have spoken at length. The Opposition Benches are awash with Members with considerable local government experience and many points on the Bill have already been made.

Not many hon. Members, even on the Opposition Benches, have experience on the shop floor. Even fewer have spent considerable time as shop stewards for trade unions. In that respect, I consider myself to be part of a small, exclusive group. I shall therefore limit my remaining remarks to the Employment Bill. I support the remarks of the shadow Leader of the House—my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—and the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). I was congratulating myself on remembering the hon. Gentleman's constituency of Orkney and Shetland when I realised that I could not remember the political party to which he belonged. However, that is by the by.

I served on the Standing Committee on the Employment Bill. I agree that the debates were constructive and were conducted efficiently and expeditiously. We covered all the clauses and schedules, and Report and Third Reading took place without any time restrictions. As far as I am aware, there were no time restrictions in the other place. It is therefore a bit galling that the passage of the Bill is to be marred by this guillotine motion when there is much more to discuss. It is disgraceful that the Government should seek to curtail debate on a Bill which the Leader of the House conceded was controversial and important. It affects workers' conditions and the welfare of millions of people. The Bill is a further example of the Government's antipathy towards working people in general and the trade union movement in particular. It further shifts the balance away from employees towards employers and is yet another example of the Tory party's master and servant mentality.

The Bill and many of the Lords amendments are riddled with cynicism. On the pretext of opening up new opportunities for women, for example, the Bill opens up the possibility of women working below ground in the coal mines. Some people might ask why I should criticise that because it is part of equality for women at work. However, the Government have not addressed the fact that conditions underground are not suitable for women and they have no intention of addressing that problem before bringing in this legislation. When taken in connection with the Social Security Act 1989, the Bill provides for women to have their unemployment benefit stopped if they refuse to take employment down the mines—although the conditions are not suitable for them—under the "actively seeking work" rule.

On the pretext of opening up new opportunities for young people, the Bill opens up further opportunities for exploitation by employers, which has implications for the health and safety of young people in employment. On the pretext of opening up new opportunities for meaningful training, the Bill destroys the former tripartite arrangements for training and hands total power, and a considerable amount of taxpayers' money, to private employers who are elected by no one and responsible to no one and who represent no interests other than those of employers and business.

The final insult to add to injury is that it is claimed that the Bill will lift barriers to employment. In practice, it will make it easier for employers to sack workers without having to give them reasons and to avoid paying proper compensation when they are sacking them.

The Lords amendments, which we are now to consider in a restricted time, cover important issues which deserve more time than we are to be allowed. They include health and safety at work, the administration of safety procedures, and the welfare and conditions of women at work. The time set out in the motion to discuss those important issues is wholly inadequate, so the House should reject the motion.

5.42 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): As I said at the time, I greatly welcomed the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and the news he brought to the House. Apart from that speech, this afternoon and last night have been miserable occasions for the House and the conduct of our business.

I want to talk about the housing aspects of the Local Government and Housing Bill because, as the Opposition recognise, I am interested in these matters. However, as the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) promised us more "guillotines" if there were ever a Labour Government, I want to reflect on the origin of that word.

The British historian Thomas Carlyle described the originator of the term as a "respectable practitioner". If he had not been a Frenchman, I suspect that he might have been a member of the British Medical Association. Carlyle reports that Dr. Guillotin brought forward a proposal to improve the ventilation of the hall in which the National Assembly met. Perhaps we could do with his services sometimes in this Chamber. Carlyle continues:

> "but greater far, he can produce his 'Report on the Penal Code', and reveal therein a cunningly devised Beheading Machine . . . which product popular gratitude or levity christens by a feminine derivative name, as if it were his daughter: *La Guillotine!*"

Carlyle concludes:

> "Unfortunate Doctor! For two-and-twenty years he, unguillotined, shall hear nothing but guillotine, see nothing but guillotine; then dying, shall through long centuries wander, as it were, a disconsolate ghost . . . his name like to outlive Caesar's."

I fear that we may recall that in future timetable debates.

I sat through most of Monday's proceedings and spoke on Monday. I can confirm the judgment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House that we debated the issues in an orderly and sensible way on Monday despite the fact that, as I reminded the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), one of the issues was the community charge, which I would have thought was a fairly major issue between the Government and the Opposition.

I have shown a considerable interest in the housing aspects of the Bill. I spoke principally on housing on Second and Third Readings and two or three times in Committee. My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale has dealt with one source of concern on housing. However, another important issue —which, I regret, we shall have a limited time to debate because of the Opposition's antics yesterday—is the preservation of council accommodation for old people in relation to giving them the right to buy.

I have somewhat conflicting views on that issue and I have had representations in opposite directions from my constituents. The Opposition made a legitimate point in the other place—no doubt it will be made again this afternoon—about the danger of limiting council accommodation by extending the right to buy to that accommodation, especially in areas where council accommodation is limited. I hope that the housing officer of my own local authority, Taunton Deane, will not mind me quoting from his letter. He says:

> "To expose these properties to the Right to Buy would increase the risk of abuse, i.e. the real motivation for purchase may not come from the elderly secure tenant . . . but instead the prime mover may be a younger relative with an eye on the inheritance . . . The effect of these proposals will be particularly severe in certain rural locations where a small group of properties (normally bungalows) are specifically reserved for the elderly."

From my constituency surgery experience, I can testify to the son-in-law situation. On two occasions, elderly constituents have come to me accompanied by their sons-in-law. In one case, an elderly constituent had a flat with stairs and because that person suffered badly from arthritis, it was unsuitable accommodation. The council was able to rehouse my constituent in a ground floor flat which was far more suitable to that person's condition. It was then discovered—I must confess that my authority was somewhat at fault for not having made it clear—that this accommodation was designed for old people and therefore was not subject to the right to buy. My constituent was angry, but the son-in-law was angrier. I am sure that the House will appreciate the concerns and issues involved. There is a danger of abuse if the earlier Lords amendment is sustained.

Others may ask why we should not extend the right to buy to elderly people. Again I must cite a constituency case. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is not here, because he would be interested in my next point. In my constituency and elsewhere in the south-west, including the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), the Secretary of State for Defence, there are a number of properties that were formerly Greater London council homes for retired people. When the GLC was abolished, there were discussions about what should be done with those homes. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West has rejoined us.

At first, the idea was—and this would seem logical— that the local district council should take over these GLC retirement homes. For some reason, which I have never been able to ascertain, the Association of District Councils turned that down. As a result, the homes went to one housing association, which recently sold them to another housing association. There are a number of issues involved.

A year ago, people asked me, "Why do we not have the right to buy?" I am afraid that even if we carried the earlier amendment passed in the other place, they would not have the right to buy because a housing association owns the properties. Perhaps the Minister will elucidate during our debate on the Lords amendments. It is an important point that I should have liked to have time to explore during our debates on the Bill.

Mr. Holt: I am not sure where my hon. Friend's sympathy lies. Suppose that one partner is old and the other much younger. Surely the older partner would want to ensure the younger's security and would want the right to buy even if he or she was an old age pensioner.

Mr. Nicholson: I entirely accept that. The point that I am trying to make is that I am being pulled in different directions because of the housing situation in my constituency and others like it.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the hon. Gentleman recall why those seaside and country homes were built or purchased by the London county council, and then the GLC? It was to give elderly Londoners the opportunity to move to more pleasant surroundings in their twilight years. All that has gone now, and the sale of the houses will ensure that there is no future possibility of nominating Londoners to enjoy the benefits of seaside and country air. Does the hon. Gentleman feel that that ought to be taken into account?

Mr. Nicholson: I do not wish to prolong my speech, although the hon. Gentleman has made a legitimate point. If we had been able to debate these matters properly yesterday, we should certainly have wanted to discuss this point.

I am in a dilemma, although, on the whole, I welcome the judgment of Solomon that my hon. Friend the Minister has made on the Opposition amendment carried in the other place, which he will put to the House shortly.

I understand that, as so often on these occasions, the practices in the House yesterday did not represent a sustained attempt by the official Opposition to delay business. When guillotine motions were introduced by the Labour Government of the 1970s, they were, I suspect, the result of sustained resistance by a united Conservative party to a number of controversial measures. Increasingly —we hear this from the more approachable Opposition Members—such occasions are maverick occasions and do not represent official resistance.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nicholson: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not rise to that.

Mr. Battle: I sat through the whole debate on housing yesterday. The speeches are there in *Hansard* for all to read. We dealt with very few of the major issues because of the large number of Government amendments on the Amendment Paper.

Is the hon. Member now telling the House that the debates that we had on rents——

Mr. Holt: What is the point of order?

Mr. Battle: It is not a point of order; it is an intervention. Is the hon. Member for Taunton telling the House that the time that we spent on debates on rent levels, on the fact that housing benefit will now be paid out of the rents of other council tenants and on homelessness was not usefully spent? Conservative Members would not join in those debates, but the issues are of major concern

[Mr. Battle]

and not a moment of that time was wasted. We, too, wanted to deal with the amendments to which the hon. Gentleman was referring.

Mr. Nicholson: I do not doubt for a moment that the hon. Member made a sensible speech yesterday, as I know of his interest in these matters. I am complaining in general about the actions of Opposition Members, and about maverick resistence.

I wonder what sort of time a Labour Government would have, if one ever acceded to power, when trying to introduce measures to implement, for example, the economic policies of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and other measures that would be extraordinarily divisive of their ranks. I wonder what sort of resistance they would encounter from those mavericks, who will no doubt have increased in number. I regret that they will probably not have the powerful figure of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) to deal with the matter. Fourteen years ago, he turned on the mavericks in his party and described them as

"out of their tiny Chinese minds".

I have never been entirely sure of the etymology of that remark. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman has had the opportunity of discussing it with Deng Xiaoping. On another occasion, the right hon. Gentleman described the mavericks in his party in more earthy Anglo-Saxon language. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, would not allow me to repeat what he is supposed to have said. Those mavericks have led us to this timetable motion and restricted debate on the important issues raised by the Bill. I regret the need for the motion, but I shall certainly support it.

5.57 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I shall confine my speech to the Local Government and Housing Bill as it relates to Wales. The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) mentioned the importance of Lords amendment No. 269 on rural housing. I share his concern that that amendment will not now be debated. I was especially anxious that it should be debated because rural housing in Wales has been given a completely different flavour by the issue of Welsh Office circular 30/86, "Housing for Senior Management". There is no English equivalent and I want the House to know that I have raised the matter repeatedly and that I am still disturbed that, in general, people in rural areas in Wales must comply with local and structure plans but senior managers do not have to comply fully. An exception has been made in their case, and I feel that that is gross discrimination.

The Welsh Office issued a further circular, 44/87, which would have modified the original circular, but then claimed that it had not been issued. The original circular still exists. In my constituency of Gower and other Welsh constituencies local people living in rural areas cannot purchase houses because of high prices and cannot build them because of the adherence to local and structure plans while housing for senior management has been made an exception. That is an extremely distasteful and unnecessary intrusion. Young people in rural villages are prevented from building houses in the locality whereas people from outside can come in and do so.

Lords amendment No. 291 is also extremely important. I know that the Leader of the House, with his deep Welsh roots—his roots are perhaps deeper than his accent—will consider carefully the separate provisions for Wales which that amendment would allow. It says:

> "Where any provision of this Act which extends to England and Wales confers . . . a power on the Secretary of State to make regulations, orders, rules or determinations or to give directions or specify any matter, the power may be exercised differently for England and Wales, whether or not it is exercised separately."

It is a superb amendment because it would allow Wales to be considered completely differently.

The people of Wales would be delighted if the amendment were carried since it would enable two matters to be excluded from the current provisions on home improvements. First, there is the standard of fitness in terms of home improvement grants. The proposed standard of fitness for mandatory grants is wholly inadequate and falls short of present standards of fitness. A standard of fitness should go beyond that aimed at preventing danger to health and safety. It should aim to ensure a minimum level of comfort and amenity, which all householders of all tenures should be entitled to enjoy before the next century. It is important for the Government to understand that in assessing whether a house is fit or unfit, it will always be necessary to consider whether it is reasonably suitable for occupation in that condition. Specific standards should be set for rewiring, lighting, heating and thermal insulation. The target standard should be at least that of the National House Building Council.

In Wales we feel strongly that works to the external curtilage of the property should be eligible for grant aid. The present system applies only to the dwelling. In districts such as the Rhondda repair work or renovation to retaining walls is urgently needed. To neglect the fabric of such structures could detract seriously from works carried out to the main structure of the building.

The second crucial area that we in Wales would like to see changed is the concept of means testing of improvement grants. In 1986 the Welsh Office published its Welsh house condition survey. It showed that in Wales 80 per cent. of grants went to people on low income. Seventy two per cent. of grant recipients had savings of less than £1,000 and 90 per cent. of grants went to dwellings that were unfit, lacked amenities or were in substantial disrepair. Therefore, it is nonsensical to argue that a means test with all the stigma attached to it and the bureaucracy required to implement and check it is needed in Wales. It is a great shame that the amendment cannot be debated.

In response to the Government's consultation paper on home improvement grants, Swansea city council said:

> "The introduction of means testing will create a system which will involve both applicants, council officers and possibly other statutory agencies in considerable work which in many cases will have no beneficial effect in that grant will not be payable. Although this may appear to accord with ensuring that grant aid is properly targeted, it is of little help to the hapless applicant who will be required to get detailed estimates, provide details of his household financial circumstances and be subject to a financial assessment and then be told that grant aid is not available or only available at a very low rate."

The means test will deter applications for assistance to the detriment of the long-term quality of the housing stock. Many people would prefer to let their properties deteriorate rather than submit to the examination that the Government envisage.

That problem is likely to be evident particularly among older people who form one of the main groups to which grants should be directed. Old people usually prefer to stay put in their existing environment. That preference tends to be most strongly in favour of staying in their existing homes than objective consideration of the conditions of those homes might suggest. The proportion of old people living in under-occupied or otherwise unsatisfactory accommodation who wish to move is consistently, country by country, far below what expert or objective review of the position might suggest.

In a memorandum to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs inquiry and report into the condition and disrepair of privately owned houses in Wales, page 286 of volume 2 of the minutes of evidence, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors states:

> "Older generations generally do not regard property as an asset and therefore do not carry out repairs to maintain the value of the asset. Most poorly maintained property is occupied by elderly persons who do not have the will to carry out necessary repairs."

An excellent example of the Welsh house condition survey's usefulness on detail is revealed by the apparent misconception of many householders about the actual state of their properties and especially the data not published in the report. It shows that 70 per cent. of those living in homes that could be classified by the technical appraisal as being in serious disrepair considered their homes to be in good repair or needing only minor repair. In view of such information, it is important that the Secretary of State for the Environment pays heed to the advice of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors when it says that an age limit of 65 should be set, above which people do not have to satisfy a means test. If the Secretary of State does not want to introduce that for England, we should be grateful if he would do it for Wales.

There are also serious objections to the details of the means-testing proposals. It is not acceptable that the calculation of available disposable income that determines the threshold does not deduct mortgage repayments. That would prejudice young owner-occupiers and first-time buyers.

Another crucial problem under the proposed system for mandatory grants is that two tests need to be satisfied. The first test relates to the condition of the property. The local authority would need to decide whether the property was fit or unfit, having regard to the proposed standard set down in the Housing Act 1988. The standard appears to be far more flexible than that in section 604 of the Housing Act 1985. On the Government's admission, that would make many more properties unfit. Assuming that a property is established as unfit, the second test is then applied—the resource test to the family. Although the family's resources may be by no means great, grant aid may not be available. The local authority's predicament is that as it is aware that the house is unfit, and irrespective of the availability of grant, there is a duty under the Housing Act 1988 to deal with that unfitness.

Therefore, the applicant for grant aid could, following a visit, be refused help but be presented with a Housing Act notice requiring him to carry out costly works at his own expense—the very works on which he had sought help in the first place. It will not take long for such circumstances to become known to grant applicants. That will act as a severe disincentive to people seeking help. I cannot but think that in this means-test procedure the Government's intention may be to reduce the total amount of money spent on grants by making it extremely difficult for people either to understand the system or go through the procedure.

The Institute of Housing summed up the argument in its memorandum to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, stating on page 306 of the minutes of evidence:

> "The means test concept envisaged by the Government, whilst clearly attracting resources towards those most in need, will not secure what the institute sees as a main objective of our older housing policy—improving poor housing conditions and arresting disrepair. There will be an acceleration of the rate of deterioration into disrepair for some of our older housing stock."

I think that I have said enough to show the great concern in Wales about the fact that the Bill has not been debated properly. Several important amendments remain to be considered and I wish that amendment No. 291 in particular could have seen the light of day and have been examined closely.

There is alarm in Wales that, while Exchequer contributions to local authorities will remain, the rate for grants is to be reduced to 75 per cent. from the present level of 90 per cent. That change will increase the burden on the community charge payer of this new system which has a powerful potential to do enormous harm to the housing stock in Wales.

6.11 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Thank you for allowing me to take part in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in which I rise wholly to support the Government's position on this matter.

A short time ago, the BBC invited me to take part in the programme "The Week in Westminster". During the interview, which was on the subject of community care and the proposal that local authorities should be given a new responsibility in that area, I was chided by the interviewer, who asked whether I was aware of comments made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) who had ridiculed the Government's willingness to give local authorities that new responsibility, bearing in mind the Government's attitude—as perceived by the hon. Gentleman—towards local government. I responded by saying, "No, this Government have worked hard at reforming local government." Indeed, this Bill, which is the 50th measure that the Government have had to bring forward to try to bring to heel those parts of local government which are not performing as efficiently as they could, will successfully overhaul and bring up to date local government procedures. I said that, upon that basis, I felt that I understood why the Government were to entrust community care to local authorities in future.

The motion has led me to reflect on why we have needed to bring forward 50 measures on local government. I am minded to reflect on the fact that many local authorities seem to spend more time trying to circumnavigate the Government's attempts to make them efficient and responsive to their ratepayers—soon to be their community charge payers—than they do on concentrating on the delivery of the many services to which the Bill relates.

The Bill is also a reflection on the conduct of local government. The first part of the Bill deals with the Widdicombe proposals, which were the subject of independent assessments, consultation and vast public debate before coming before the House in the form of a

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Bill. Sitting through our deliberations on the Bill on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report, I have found it interesting to reflect on the amount of time that Opposition Members have spent trying to defend what I would term the indefensible—some of the practices highlighted by Widdicombe.

The root of the problems which have resulted in this motion is the way in which the Opposition conducted their assessment of the Bill in the first place. I could not believe the amount of time that they spent in Committee assessing the Widdicombe proposals. They spent day after day on that element of the Bill. If the Opposition had wanted to spend as much time as they now claim that they want to spend on discussing other aspects of the Bill, such as local government housing, and financial and capital arrangements, I ask whether they did not have the seeds of the solution to their problem in their own hands. They could have spent less time on the Widdicombe proposals in Standing Committee. Indeed, that was the weakest element of their case—and they knew it.

So why did they do it? Simply because they thought that there was mileage in it, because the county council elections were upon us. The Opposition were so deluded by the inadequacy of their own arguments that they found in Committee that they did not have enough time to debate in detail many of the Bill's other aspects.

I am also surprised by the uncharitable way in which the Opposition have treated these deliberations—especially what happened in the House last night—because I can remember the sympathetic way in which the ministerial team helped the Opposition. I can remember the time when, because of transport difficulties, Opposition spokesmen failed to make it to the 10.30 am start——

Mr. David Nicholson: But we made it.

Mr. Jack: Yes, as my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) so accurately reminds us, we made it. Who helped out the Opposition when they did not have their stream of yellow pieces of paper containing their various amendments from the lobbying bodies? Who came to their aid? The answer is, the Government. If I may say this against my hon. Friends on the Front Bench, there was a mini-filibuster of generosity from the Government, who tried to help the debate forward. The Government fed the Opposition information. I even remember seeing a Minister cross the Floor of the Committee Room to give succour, aid and comfort to the Opposition.

However, that generosity has not been repaid in the House. We saw that last night when we were kept up because of a discussion that showed that the Opposition had failed to weigh the balance of the needs to discuss different points in the Bill. Their concentration on the delights of procedural effects overwhelmed their previous professed wish to discuss certain measures.

Mr. Redmond: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the old saying, "Beware of the Greek bearing gifts"? One is always a little suspicious when Ministers give information because they obviously have an ulterior motive in seeking to allay the fears of the Opposition. Opposition Members seek information on various valid points and Ministers attend Committee sittings to give the Opposition information and to explain those points. The trouble with this Bill is that the Minister has clearly not been able to explain those points, judging by the number of amendments that have followed.

Mr. Jack: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman intervened, because he referred to gifts and I think that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench have been over-generous. They listened most carefully to the Committee debates, which is why, in another place, many of the assurances that they had given in this House were then acted upon. Although we had won the argument about Widdicombe hands down on, for example, the question of salary levels for local government officers, in their new guises my hon. Friends listened to those points, and, even when Parliament was not sitting, presented provisions in another place to acknowledge some of the views—they were certainly not arguments—that had been advanced by Opposition Members.

Those concessions took up time in the other place and, yes, there was a need to table amendments to seek to enact them, but the charity with which those concessions were made has inevitably put pressure on the time available for our consideration of the amendments. Surely the Opposition could have reflected on that and said, "At least we've won a few points. We'll give ourselves a slight pat on the back"; but they have not done that. They have taken up the time of the House as they did last night. That has led to this situation and to the fact that we are spending three hours this afternoon debating general views about guillotines, instead of spending three hours considering the detail of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), the Opposition spokesman, was as guilty as anyone. In Committee, his local authority entertained us with some extremely devious financial practices, better known as "loan swapping". Those practices were quite beyond my simple mind. The action of that authority highlighted the reason why we need the Bill to control Labour-controlled local authorities which are trying to find ways around the Government's desire to improve the efficiency and financial accountability of local government.

There are many reasons why we need to get the Bill on to the statute book. I particularly welcome the amendments to the transitional arrangements for the community charge. I pay thanks to my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities for helping to bring those amendments before the House. It was a humane and compassionate act, and he listened carefully to the representations made. The sooner the Bill gets on to the statute book the better.

6.20 pm

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): I shall be brief, as I know that two of my hon. Friends want to participate before the Minister winds up. I shall speak against the guillotine, the timetable—the chopper—because it is undemocratic. As a Back Bencher, I am entitled to speak against the timetable.

Approximately 600 Government amendments have been tabled to the Local Government and Housing Bill. We have been unable to discuss them in any depth, and that must be a sign of inefficiency. The Government have a majority of more than 150, but they are inefficient. They have told local authorities to be efficient and have passed Bills to achieve that end. They have told industry to become efficient, to get off its backside and to make exports, but the most inefficient undertaking in the country is this House and the Government. The timetable is a sign of that inefficiency and there is no better word to describe it.

Mr. Redmond: Overmanning.

Mr. Welsh: It is about that as well.

There are two sorts of people in here—Front Benchers and Back Benchers. Usually, those sitting on the Front Benches are educated and those on the Back Benches are intelligent. That is the only difference. Sometimes, however, one questions educated people, but one does not usually question intelligence.

We are here to do things for our constituents. We let them know what we are doing by voting. I want the right to vote against any amendment I so desire, so that my constituents can see my vote recorded in *Hansard*. They are entitled to know what their Member does in the House. The only way in which our constituents know what we are doing is by voting against Government amendments. That shows our people that we are totally against Government policy and that things will be changed after the next election when Labour regains power. In all honesty I will not be stood here; another good lad from the working class will be standing where I am now.

We see the same inefficiency with the unemployment Bill. I do not claim that I want to stand here and speak about everything; I am not that sort of chap. There are lots of hon. Members who want to do that and the best of luck to them. To be fair, hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber do a good job of that. If I want the opportunity to speak, however, I should have that right. Because of the inefficiency of Government, I should not be robbed of that right. I do not always have a strong desire to speak, but every Back Bencher should have the right to do so. The timetable prevents individual Back Benchers from representing their people. That is not playing the game. The House was not meant for that purpose.

Labour Front-Bench spokesmen have said that, when we take power after the next election, there may come a time when we table timetable motions. I do not agree with that. If we have a majority of 150 and we revert to using timetable motions, it means that we are still being inefficient. It does not matter which party uses the timetable, it is a sign of inefficiency. If I could not run a Government with a 150 majority and get my Bills through I would stand the drop of York.

Such inefficiency is a disgrace. Fancy the Government having all the civil servants, who feed them all the information, in the palm of their hand. A Bill goes through Committee with that advantage, but 600 amendments are then tabled in the other place. It is impossible to see how that happens; it can be put down only to inefficiency.

I want the right to vote against amendments, and I ask for that on behalf of my constituents. For that reason and because of the Government's inefficiency, all Back Benchers should vote against the Government on this issue.

6.25 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) concentrated on a specific amendment and that illustrates the argument against the timetable. A number of hon. Members have spoken about specific items which were due to be debated later, but which have been timetabled. The hon. Member for Taunton and others should have the opportunity to make their detailed speeches. As my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) has said, they have the right to have their voices heard and their votes recorded. A section in the timetable appears to timetable not just the debate but the votes as it bundles a number of possible amendments together. That is disgraceful and worrying. It is most dangerous to attempt to stop hon. Members from voting on specific items.

The Leader of the House, when arguing for the timetable, said that the advantage to Back Benchers was that we could all go home for a couple more days. He said that that break would be of benefit to us. We have just been awarded a 10·76 per cent. wage increase, which is rather like being paid for overtime without doing it. A few night shifts now and again, when the Government are in difficulty with their Bills and when items ought to be debated, should not be beyond us. There are 650 hon. Members, but one does not expect all of them to be here all the time. A number could be present, however, to continue the debate and to scrutinise the issues before us.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) that timetabling, of itself, is not something to which anyone can be opposed. I accept that timetabling may be acceptable in certain circumstances, but the circumstances attached to this timetable are particularly worrying. A number of timetables have been introduced towards the end of this Session and they have been used excessively. Those timetables have been moved not to assist the procedure of the House so that business is conducted in an orderly manner, but for the Government's convenience. The Government have got themselves into a mess because of the number of Bills that have been presented. Timetable motions should not be used for that purpose.

It is disgraceful that we have this timetable and that there are two parts to it. We have had a lot of discussion on the part relating to the Local Government and Housing Bill, but the part relating to the Employment Bill has been stuck into the timetable without any serious reason given for its inclusion. In presenting these measures to us, the Government have not respected their nature. The timetable motion is a symptom of the Government's general undermining of parliamentary democracy.

We have seen a cut in the franchise due to the poll tax legislation. A voluntary franchise system extending the expatriate vote, about which we should think carefully, has enfranchised extra people who are not part of the political nation. Petitions which are signed by people who are opposed to poll tax measures have been threatened. I have introduced a Bill about petitioners' rights in an attempt to overcome that problem. There have been massive attacks on civil liberties, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North has often referred. Consultation with trade unions and others has been turned into a farce by the Government. Now, parliamentary procedures are being dealt with in a high-handed fashion. The Government have forced through measures without thinking about them or allowing them to be discussed. These are all serious attacks on democratic pluralism.

The Government insist that they can go gaily ahead and deal with a great number of issues which have some connection with the programme that they put to the electorate at the last election but which contravene traditional Conservative attitudes about the notion of the

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mandate. They claim that somehow, because they came to power with 42 per cent. of the vote, they have the right to operate a sort of electoral dictatorship over us.

The Leader of the House did not explain the timetable motion in detail. He did not explain provision 3(b)(iv) about the remaining stages of the Lords amendments being dealt with in a bundle or the problem which arose from the timetabling of the vote as well as the debate. That seems to edge us nearer to fully fledged enabling legislation. All democrats should be worried about the degree to which that legislation may be brought foward, whether it is used by Adolf Hitler or suggested by the Militant Tendency.

A host of measures have been dealt with in this way in the past few days. These include the Football Spectators Bill—which was subject to a guillotine and had the ways and means provisions stuck in front of it to prevent further discussion—the Children Bill, the Companies Bill, the Local Government and Housing Bill and the Employment Bill. There are also massive abuses in the operation of the private Bill procedure which allows Bills to be continued in the next Session. That affects the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. Many of us believe that if the Government cannot get their business through by normal procedural methods in this parliamentary Session, they should drop the measures and bring them back to start again in the next Session.

6.34 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I shall not repeat the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) who opened this debate, although I very much agree with them. I wish to talk about the mess which the Government have got themselves into over this Bill and remind the House why we are debating this guillotine.

First, the guillotine is about a Government Bill which has no fewer than 606 amendments, the vast majority of which—all but a handful—came from the Government. Secondly, Ministers have used as a defence the fact that only about 70 are major amendments and the rest are technical ones. If we were to follow that argument through, we need not bother with Committees. All we would need to do would be to pick up as many amendments as we wanted and table them on the Floor of this House or the House of Lords. In that way, we could change Bills as much as we liked.

We have learned, not just during recent years but over the centuries, that a Government who claim that amendments are simply technical must be watched because one person's idea of a technical amendment is another person's idea of a major amendment. The Government also need to be reminded, if only for their own sake, that when they introduce legislation in such a cack-handed way they get themselves into trouble. Some hon. Members have criticised parliamentary draftsmen, but I exclude them from blame. The previous Secretary of State for the Environment proudly boasted that he had drafted the Housing Bill which is now an Act. I have no doubt that he drafted this legislation, because that would explain an awful lot. The Government have drafted this legislation and produced a mess which neither the Committee nor the House of Lords could properly sort out.

The previous Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), has much to answer for. I should warn the Government that he was brought up before the courts four or five times, each time as a result of badly drafted Government legislation. He then returned to the House to change the law retrospectively to put himself in the right. As an ex-probation officer, I take a dim view of such procedure and warn the Government that it will have consequences for them in the future. Such action is unacceptable, but that is what they have done and that is why we are in this mess. The previous Secretary of State's drafting of the Bill was ill thought out. In the past that has led to the Government getting into difficulties with the courts and that will happen again, as some of my hon. Friends have said.

In Committee, I warned the Government that they were in a mess over this Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who was acting as a Whip in Committee, and I said that we could manage with two days on the Floor of the House on Report, but only if there were not a significant number of Government amendments. We said that clearly. Following that, I told the Government that two days would not be long enough to deal with the amendments. The Minister will remember that I told him as recently as a week ago that we needed more time. However, that was never conceded.

Let us consider whether a filibuster took place. Without wishing to cast any reflection on the Speaker, let us consider the facts. The Leader of the House opened the debate and made great play of the fact that we finished at 12 o'clock on Monday. We did so because, although the poll tax was a highly contentious issue, we had already devoted a significant amount of time to debating it and the Government had made a move which, although not acceptable to us in full, was certainly helping out financially. The Government had moved dramatically on the subject of political restrictions and had accepted the Labour amendment.

However, it was a different business on Tuesday. I warned the Government that there would be no way of predicting when the vote would take place because the main issues of housing revenue accounts, rents and homelessness deserved and needed more time. Despite that fact, the vote on the main group of amendments was still taken earlier on Tuesday than on Monday. Therefore, we were doing well.

If any Conservative Member argues that five hours is enough time to debate issues such as homelessness, he or she should walk down the road to that group of demonstrators—organised by Shelter—who are protesting about homeless people who are sleeping out, and say to them that he or she believes that a five-hour debate on the issue is enough. It is not enough time, and to say so is an insult to those people. We know, and argued yesterday in great detail, that this Bill will increase homelessness. That is why we made so much of the debate yesterday and would have continued to do so.

Other issues which are of great significance to people include the emergency and civil disaster orders. A statement was made to the House yesterday about the rail disaster at Clapham. If we had had the time yesterday or today, what we would have said would have been of major importance. The Government are not moving significantly to allow us to give a proper response to emergencies and civil disasters.

The Government have legislated in the Bill for Scotland in a way that has not given Scottish Members an opportunity to speak effectively about it. A Scottish Back Bencher did an excellent job in Committee, but in the House of Lords the Government introduced more amendments which affected Scotland and which will be passed without going through the proper Standing Committee procedure. The Government are treating Scottish Members and the Scottish people with contempt. They are taking the Bill through with a Committee stage on the Floor of the House but with none of the safeguards that we usually have when we vote to use that procedure.

We shall probably not get to the relevant amendment, but the Government are going to wind up local authorities' ability to help people buy houses. The Conservative party is supposed to help home owners; this amendment will receive scant consideration.

Amendments dealing with houses in multiple occupation are also important. I welcome the fact that the Government have moved on that issue, so we could have dealt with it briefly by picking out the areas on which they need to move further.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland said that all Governments use guillotines. I accept that, and I know that the arguments can be used from time to time by either party. However, this Bill contains no fewer than 606 amendments; the Committee stage was held on the Floor of the House of Lords, and to some extent the same applied here; and parliamentary procedures have been grossly abused in the structure and pursuit of the debate on the Bill.

The last Secretary of State appeared before the courts four or five times because of bad legislation and then had to change the law retrospectively, and the Government will live to regret their actions. They and others outside will have to pick up the pieces, and that is regrettable.

This guillotine was not necessary. It is an abuse of the House, and I hope that the way in which the Government have treated the Bill and the debates on it will never be repeated.

6.42 pm

Mr. David Hunt: It is a reflection on the procedures of this House that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and several other Opposition Members spent a great deal of time during the three hours of debate expressing outrage that they did not have more time to consider the Bill, yet I am sure that people outside would recognise that we would have arranged our business much better if the timetable motion had been taken on the nod and we had got down to the business of discussing the Local Government and Housing Bill for five hours—but never mind, let us deal with the debate that we have had.

It may be helpful if I remind hon. Members briefly of the purposes of these two Bills and of the urgency of putting both measures on the statute book without further delay. To reasonable people it would be plain common sense that we should proceed in that direction.

The Local Government and Housing Bill provides that senior local government officials should be politically restricted in broadly the same way as senior central Government officials have been for years. It provides that ratepayers who face large increases in their local bills next year because of the transfer to community charges should receive the additional transitional protection of £300 million next year on top of the £2·5 billion already provided in rebates and income support.

The Bill provides that capital allocation should be concentrated in the areas of greatest need, not in the areas in which council house sales happen to have raised the greatest amount in capital receipts. It provides that regeneration grants should be concentrated on those in greatest need of help with repairing their homes.

The Employment Bill also embraces a package of sensible and vitally needed reforms. It removes absurd, outdated and unjustifiable restrictions on the right of women and young people to work where and for how long they want. It exempts turban-wearing Sikhs on religious grounds from new regulations on the wearing of safety helmets, and reduces the administrative burden on small businesses. The Bill provides technical changes to the law which are necessary to clear the ground for the proper training of the British work force of the 1990s.

Both Bills have received detailed consideration here and in another place. The other place spent 25 hours on the Employment Bill and no fewer than 85 hours on the Local Government and Housing Bill. I should like to pay tribute to the proper revising role played by the other place in the consideration of both Bills.

The hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) was wrong to criticise the number of amendments if he wants to encourage Government continually to listen to arguments adduced on both sides of the House—some of the amendments were tabled by the Opposition and many of them resulted from concessions to them. I agree that the Local Government and Housing Bill was the subject of more than 600 amendments but 90 per cent. of them, as the hon. Member for Hammersmith acknowledged that I had said before, are of a technical and drafting nature.

We made good progress on Monday—more than half the Lords amendments were approved—but progress yesterday was very slow and there was considerable evidence of Opposition Members being unhelpful. For instance, the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) had to be warned four times by the Chair to address himself to the terms of the Bill and we were given to understand that the Opposition intended to be equally obstructive during consideration of the Employment Bill.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) may be forgiven for having mentioned the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill in the context of this debate. When he did, there was a roaring crescendo from the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond).

Mr. Harry Barnes: The final clauses of the Employment Bill and the amendments to them deal with Northern Ireland. There was never any discussion in Committee or on the Floor of the House of those clauses and it now looks as though only the House of Lords will have debated them.

Mr. Hunt: On Monday we got through 317 Lords amendments and the hon. Gentleman is arguing about whether we shall get through 33——

Mr. Redmond: Is the Minister telling the House that he has guillotined the Employment Bill because he assumed that someone might want to talk about it? As far as I am aware, until the debate takes place and progress is made one cannot make such assumptions.

Mr. Hunt: I have always had tremendous respect for the hon. Gentleman but he must give me credit for not having made false assumptions. On reflection, hon. Members should recognise that we heard a good speech from the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who was anxious that we should debate staircasing. I know that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning will seek to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, to set out the full details of that.

We have had a good debate, but let us acknowledge how right my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House and the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) were to say that there must be a better way of dealing with our business than that on which we embarked yesterday. The hon. Member for Copeland said that it was barmy to sit up day and night, but sadly only nine Opposition Members were here to hear him say it. I should like him to write a letter to reach out to all Opposition Back Benchers expressing his point of view. My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) is right that there must be a better way. We all want to say good riddance to synthetic indignation, the like of which we have heard in this debate.

We must acknowledge that

> "The idea that Opposition Members can press their cause or win advantage or concession by elongating remarks, harrying Ministers and boring the pants off everybody, including themselves, thereby fulfilling the duty of a responsible, thoroughgoing and perceptive Opposition, is absolute nonsense."—[*Official Report*, 20 July 1976; Vol. 915, c. 1640.]

Mr. Robert Adley (Chistchurch): My hon. Friend is an eloquent and inventive man and I have been listening carefully to him. I had the vague feeling that the words he used had been heard before in the House. Am I wrong?

Mr. Hunt: The words to which Opposition Members took such exception were used by the present Leader of the Opposition in the debate on 20 July 1976 when five timetable motions were moved in one day. What a load of hypocrisy we have heard from the Labour party.

The Bills will remove unnecessary burdens on employers and employees alike, safeguard local democracy against political abuse, and encourage councils to improve the level of service that they provide to their tenants. The country needs the Bills enacted as swiftly as possible and I urge the House to pass the timetable motion so that they can be put on the statute book immediately.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 272, Noes 201.

[Division No. 375] **[8.52 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fineberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick

Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Michael (Scarb')
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Oppenheim, Phillip
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Local Government and Housing Bill

[ALLOTTED DAY]

Lords amendments further considered.

Clause 87

CONDITIONS FOR DECLARATION OF RENEWAL AREA

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [7 November] on Lords amendment No. 129 .

Which Question was, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 130 to 134 agreed to. [Some with Special Entry].

Lords amendment: No. 271, insert the following new clause—*Removal of exception to the right to buy—*

" .—(1) In Schedule 5 to the Housing Act 1985 (exceptions to the right to buy) paragraph 11 (dwelling-house particularly suitable for persons of pensionable age etc.) shall apply to a dwelling-house as thereunder determined by the Secretary of State only where such a dwelling-house was completed before the date of Royal Assent, or such other date thereafter as the Secretary of State may specify.

(2) The operation of subsection (1) above in relation to paragraph 11 of Schedule 5 to the Housing Act 1985 does not affect the operation of that paragraph in any case where the tenant's notice claiming to exercise the right to buy was served before the repeal comes into force unless, at that time, no notice in response had been served under section 124 of that Act (landlord's notice admitting or denying the right to buy).

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2) above, no account shall be taken of any steps taken under section 177 of the Housing Act 1985 (amendment or withdrawal and re-service of notice to correct mistakes)."

Read a Second time.

7.6 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following: Government amendment (a) in lieu of the Lords amendment, after clause 146, insert the following new clause—

'Exception to the right to buy in case of certain dwelling-houses for persons of pensionable age.

.—(1) In Schedule 5 to the Housing Act 1985 (exceptions to the right to buy), for paragraph 11 (certain dwelling-houses for persons of pensionable age) there shall be substituted the following paragraph—

"11.—(1) The right to buy does not arise if the Secretary of State has determined, on the application of the landlord, that it is not to be capable of being exercised with respect to the dwelling-house.

(2) The Secretary of State shall so determine if, and only if, he is satisfied that the dwelling-house—

(a) is particularly suitable, having regard to its location, size, design, heating system and other features, for occupation by persons of pensionable age, and

(b) was let to the tenant or a predecessor in title of his for occupation by a person of pensionable age (whether the tenant or predecessor or another person).

(3) The Secretary of State shall for the purposes of this paragraph disregard the presence of any feature provided by the tenant or a predecessor in title of his.

(4) An application for a determination under this paragraph shall be made within the period for service of the landlord's notice under section 124 (notice admitting or denying right to buy).

(5) This paragraph does not apply unless the dwelling-house concerned was first let before 1st January 1990."

(2) Subsection (1) above does not apply in any case where the tenant's notice claiming to exercise the right to buy was served before the day on which this section comes into force.

(3) For the purpose of subsection (2) above, no account shall be taken of any steps taken under section 177 of the Housing Act 1985 (amendment or withdrawal and re-service of notice to correct mistakes.'.

Government consequential amendment (b) to the Bill in, page 146, line 3, after '146' insert

'(Exception to the right to buy in case of certain dwelling-houses for persons of pensionable age)'

Lords amendment No. 272 and the Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendment No. 278.

Lords amendment No. 279 and the Government motion to disagree, and Government amendment (a) in lieu of the Lords amendment.

Lords amendments Nos. 280 and 282.

Lords amendent No. 582 and the Government motion to disagree.

Mr. Howard: The main issue in the group of amendments beginning with Lords amendment No. 271 is the right to buy as it concerns dwellings particularly suitable for elderly people. Our amendment (a), proposed as an alternative to Lords amendment No. 271, reflects the intention of the Lords amendments that were carried against the Government. They would give my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the task of making determinations to exclude from the right to buy individual dwellings that are not sheltered and that are particularly suitable for people of pensionable age. Such determinations could be made only in respect of existing housing. Housing for elderly people that was first let on or after 1 January 1990 would be within the right to buy unless it was part of a sheltered scheme with special facilities. The amendment also brings within the right to buy dwellings that are suitable for elderly people but have been let for occupation by a disabled person. I stress that the amendments do not affect the position of sheltered housing, which remains outside the right to buy without the need for any landlords to refer individual cases to the Secretary of State.

Amendment No. 271 and the Government amendment in place of it are before the House because there is evidence that the existing legislation has not been working properly. In England, 519 determinations were made by the Secretary of State from the inception of the right to buy in 1980 until 1987, enabling landlords to retain particular properties. Since January 1987, in less than three years, English local authorities, now relieved of the duty to bring these matters to the attention of the Secretary of State, have denied the right to buy to the tenants of over 6,000 homes on the ground that the homes were particularly suitable for elderly people.

On any view, the abrupt increase in the number of tenants denied the right to buy for this reason must cause concern. I am ready to be persuaded that it was justifiable to deny the right in all cases, but I should be surprised if that were the position. The Department hears from over 300 tenants each year who have been denied the right to buy on the ground that their homes are elderly persons' housing. In many instances, their homes are not at all special. They might be bungalows or ground-floor flats that are, indeed, suitable for elderly people, but they are not out of the ordinary. It is clear from my post bag that many elderly tenants feel strongly that they are unfairly treated because of the way in which the law currently operates.

A timely example appeared in my post only this morning. The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) wrote to me of a sad case in which a couple who have spent a great deal of money on improving their flat have been told by Brent council that it has decided, a year after the couple applied for the right to buy, that their home is a flat for elderly people. The hon. Gentleman asked me for my advice, the actions of Brent council having greatly distressed the tenants. I would not necessarily have expected the hon. Gentleman to be the strongest supporter of the right to buy, but he clearly recognises the unhappy position in which tenants can be placed under the law as it stands. If the operation of the law makes people feel that they are being treated unfairly, we need to think carefully about whether we have it right.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): It is outrageous that a local authority should suddenly step in and designate a home as being suitable for elderly people and, therefore, not eligible for the right to buy, but if there were to be extensive selling off of property which is suitable for the elderly, where would successive generations of elderly people find such accommodation?

Mr. Howard: There are various provisions. Grants are made by the Housing Corporation and housing associations that would deal with the problem. I recognise that my hon. Friend has expressed a legitimate concern. The difficult task in this area, as in so many others, is to strike the right balance. We think that we have acheived that by accepting the essence of the amendment that was passed, against our judgment, in another place.

We originally introduced an amendment to bring within the right to buy all elderly persons' housing that did not form part of a sheltered scheme. That amendment, which was carried in Committee in another place, was overturned on Report by what is now Lords amendment No. 271, which represents a compromise. Existing housing especially suitable for elderly people would remain excluded from the right to buy, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would once more, as he did until 1987, have the task of deciding whether a particular property fell within the statutory criteria. New housing for elderly people would be within the right to buy unless it were sheltered housing.

This subject gives rise to strong feelings. I recognise the sincerity of the views expressed in another place, which have been repeated by my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), and we are prepared to accept the compromise. The Government amendment, which would replace Lords amendment No. 271, is designed to improve the drafting of the provision submitted by another place without changing its substance. The consequential Government amendment provides for the new provisions to come into force on a day appointed by statutory instrument. As the Bill stands, it would come into operation on Royal Assent and that would not allow enough time to make arrangements for landlords to apply for determinations.

Lords amendment No. 272 concerns housing that is especially suitable for elderly people but has been let for occupation by a disabled person. The Housing Act 1988 repealed provisions under which housing other than sheltered housing specially designed or adapted for disabled people was excluded from the right to buy. A disabled person, however, may still be refused the right to buy on the ground that his or her home is especially suitable for occupation by elderly people. There was general agreement in another place that that was wrong. The Government amendment that is designed to replace Lords amendment No. 271 covers the matter. If the House accepts the Government amendment, there will be no need for Lords amendment No. 272. The remaining amendments concern the right to buy in Scotland. If hon. Members so wish, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will speak to them later.

7.15 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): As the Minister rightly said, Lords amendment No. 271 overturns provisions which were sent back to us from another place. It is important to remember that when the vote took place in another place, 94 of their Lordships were in favour and 36 against. Some Conservative Peers and Cross-Benchers voted with the Opposition for reasons that have been mentioned by the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson).

The Government have tried to dig themselves out of a hole by giving the Secretary of State the power to exempt a local authority from having to sell. The problem about that is that we do not really know——

Mr. Howard: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that the role of the Secretary of State is something that has been introduced by the Government. It reflects the essence of the Opposition amendment that was passed in another place.

Mr. Soley: I am talking about the amendment that the Government have introduced in this place. I am anxious to know whether the Government intend to adhere to the spirit of the original Lords amendment. Perhaps they are. That is one of the reasons why I want to explore the issue. There is considerable uncertainty here and in another place about why the Government feel that it is necessary to change the original Lords amendment, which was considered by their Lordships to be clear and satisfactory. The Government have chosen to change it, and there is doubt about the Government's willingness to interpret the spirit of their Lordships amendment. That is, in part, what the debate is about. Whatever I say, I assure the Minister that those in another place will want to return to this issue when they are able to do so.

Mr. Howard: So that unnecessary misunderstanding does not linger, I assure the hon. Gentleman that the position is exactly as I stated it. The changes to the Lords amendment have been made solely and exclusively for the purpose of curing the technical defects in the original amendment. They have been introduced for no other reason, and they do not change the sense of the original amendment. I thought that I made that pretty clear in my opening observations.

Mr. Soley: I welcome the Minister's intervention because I think that he has clarified the position. I am sure that the clarification will be welcomed elsewhere.

The Government have put themselves into difficulties because the right-to-buy policy has always been one legged. There is nothing wrong with the right to buy, be it for ordinary housing, housing for the disabled, housing for the elderly or housing for charitable associations, if it is matched by a duty to replace, and there is a financial structure that enables housing associations, be they charitable or not, to do so. The Government are in trouble—they faced criticism in another place, which has been repeated by the hon. Member for Taunton—because they cannot effectively replace properties that are bought under the right to buy.

In the debates over the past few years, including our debates yesterday, my hon. Friends and I have been drawing attention to the growing housing crisis. At the sharp end, there has been a diminution of the supply of affordable houses or flats for rent. The entire country is affected and the reason is not hard to find. Leaving aside the collapse of the private sector, which is not germane to the debate, well over 500,000 council houses have been sold. There would have been no problem if those houses had been replaced.

The Labour party made it clear that the right-to-buy policy could continue if it were matched in housing stress areas with a duty to replace. That duty could be achieved in a number of ways. It could be fulfilled by allowing the local authority or housing association to build another property. I shall deal with financing later. It could be achieved by the authority or association buying another property from the private market. It could be achieved also in a way that I would consider most appropriate, by the authority or association having the right to buy back when the house is put up for resale for the first time. I note that there is a nod of support from at least one Conservative Member, and probably two.

By simply allowing the right to buy without any duty to replace, in rural and urban areas alike, the Government have cut off the supply of affordable rented houses. It has dropped by at least 500,000 in the council house sector alone, and with housing association and private sector losses the total would be well above 1 million. The Government would not have found themselves in so much difficulty in Committee or in another place—they were forced to accept amendments there, and these changes are a result of that fait accompli—if they had originally introduced what the Labour party has always said was essential—the duty to replace. Their failure to do so has caused all these problems.

Why do the amendments relate specifically to the elderly? It is because, having introduced the right to buy, the Government suddenly found that the elderly and the disabled also wanted to buy. The same applies to the charitable housing associations. If the elderly and the disabled were given the right to buy, houses that had been specially converted for them would be lost to the rented sector and would not be available for future generations of elderly and disabled people. It has become clear that there would be a growing shortage of such accommodation. To prevent that, the Government would have to say that the elderly and the disabled should not have the right to buy—and consequently the right to buy would not, in effect, be a true right to buy. Indeed, we all know that it is not a fundamental human right; it has been limited to certain groups, and specifically to council tenants in certain types of accommodation.

Had the Government said initially that the right to buy should be matched by a duty to replace, and had they provided a housing finance system to support that, the position would be very different. The Government could then have said that the elderly and the disabled should have the right to buy, but that the local authority or housing association must replace. That could be done in any of the three ways that I have already suggested. However, if the Government were serious about doing that, the finances would have to be there to support it. That is why I urge on the Government the need to reform housing finance.

If a tenant is given a discount that comes from local authority funds, there is no way that that authority can replace—not even by buying back, or at least not without losing a great deal of money. The way around that problem would be directly to subsidise the person wanting to buy, but the Government have chosen not to do that. They do not really want to help people to own their homes; they want people to buy their council houses at the expense of other people in that area who are both paying for those houses and in the queue waiting for those houses.

That means that elderly people who want to move into specially converted accommodation are now less able to do so than previously. As the hon. Member for Taunton and the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) know, because there are fewer places available, those people cannot move into that sort of accommodation. That means a growing problem with elderly people having to stay in inappropriate housing while they wait for the right accommodation to become free, but it is not becoming free because it has been bought and is not being replaced.

Mr. David Nicholson: I hope that the hon. Gentleman recalls our debates in Committee. He has described with some accuracy the position in rural seaside areas. A number of elderly people have moved to those areas and there has always been a fairly small number of council homes, many of which have now been sold. However, that does not apply to the metropolitan areas where there are large empires of council homes which, on the whole, the elderly are trying to leave for very good reasons. Relatively few of those homes have been sold.

Mr. Soley: That is an amazing statement. In my neck of the woods it is becoming increasingly difficult to find appropriate housing for the elderly. I am referring to the old Greater London council area. All the seaside homes that had been specially designated for the elderly were sold en bloc to a housing association and have since been resold. That means that those who were intending to retire from London to the seaside, thus freeing a home in London, cannot do so because several thousand homes have been lost. The problem is serious in my area, even if it is not as serious as in some rural areas. There is nowhere for those people to go and that is why they are insisting on the right to buy.

I have had letters, similar to those sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), described by the Minister, asking, "Why can't I buy my home?" A disabled couple in my constituency are asking why they cannot buy their home. If there were a proper finance system, they could buy their home because the local authority could say that when they sold the property it would want to repurchase it. The finance system would have to allow that to happen. Alternatively, the local authority would have to buy another property and convert it—there is not a great deal of room for building in my constituency. That is what would happen in a rational system. However, because the Government have hooked themselves on to the right to buy alone, and did not think about the replacement of the rented homes that would be lost—whether for the elderly, the disabled or anyone else —they have caused a drastic drying up of supply.

One problem that is emerging in the current right-to-buy system are the cases—fortunately relatively few, but enough to be worrying—where children of an elderly couple encourage them to buy in the expectation of inheriting that home. I am not suggesting that that is done with any wicked intent; it is often done with the open co-operation of the parents who want to leave the home to their son or daughter. Nevertheless, the danger is that some parents are being increasingly pressurised. That would not need to happen if there were a reformed housing finance system that allowed us to assist those who wanted to buy, while enabling others to rent if they so wanted.

The reason that I suggested, outside the Chamber, that we would not vote on this group of amendments was that it appeared that the Government were staying within the broad parameters laid down in another place. The Minister has assured us that the changes that he has suggested are purely technical. We, and no doubt those in another place, will seriously consider that. However, I stress strongly that the way in which the right to buy has been operating is having a disastrous effect on the rented sector.

There are two major disadvantages for the elderly and the disabled. First, it prevents other elderly and disabled people from moving into specialised accommodation because less and less is available, and, secondly, it puts many of them in an unfair position because they think that they should have the right to buy, like everyone else, but they do not have it, either because it has not been conceded, because the local authority does not approve of that, or because the Secretary of State can say, "No, I do not think that you should buy it." Perhaps the Minister will find himself having to write back to my hon. Friend the Minister for Brent, East to say that the council was right and it should not allow them to buy. The Minister has taken on that duty. He will find himself saying the same as some councils—"I am sorry, we know you have the right to buy, but we can't allow it."

I want the Government to make a root-and-branch reform. We should have the right to buy, but people should be able to move between the rented and the purchase sectors. Many older people do not want to be owner-occupiers, but want to go back to the security of rented accommodation, so that they know who will repair the roof and that they will not be ripped off by the builder. If we worked on that we could turn the right to buy into something positive. It would give people a genuine option between renting and buying and would ensure that housing was replaced, and not lost from the rented sector.

7.30 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I endorse what my hon. Friend said about the need for replacement. I have a constituent who was forced to leave the marital home last week because of her husband's violence. She has three children and they are now sleeping on the floor, divided between two houses, one of which is a flat which belongs to an elderly person and does not have adequate room. I received a letter from the local authority to say that it will be difficult to rehouse them. The mother will have difficulty bringing up her children alone. There is an injunction to stop her husband molesting her. However, the council will have difficulty housing her because of the number of houses that have been sold off in the area in which she wants to live, near friends who will support her. The housing shortage is causing serious difficulties.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is right. If the right to buy had been matched by the ability to replace housing, and the housing finance system had been reformed, that situation would never have arisen.

It is not common knowledge—I accept that that is Labour's fault—that the Labour party has always provided council houses for sale. We did that in the 1930s to my certain knowledge. Our argument is that we have a duty to replace houses or the best ones are sold at a discount, and people are left to scrabble around for the remaining houses, which tend to be second and third rate homes. That is what has gone wrong with the scheme and what is going wrong for elderly people now. That is why the Government are in this hole.

I urge the Government to think about the possibilities that I have suggested to give elderly people the right to buy. Not everyone will have automatic access to it, but the right covers all sectors—the private sector, the public sector and housing associations. We could get housing finance right and build in safeguards so that the person who sells the house does not lose out and the subsidy goes to the person who is buying. We would be able to achieve tenure neutrality, and people would be able to move from the rented to the purchase sector and back again.

It is nonsense to force people to buy as early as possible, and to make them stay when they do not want to. For example, it is not a sensible policy for the elderly. It is ideal for people to rent when they need to, perhaps when they are young, to buy in their middle years, and, when they are elderly, and worried about repairs and maintenance, to be able to return to the rented sector. That is what we want. What we have is a chronic drying up of affordable housing for rent. For the elderly and the disabled the problem is double-edged—they are not entitled to the right to buy as other people are, and they cannot get the houses that they need. That is unnecessary and it is down to the Government to change it.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I welcome the fact that the Government have seen fit to introduce their own amendment in response to the concern expressed in the other place and contained in Lords amendment No. 271.

I believe that, because of the way in which the Government introduced their original amendment—belatedly, at night during Committee stage in the other place—they had little option but to listen to the reasoned arguments put forth.

I am happy that the existing housing stock will be given some protection by the Government amendment, which

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

allows the Secretary of State to determine whether an existing property falls within the right to buy. I would be happier if I could be assured that housing will be available to replace the present stock as age takes its toll. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) expressed that in his well-thought-out speech.

If we lived in a world where we could supply housing on demand, individuals' right to buy or not to buy would be paramount, but we do not live in a world like that. There is a desperate shortage of housing, not least in my area. I used to think it was quite an affluent area. I thought that council housing would be there for ever. The right to buy has interfered with that, and housing is not being replaced. The shortage of suitable homes for pensioners is worse —the supply of suitable flats and bungalows is diminishing rapidly. Lords amendment No. 271 would ensure that the existing stock would remain available for the growing number of people who need it.

We should not forget that the number of elderly people will increase dramatically. We have been told that time and time again in the context of care in the community. Many of those people will not be able to enter the housing market by buying a house which is suitable for their needs, or to adapt their existing home to meet those needs.

I am aware that it could be seen as discriminatory to deny an individual or some categories of individuals the right to buy, but to deny many people the right to live in accommodation that is adequate for their needs, and to condemn them to live, in some cases, in squalor is perhaps a greater discrimination.

Despite what the Minister has said, I support Lords amendment No. 272, which gives the right to buy to disabled persons, because I believe that a different set of criteria apply here. However, I shall add a note of caution. I hope that the right to buy will not lead to disabled people who are less well off having a poor quality of life through lack of access to accommodation which meets their needs. Perhaps the Minister could comment on that.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) but will concentrate on the Scottish amendments. All these amendments relate to the right to buy.

Amendment No. 278 refers to the time spent in the family home by a child who succeeds to the parents' tenancy, and that time automatically counts towards the child's discount. For other members of the family, it is left to the discretion of the landlord—the local authority— whether to include time spent in the family home. The amendment seeks to remove that discretion and puts family members on the same basis as children or their spouses.

The second part of the amendment deals with members of the family who enter into a joint tenancy with an elderly relative. On their death, the family member becomes the tenant. Not all landlords consider that the discount entitlement should take into account the period of residence prior to the joint tenancy. This is particularly hard in the case of a family member who has put on a formal basis, by means of a joint tenancy, the arrangements made by the family to maintain a home.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I accept some of the things the Minister is saying. It is unfair that, if someone has lived for 10 years in a house with his mother, and is a joint tenant, that 10 years is not taken into account. However, what if they moved in six months before their mother died and took out a joint tenancy? It cannot be right for them to get an entitlement that goes back a long way.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If a person has been living in a house for many years, it is perfectly fair. We are widening the right to buy, and we consider that it will be warmly welcomed by those concerned.

Lords amendment No. 279 relates to the amendment tabled by Lord McIntosh of Haringey in the other place. The amendment was defective as it omitted to delete reference to section 69 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 in the repeals schedule. That amendment also left in place the provisions of subsection (2). That subsection would be relevant only if the provisions of 1979 had been repealed in their entirety. Lords amendment No. 279 seeks to rectify those defects and to clarify which houses will continue to be excluded. It would not overturn the general principle.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) will be interested in Lords amendment No. 280, which relates to the extraordinary circumstances in which some council houses have leases as long as 999 years. The amendment seeks to give a tenant whose landlord is not the heritable proprietor the right to acquire his landlord's leasehold interest in the house that he occupies. Such leases are prevalent in Motherwell, Monklands, Stirling, West Lothian and Nithsdale, and were often granted for periods of at least 900 years. In such cases tenants cannot exercise the right to buy, but the amendment would allow them to acquire a substantial long-term interest in their homes.

Lords amendment No. 282 would require landlords to inform persons who have applied to purchase their homes of prospective changes in the provisions for calculation of the selling price of a house. A tenant should know if his position has been improved, and if he has not completed missives he can withdraw and reapply. That duty will relate only to applications made up to the point of the enforcement of the change. The landlord is not required to produce any calculations. I therefore do not consider that the new duty will prove onerous.

Mr. Maxton: The amendments may not be of major, earth-shattering importance in relation to Scottish housing, but they require some comment.

Yet again—disgracefully—Scottish housing, which in the past has always supposedly been part of the separate Scottish legislation system, is being disregarded and shoved into what is largely an English-Welsh Bill, which makes it difficult for Scottish Members to take account of it and for the public in Scotland to know what is happening.

The Minister is a difficult man to describe as an obsessional fanatic; nevertheless, the amendments are a product of the Government's complete obsession with the right to buy, which is their only housing policy in Scotland. They entirely disregard all other aspects of public and, for that matter, private housing. Now, in three or four different ways, they are extending that right still further, locating the odd loophole which remains and trying desperately to close it. Oddly enough, I gather that some elderly people's housing is to be excluded from the right-to-buy provisions—or, at any rate, local authorities will be allowed to exclude it. The measure to deal with long leases is certainly of some interest, but that is accidental.

What the Government always forget is that 85 or 90 per cent. of Scottish council and housing association tenants are simply not interested in buying their houses. What concerns them is that those houses are riddled with damp because they cannot afford to heat them properly, because the houses were badly designed in the first place and because they cannot be properly maintained because the local authority has not been given the money with which to maintain them. Tenants are concerned about the environment in which their houses are placed, and about ever-soaring rents caused by the Government's policy of forcing local authorities to push up rents time and again.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has pointed out, the houses that are sold are those in the better areas—those that tenants consider to be worth buying. My constituency contains part of one of the largest housing schemes in Europe, the one in Castlemilk. I believe that five houses have been sold, out of a total of more than 1,000. In other parts of Glasgow, such as Mosspark, large areas of housing have been sold.

In another amendment, which we may not reach, the Government have attempted to close yet another loophole. Glasgow district council may be stretching the law a bit—although it is acting in a way that is morally right—by saying that, having spent thousands of pounds on improving a house, it does not want tenants to turn around and say that they want to buy it. That strikes me as entirely justifiable, however; it is absurd that other ratepayers should spend a fortune on the upgrading of a house, only to find that the tenant has bought it. The court ruled that the council was wrong to take such action, but added that it could rule only in that one case; if another authority did the same, the same process would have to be gone through.

7.45 pm

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith has said, it is time that the Government came up with housing policies and housing finance systems which concern all Scottish residents—those who own their houses, those who wish to own them and those who wish to remain as tenants. That is what a real housing policy is about, and that is the policy being developed by the Labour party. The sooner that Scotland's tenants have a Labour Government to implement that policy, the better.

Mr. Cryer: Let me enlarge on what I said in a brief intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

The Government are seeking to introduce a reserve power controlling the selling-off of public housing—that is, certain dwelling houses for those of pensionable age. That reflects the fact that the selling-off policy has begun to reap the disadvantages and difficulties that Labour has always said would arise in the absence of a policy for replacement. The case that I am about to cite does not concern a person of pensionable age; I shall deal with that aspect later. A few days ago, the experience of a constituent with whom I was dealing happened to coincide with my own prejudices.

I have warned in the past that the selling-off policy implemented by various items of legislation would lead inevitably to the exhaustion of available rented housing stock. The Minister should recognise that a large proportion of the population—it is difficult to determine the exact percentage—simply cannot afford to buy, as they have not the means for even a modest deposit. Rented housing of a decent standard is therefore a necessity if they are to embark on a life of any stability.

Shortly after the interview with my constituent began, she was in tears. She had been forced to leave the marital home with her three children, having been subjected to violence there. Her husband had pursued her to a flat with which the local authority had provided her; it was some distance from the marital home, so that she could avoid him. Having chased her there, however, he had attacked her, and she had been forced to flee the flat with her children and to hide in a local church—sanctuary, perhaps.

Having received some help and advice, my constituent had obtained an injunction in court to stop her husband molesting her. Although that had protected her from one danger, she had found herself homeless, and faced with a charge from the local authority for the month in which she had not inhabited the flat. She came to me in desperation, seeking security and assistance. She wanted to return to the area that her husband's violence had forced her to leave.

I took up the case with the local authority: it is the sort of case with which Members of Parliament frequently deal. The response came back from the local authority that she is on the waiting list. She has paid part of the joint debt that she and her husband had accumulated. She takes responsibility for the children and he does not. I should have thought that that would be taken into consideration.

The waiting list in Bradford is long, because over several years a considerable proportion of the housing stock has been sold. When I wrote to the local authority about my constituent's needs I was told that such a large proportion of the housing stock had been sold that it would be difficult to accommodate her—even though her application had considerable support—because there were not enough houses for all the people in need.

Government housing policy has not taken into account the fact that housing stocks are often reduced, as in Bradford, by the discovery of defects. The so-called Boot houses, built in the 1920s by Sir Henry Boot, were held together by metal ties which have corroded. A local authority must either build a new shell around them or demolish them. Limitations on housing capital expenditure are such that few local authorities can tackle such problems on any scale. Most have to accept the alternative of demolition, as in Bradford, where half an estate in my constituency has been demolished. Virtually no houses have been replaced.

Structural defects have also come to light in prefabricated dwellings. Under the right-to-buy scheme, purchasers have the right to sell back to the local authority if defects subsequently appeared. That protection was not unfair, but it shows that the right to buy has given rise to complications which were not foreseen when the Government embarked on the policy.

The clause recognises that local authorities sometimes invest extensively to provide for senior citizens homes with special facilities, such as ramps, baths with grab handles and so on. Such facilities cost extra money. Local authorities undertake such expenditure carefully. By and large, they are not lavish. They hit their expenditure targets far more accurately than central Government.

[Mr. Cryer]

They do not equip homes lavishly but simply provide facilities to make life easier for people who find it difficult to move about.

If such houses are sold, it is difficult to replace them because the necessary adaptations are costly. It is unjust to sell houses with special adaptations and facilities for people in their latter years. Local authorities are faced with extra expenditure when other elderly people justifiably want the same standards as were provided in the specially adapted flats that have been sold.

The policy of selling housing has reached a point where even the Government see the need to qualify it. The Bill recognises that. It is an outrage that the Government have not required the compulsory sale of private rented property. If a council tenant has the right to buy, so should a private tenant. If the right to buy is so inalienable and has such virtue, why is it given only to local authority tenants? I think that I know why and I shall expatiate on it after I have given way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Banks: I know the reason, too. My hon. Friend will agree that it is because public property is considered second-rate and, if necessary, is virtually given away, while private property is sacrosanct. We have seen how the right to buy has been perverted by the Government. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is even more perverse when a specially adapted house is sold to someone who has no need of the facilities and clears them out? They are completely lost to people who could put them to good use.

The Minister was not in the Chamber earlier when we discussed the GLC seaside and country homes. As those homes have been sold, they are no longer available to old people in London to go and enjoy the seaside and country air.

Mr. Cryer: At one time the Government recognised the strength of my hon. Friend's argument. They did so in the 1980 Bill, when they decided to exclude all dwellings designated for elderly people. It was only subsequently that they decided to cast the net more widely, with the result that expensive fittings—which we do not begrudge—were lost to local authorities and future generations. My hon. Friend is right when he says that public housing is regarded as something to be looted.

Mr. Banks: Public assets.

Mr. Cryer: Indeed, public assets.

The Labour party has always had a tolerant view of a local authority's right to sell some of its housing stock and has recognised that there is a demand to buy. However, we maintain that it should be at the discretion of the local authority. The Government say that local authorities cannot make the decision because, for doctrinaire reasons, some will not sell off any of their stock. The local authority should judge whether there is a surplus of housing. I was a councillor on Keighley municipal borough council, which had a surplus of housing. The Labour group agreed with the Conservatives that some housing should be sold. Nobody was harmed because plenty of property for rent was available to people on the waiting list, who had the chance to obtain decent quality housing at a relatively low rent, quickly. The position has now completely changed. Part of that change is attributable to the Government's policy to sell public housing and not to allow local authorities to judge what is in the best interests of the community.

A group of Right-wing extremists is temporarily in control of Bradford council. It will not be there after the next elections in May. It is a matter of pride to them that the council is not building new council houses to replace those sold. A policy of replacement is necessary if we are to retain public-sector housing for rent. Bradford council has no replacement policy because of doctrinaire commitment. Are the Government serious about generating a housing policy that will provide for people who cannot afford the deposit on a house?

Such people may not have £2,000, £3,000 or £4,000 to hand because they live from week to week, struggling to pay their bills. They do not have surplus capital, not because they are spendthrifts but because they have a poorly paid job, for example in catering, and use all their income to pay their bills. If they have young children, they have to make provision for them, which is very costly.

The choice that the Government say that they have given to people is not available to those who do not have much money. The more money one has in one's pocket, the wider the choice. If one had £50,000, one could buy any make of car—from a mini or a deux chevaux up to a Rolls-Royce. If one has only £5 in one's pocket, there is no choice. One cannot buy a car.

It is just the same with housing. If one has £50,000 in one's pocket, it might buy a terraced house in a town in the north, such as Bradford, although prices there have rocketed because of the Government's policies. One could perhaps buy former council houses for £15,00 to £20,000; the price would vary according to the location. However, if one has only £5 in one's pocket, it is impossible to find the deposit to buy a house.

There is no choice. All one can do is get a rented house from the public sector. I emphasise the public sector because the Government have acknowledged that the quality of private sector housing for rent has diminished. The quality of private sector housing is highly variable. The Government dismantled the fair rent legislation and they are preparing the way for market rents.

8 pm

In recognition of the changed circumstances, the Government are seeking powers for the Secretary of State to say to landlords, "You can't sell this property because it does not meet the criteria that have been laid down in the new clause." This is highly specialised property, with the special and expensive adaptations to which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred. These circumstances apply to housing in general. Therefore, the provisions should not be confined to housing that is suitable for persons of pensionable age.

No persons of pensionable age have approached me regarding the possibility of purchasing their flat or bungalow. The reason is that persons of pensionable age would have great difficulty in buying their property. If they are 70, they are unlikely to be given a 20 or 25-year mortgage; it is unlikely that they will be there to pay the mortgage over 20 or 25 years. Most of them do not have much capital. Those who have some capital want to keep it. They do not want their nest egg to be used up on repairing a property that they have had to buy. That can be expensive. The provision of facilities to persons of pensionable age to buy their dwellings is the result of a doctrinaire policy. The Government are divorced from reality. They do not know what people's housing needs are. It is not a question of what people want. People want different things. Most people, however, need a house that is in reasonable condition.

That must seem a very modest aim to many Conservative Members. It is not, however, a modest aim to the constituent to whom I have referred. She has three children, sleeping on the floor. They are at school temporarily. She wants to move to another area, so she does not want them to settle down in any particular school. The housing shortage leads to uncertainty and difficulties for the children. They are unable to mingle with their peers at school just because the local authority may make an offer to house the family in two, six or 10 months time, depending on the number of houses that are available.

The modest requirement of decent housing at a fair rent would be very much welcomed by millions of people who cannot afford to buy their homes. I hope that, belatedly, the Government have recognised that their housing policy is leading millions of people into severe difficulties. I hope, too, that even now it is not too late for them to change their policy, which has caused so much despair.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I apologise to the Under-Secretary of State for missing his speech. I saw his name on the annunciator in my office and came rushing into the Chamber, but he must have made an uncharacteristically brief contribution. He will be aware, however, of my long-standing interest in housing in Scotland, following our fairly lengthy debates in Committee and in the Chamber on the Housing (Scotland) Bill—now the Housing (Scotland) Act—last Session.

The Opposition have constantly pressed the Government to address the real housing needs and priorities of the people of Scotland. However, there has been no Government response. They have introduced the right to buy and they call that a housing policy. There is a housing crisis in Scotland. About a quarter of the population live in overcrowded accommodation. About 30,000 people become homeless in Scotland each year and have to apply to the local authorities under the homeless persons legislation. There are nearly 200,000 people on local authority housing waiting lists in Scotland. That is a housing crisis, and councillors and Members of Parliament in Scotland come face to face with it in their constituencies, week in, week out. Unfortunately, however, Scotland has a Government who are not elected by the people of Scotland. I suppose, therefore, that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) and his colleagues do not realise how important it is to deal with the crisis.

The homeless, those on low incomes and those in overcrowded accommodation might like to buy their houses but the right to buy will not overcome their serious, immediate problem: the right to rented housing, the right to have a decent roof over their heads, the right to security. In many cases, the Government are taking those rights away from them.

The right to buy, which we are extending by means of the amendments to which the Minister referred, will encourage more people who might not particularly want to own their own homes to purchase them. I am thinking in particular of former Scottish Special Housing Association tenants, 80,000 of whom are now Scottish Homes tenants. They are worried that Scottish Homes will hand them over to the private sector. In many parts of Scotland there are bad memories of private landlords. However, they feel that because of the incentives that the Government are offering they would be crazy not to buy their houses. In the coming months and years, though, they may find it very difficult to cope with the costs of home ownership, insurance and repairs. They are almost being trapped into home ownership. In many cases that may prove to be a burden in the long term because of the dynamics of the Government's housing policies.

The right-to-buy policy makes sense for those who can afford to buy their houses, but that is not a housing policy; it is a home-ownership policy. The Government refuse to address themselves to the problems of people living in overcrowded and bad accommodation and, above all, to the homeless, who are stuck on local authority waiting lists and have no prospect of obtaining accommodation. The right to buy at a discount, which the Government are pursuing so doggedly, is not a policy but a diversion.

A responsible Government in Scotland should be addressing the need for housing for our people and ensuring that houses are built, improved and made available to those who need them. We are still awaiting such a policy, and I fear that we may have to wait until a Labour Government take office here or in the Scottish Parliament in due course.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): This is part two of the equation that I mentioned yesterday when we were debating rents. It involves the destruction of a good housing policy by the policies of the Government and their ideological pursuit of home ownership.

I told the Minister yesterday that my local authority promotes home ownership and helps in every way that it can. It protested against the right to buy—the Minister is well aware of its reasons for doing so—but once it became law it sold its council houses.

Some of the problems that I foresaw when we were debating the Bill in Committee have now occurred. People have bought their homes but, unfortunately, have discovered that they cannot afford them. Once again, they are asking the local authority to rehouse them because of foreclosure on their mortgages. In Committee, I said, "For heaven's sake include provisions in the Bill to ensure that that does not happen. Local authorities should be able to repurchase the houses that they sell." The Government did not take any notice; local authorities have been powerless to repurchase houses and they have had to be sold on the open market.

About 16 or 17 per cent. of my local authority's housing stock has been sold, but in other areas the figure is as high as 34 per cent. Not surprisingly, the 34 per cent. of the houses that have been sold are the most desirable. If the Minister wants the figures, I have them here.

The Government are now proposing the sale of aged persons' dwellings. They believe that aged persons should have the same right to buy as anyone else. From their point of view, that is admirable, but once again the policy will cause problems. Every bungalow or aged person's flat that is sold on the open market means that someone will not achieve their dream of having a local authority aged person's bungalow or flat. In the rural areas of my constituency, Airey-type dwellings have had to be pulled down and the local authority has replaced them not with houses but with stone-built bungalows overlooking the

[Mr. Allen McKay]

Cawthorn Baison, which has one of the most marvellous views of Yorkshire. The value of those bungalows on the open market must be tremendous, and under the Government's policy they will have to be sold off. However, there are insufficient houses in the area and the children of families resident in the area are having to move away as a result. The more houses that are sold off, the worse the problem becomes. Not a single aged person's bungalow should be sold because it deprives someone of the opportunity of such housing, unless enough money is provided for a replacement. The Government made that mistake with council houses, but they should not repeat it with bungalows.

8.15 pm

Figures for house building in my local authority show that in 1979-80 449 private houses, 297 council houses and 27 housing association dwellings were built, making 773 in total. In 1987-88, 347 private houses, no council houses —because of Government policy—and 56 housing association dwellings were built, making a total of 403. There has been a 50 per cent. drop in house building, but, at the same time, a 54 per cent. rise in the number of homeless people.

The Government have not a housing policy but an ideological hatred of council housing. They hate the idea of councils being housing authorities. They wish to get rid of council housing and leave only sheltered accommodation, part III accommodation and accommodation that they can sell off.

The Government have ruined the history of council housing, the history of housing in general and have hurt hundreds of thousands of people, who will not forget.

Question put and agreed to.

Amendment made in lieu of the Lords amendment: (a), after clause 146, insert the following new clause—

Exception to the right to buy in case of certain dwelling-houses for persons of pensionable age.—

.—(1) In Schedule 5 to the Housing Act 1985 (exceptions to the right to buy), for paragraph 11 (certain dwelling-houses for persons of pensionable age) there shall be substituted the following paragraph—

"11.—(1) The right to buy does not arise if the Secretary of State has determined, on the application of the landlord, that it is not to be capable of being exercised with respect to the dwelling-house.

(2) The Secretary of State shall so determine if, and only if, he is satisfied that the dwelling-house—

(a) is particularly suitable, having regard to its location, size, design, heating system and other features, for occupation by persons of pensionable age, and

(b) was let to the tenant or a predecessor in title of his for occupation by a person of pensionable age (whether the tenant or predecessor or another person).

(3) The Secretary of State shall for the purposes of this paragraph disregard the presence of any feature provided by the tenant or a predecessor in title of his.

(4) An application for a determination under this paragraph shall be made within the period for service of the landlord's notice under section 124 (notice admitting or denying right to buy).

(5) This paragraph does not apply unless the dwelling-house concerned was first let before 1st January 1990."

(2) Subsection (1) above does not apply in any case where the tenant's notice claiming to exercise the right to buy was served before the day on which this section comes into force.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2) above, no account shall be taken of any steps taken under section 177 of the Housing Act 1985 (amendment or withdrawal and re-service of notice to correct mistakes).'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Consequential amendment made: (b), in page 146, line 3, after '146' insert

'(Exception to the right to buy in case of certain dwelling-houses for persons of pensionable age)—[Mr. Howard.]

Lords amendment No. 272 disagreed to.

Lords amendment No. 278 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 279 disagreed to.

Amendment made in lieu of the Lords amendment: (a), after Clause 154 insert the following new Clause—

Sale to secure tenants of houses provided for persons of pensionable age: Scotland.

In section 69 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. (Secretary of State's power to authorise refusal to sell certain houses provided for pensions of pensionable age) after subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) This section applies only to houses first let on a secure tenancy before 1st January 1990.".'—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Lords amendments Nos. 280 and 282 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 269, before clause 145, insert the following new clause—

Housing accommodation

" .—(1) Part II of the Housing Act 1985 (Provision of Housing Accommodation) shall be amended by the inclusion of the following section after section 32—

"32A—No condition shall be attached by the Secretary of State to the payment of grant to a local housing authority, or to the giving of a consent to:

(i) the disposal of land, or

(ii) the use of funds, or

(iii) the payment of grant to a housing association by a local authority, which would require such authority or housing association to grant occupiors a right to acquire the full equity or any specified share of the equity of any dwelling which is constructed in a rural parish with a population of 3,000 people or less."

(2) Part II of the Housing Act 1988 (Housing Associations) shall be amended by the inclusion of the following section after section 50—

"50A—No condition shall be attached by the Housing Corporation to the payment of grant to a housing association or to the giving of consent to the use of funds by a housing association, which would require such housing association to grant to occupiers a right to acquire the full equity or any specified share of the equity of any dwelling which is constructed in a rural parish with a population of 3,000 people or less."

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

We heard repeatedly in the previous debate the accusation that the Government had no housing policy save the right to buy. I said during questions this afternoon that our planned public spending on housing over this and the next two years amounts to nearly £13 billion. Against that massive programme, the allegation that we have no housing policies save the right to buy does nothing save demean political debate and bring our discussion into disrepute.

Lords amendment No. 269 aims to retain local housing in rural areas for those who need it. We agree with its objective, but we propose to achieve it in a slightly different way. Our policy is that shared owners who own part of their home and rent the remainder should be allowed to become full home owners. The amendment would prevent either the Secretary of State or the Housing Corporation from insisting that publicly assisted shared ownership schemes should give shared owners that opportunity. It applies to rural parishes of fewer than 3,000 people.

We recognise the strong concerns that have been expressed on both sides of the House about the need to provide and retain low-cost housing for local needs in rural areas. The Government produced a repurchase scheme designed to ensure that housing associations could keep properties in rural areas in the low-cost housing sector, but there was legitimate concern that the proposal might not work satisfactorily. The Department has been working with those most closely involved to see how we can improve the scheme. As a result of those discussions, we have come up with improved arrangements which I shall invite the Housing Corporation to implement.

We have benefited from the views of a number of colleagues, notably my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). I am sorry that I was not in my place this afternoon during his speech. My right hon. Friend was entitled to claim a considerable victory. I pay tribute to his persistence and to the characteristically resourceful way in which he has pursued his campaign over a lengthy period. We have benefited from the views of many in the other place, in particular Lord Stanley, Lord Carter, and Lord Vinson. I am happy to tell the House that the arrangements that I am about to describe have the full support of the Rural Development Commission, the National Agricultural Centre's Rural Trust, the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association.

The first point that concerned people was whether the money to pay for the shared ownership property would really be available from the Housing Corporation when it was needed. I can give the House an assurance that the corporation will fund, on demand, housing associations that want to repurchase properties within this scheme. It will do that with the full authority of the Government from its approved development programme.

Of course, a generalised undertaking needs to be applied to the particular properties in question. The corporation will therefore make it clear in writing, when a property is first accepted into the scheme, that the repurchase arrangements will apply. Therefore, in addition to the general undertakings which I am giving now and which the corporation will give, there will be a site-specific undertaking, indicating that the shared ownership housing on a particular site is subject to the repurchase arrangements that I have described. The amount of Housing Corporation funding will normally be that which is necessary to enable the property to be resold for shared ownership, with the new shared owner buying the same proportion of equity as the first shared owner had originally bought. In appropriate cases, the corporation will be prepared to consider making additional grant available so that the new purchaser can acquire a lower share of the equity.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): My hon. and learned Friend has said that the new owner should be able to obtain the same proportion of equity as the previous owner. Will he be able to do so at the same price as the previous owner? Many people are worried about the fact that, although the same proportion may be made available, the price may have escalated, because of the increase in value, to such an extent that cheap housing is no longer available.

Mr. Howard: That would very much depend on the circumstances in which the housing was made available. It is true that there may have been an increase in the price. As my hon. Friend will appreciate, in all shared ownership schemes, the subsidy goes to the part of the share that is rented and not to the part that is purchased. If the house were originally on land that was made available for a particular scheme at low cost, or at no cost, and were subject to a covenant whereby it should remain available only to local people on low incomes—there are ways in which this objective, which I know my hon. Friend holds dear, can be achieved—although I cannot say that there would be no increase in the price, the price would certainly reflect those special arrangements.

Mr. Soley: Much of my worry is about the market price. A housing association will, in a sense, lose a certain amount of money and need to make it up when it rebuys the property at the new market price. The Government need to be clear about this point. Will they make sure that the housing association can repurchase at the market price without losing its funds in any way? That is crucial.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate from the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) that the market price reflects all the relevant circumstances. The fact that a property is subject to the kind of covenant to which I referred when dealing with my hon. Friend's point will be reflected in its market price.

Concern has been expressed that the funds that the Housing Corporation would need to operate the repurchase scheme could reduce the number of projects allowed into the scheme in the first place or could erode the amounts available for rural rented housing. I assure the House that repurchase funds will not be found from the amount set aside within the Housing Corporation's programme for rented accommodation or shared ownership in rural areas—the point on which my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale placed particular stress.

The Government strongly support the case for an expanding programme of low-cost housing in rural areas. I am inviting the Housing Corporation to propose a significant increase in its special rural programme for rented housing, to allow 1,000 approvals next year, 1,200 in 1991-92 and 1,500 in 1992-93. I am inviting the corporation to identify separately, for the first time, a rural element within its low-cost home ownership programme, to allow 250 approvals next year, 300 in 1991-92 and 350 in 1992-93. Neither of those approval targets will be affected by the demands for repurchase funds.

The localities to which the repurchase scheme applies are wider than those proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale when we debated this subject in the summer. The scheme will apply in areas eligible for investment under the corporation's special rural programme. That is primarily targeted on settlements in rural areas with fewer than 1,000 people, but that is not intended to be an absolute cut-off point. It may be appropriate for the pre-emption scheme to apply to properties in rural areas with a greater population. It is important that there should be a measure of flexibility at the margin, and the corporation will consider all such cases on their merits.

[Mr. Howard]

The scheme will apply also in rural areas other than those within the special rural programme where the site has received planning permission specifically for the development of low-cost housing for local needs and is covered by a section 52 or similar agreement. It will apply also where a private landowner has made a site available on condition that it is retained for low-cost housing—the kind of circumstances to which I referred in answering my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton.

Some people have been worried by the fact that a housing association has a right to purchase, but not an obligation. They point out quite fairly that if there is a chance of an association not exercising its right, landowners may be reluctant to give land in the first place or local authorities may not feel able to grant planning permission. Where local authorities or landlords are worried about this point, the solution is to enter into a covenant and/or make a section 52 agreement to oblige the association to exercise its right to repurchase. They can do that in the full knowledge that the funds will be available from the corporation to enable the association to meet its undertaking.

We shall, of course, be monitoring the operation of the scheme. We shall want to review its workings after a suitable period. We believe that the improved repurchase scheme and the substantially increased programme for rural housing are important new elements in the Government's drive to meet local housing needs in rural areas. Those who promoted the amendment believe that as well. With their agreement, therefore, I ask the House to disagree with the Lords in amendment No. 269.

Mr. Soley: This is an important debate which will predominantly affect hon. Members who represent rural constituencies. My complaint about the Minister's lack of a housing policy is quite correct because the amount that we invest in housing is now one of the lowest in western Europe. We should not be having a debate on the problem in rural areas if the Government had not failed to develop a proper housing policy. It is precisely because of that failure that I have been able to point out consistently over the past few years that our housing crisis is no longer primarily an urban or inner-city crisis, but a national crisis which is hitting the rural areas. I know that some Conservative Members are seeking to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall ensure that they have time to do so by keeping my remarks brief. The fact that they are trying to catch your eye shows the level of seriousness of the housing crisis in rural areas.

8.30 pm

When the Government said last year that they planned to increase the number of housing association schemes, it sounded like good news, but when we looked at the small print we found that "schemes" meant only 600 new houses or flats throughout the rural areas of England. No Conservative Member—least of all the Minister—can believe for a moment that that will meet the needs of the rural areas. As I have often said, the Government made the fundamental error of ending council house provision as it used to exist and cutting it back until only 5,000 or 6,000 units per year were being built, without providing an alternative. As I have also often said, the private sector is unable to provide and is continuing to collapse.

The Government did a bit of an about-turn a couple of years ago by beginning to put funds back into housing associations, but even now, when additional funds have begun to flow in, the housing association movement is still not providing the same number of homes as in the mid-1970s and is only just beginning to get back to that figure. Even in a few years' time—for the moment, I am sticking to the rural areas—the housing association movement will not be providing enough accommodation to make up for the loss in the council sector. That is why the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), and the hon. Members for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) are in trouble in their areas. That is why people in those areas are saying that their sons and daughters cannot find anywhere that they can afford to rent or buy and that is why the local work force, such as postmen, nurses, teachers and bus drivers, are saying that they cannot find anywhere to rent or buy at a price that they can afford. That is the housing crisis in rural areas. The shared ownership scheme has a small but important part to play. Most—if not all—political parties have always accepted that the shared ownership scheme is useful in helping people to bridge the gap between renting and owning, and we all want to encourage that scheme.

I note that the Lords amendment refers to

"the full equity or any specified share of the equity".

The Government are trying to persuade the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale to accept what for him is a compromise. I must be careful. I accused the right hon. Gentleman on Report of not being prepared to press his amendment to a Division, but in fact he did so and he had my full respect for that. The compromise now concerns the amount of the equity and, more importantly, the small print of the deal, to which both I and the hon. Member for Honiton have referred in interventions.

There is understandable anxiety that the housing association may not be able to ensure that it receives back the full amount of money to enable it to repurchase at the price that is being asked at that time. In other words, we must allow for house price inflation because, although we are now going through a slight flattening of the inflation curve on house prices, they are still going up and we know that they will probably go up quite steeply from the end of next year. The housing associations will be asked to pay that price at that time. If they cannot do that without drawing on their reserves, as a result of the tight squeeze they are in and the fact that they are being pushed by Government policy towards private sector finance, they will try to find ways of avoiding doing that. They will at least want to hold the Government to their commitment to fund them in some way.

I notice that the Lords have tied their amendment to rural parishes with a population of 3,000 or fewer. I suspect that the problem goes wider and is affecting all rural areas. I also suspect that the problem for housing associations is the complex relationship that develops on the market price when they come to repurchase and, as the Minister himself acknowledged and as was mentioned in the Lords amendment, the question of the disposal of land price, the use of other funds and the payments of the grant at the time. The housing associations may have a deal, with the land price having an effect on that, but if the Government's price simply takes that into account without giving the housing associations sufficient funds to buy back the property at the price at the time without loss to their reserves, the housing associations will want to avoid such repurchases or, if they are forced to do so, will do so only at the expense of further housing investment in that area.

Such investment may not necessarily be in new housing because it may be investment through repair and renovation schemes. Housing associations may deal with the problem by making up the money through other people's rents. If they do that there is a danger. Let no Conservative Member think that any extra money that the housing association has to find itself can be lost in rents without causing problems. Housing association rents went up last year by 24 per cent. We all know that they will go up again next year and, almost certainly, the year after, unless the Government change the rules that they have introduced. The housing associations are being asked to operate the shared ownership scheme, which is neither cheap nor an easy option. We must remember that the price people are being asked to pay is closer to a mortgage than a rent in most cases, which is one of the problems for people who get into difficulties changing a mortgage into a shared ownership scheme—which many of us would like to see. The difficulty is that the payments are often close to the amount of a full mortgage. Housing associations cannot pass on any surplus that they have picked up in rent without pushing up rent levels generally.

I urge Conservative Members who are interested in this subject to think carefully about the wording and to hold the Government tightly to what appears, on paper, to be a tolerably good commitment to fund the associations. When one looks at the small print, one sees that housing associations will either have to find some extra money from their reserves and squeeze their building, repair and renovation programmes or lose the money in a rent increase. If they do not do that, they will try to avoid buying back because they will not receive the funding that they expected from the Government.

I am deeply disturbed by the Government's proposal and I should have thought that it would have been best to accept the Lords amendment. It is worth reminding the House that some 111 Members of the House of Lords voted for the amendment, with only 38 against; some 10 Tory Members of the House of Lords supported the amendment, as did a significant number of Cross Benchers and a couple of bishops. It would be unwise for the Government to throw out the amendment without bearing in mind the fact that the issue attracted cross-party support in the Lords or without considering the cautionary note I have sounded. I advise the House to agree with the Lords amendment.

Sir Peter Emery: I understand the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), which many of us have voiced. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Londsdale (Mr. Jopling), who brought this matter to our attention and pursued it in a proper and reasonable manner. We have been able to show the degree of flexibility of Government policy and of Government Ministers, which many of us have always believed to exist, although Governments are frequently not given credit for being flexible. We have certainly got much further with the Government than would have appeared obvious from the then Secretary of State's reply on a certain night, which did not even seem to understand the problem, let alone begin to meet it.

The Government's solution has gone through the hoops—it has been closely examined by the Country Landowners Association and by the National Farmers Union. A Minister who can get those two bodies together and persuade them to welcome and agree on recommendations is not doing badly, and I congratulate my hon. and learned Friend on having achieved that. As my hon. and learned Friend said, the solution should be monitored. We must make certain that it does what the Government and what those of us who have been pressing them want it to do.

The decrease in the amount of local housing in agricultural areas is a major worry, as is now accepted by everybody and by the Government. The level of financing suggested by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister slightly concerns me. The Opposition have a point that it may not be enough to meet the problems. One great difficulty is that in some constituencies—Honiton is a prime example—homes which in the past have always been established as agricultural cottages are now being snapped up by people from the midlands and elsewhere for use as retirement homes. A host of housing is being taken out of circulation that would previously never have been used for anything other than homes for those working in agriculture.

The amount of assistance that may be necessary to sustain homes in agricultural areas needs to be monitored closely and I ask my hon. and learned Friend to give us an assurance that that will happen.

I have one other question, with which my hon. and learned Friend did not deal, and which goes wider than low-cost agricultural housing. East Devon district council is very concerned about some of the restrictions that have been placed on it. The local authority purchased land a number of years ago at a reasonable price, very much lower than the market value, yet it is being forced to sell to housing associations at market prices. The housing associations then increase the cost of the housing to a level far higher than the local authority would wish. The local authority has applied to the Department, which has told it that it will have to sell in accordance with the market valuation of the land rather than at its purchase price. The ratepayers would in any case have got back the money spent on the purchase and it seems to me foolish that at a time when we are trying to encourage the provision of low-cost housing and starter homes the Ministry should insist that local authorities, which are in a position to provide low-cost land for such premises, should inflate the price of the land and sell it at market value. That may be to the benefit of the ratepayers, but it is of no benefit in trying to achieve what the local authorities and most people in the area would want—the provision of low-cost housing and starter homes. Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend will pursue that case with me.

I urge my hon. and learned Friend to express our gratitude to those in the other place for pursuing our ideas and translating them into Lords amendments. Without the Lords, we might not have had such an excellent statement from the Government. I am happy to urge my hon. Friends to accept that statement so long as it is understood that the provision will be monitored over the next two or three years to ensure that it achieves the objectives that the Minister has outlined. If that can be done, we shall have achieved a considerable victory.

8.45 pm

Mr. Fearn: I am happy to add my own support and that of my party to the support already voiced for Lords amendment No. 269. I should have liked it to apply much more widely. The fact that it refers to rural parishes with populations of 3,000 or fewer makes it a moderate move. I hope that Conservative Members will join many of their colleagues in the other place and agree to the amendment.

As the House knows, the amendment received overwhelming support from all parties in the other place, whose members are knowledgeable about the provision of low-cost housing in rural areas. Many of their Lordships have spent much of their lives helping to provide homes for those who can least afford them. It is the provision of land—at its agricultural rather than its development value—by some of the Lords that makes some low-cost schemes possible. They have the interests of their community at heart, and we should do well to heed their expert advice. Many housing groups also agree with Lords amendment No. 269. Unfortunately, Ministers do not have a reputation for taking kindly to outside advice, especially if it is given to someone else.

It may be admirable for the Government to claim that they are standing by the fundamental principle of their housing policy, which is the right to home ownership. But such a policy becomes somewhat dogmatic and foolhardy if it deprives hundreds, if not thousands, of people of the opportunity ever to have a home of their own. The policy is even more foolhardy if it leads to the devastation of whole communities, and that could still happen.

I note that, by trebling the number of low-cost homes to be built in rural areas, the Government have recognised at least some of the problems, and that they have attempted to alleviate them by giving the housing associations the first right to buy. The fact that that right can only be exercised if they buy at open market prices will, as we heard, result in their being unable to buy, so the use of the houses will be lost to local people on low incomes.

Claims that funds will be available for that purpose—for all houses once they have been accepted into the scheme—should be taken with a pinch of salt. The scheme is cash-limited. The Government are the least likely people to agree to an open-ended project. Housing associations wishing to apply for a grant from the Housing Corporation to provide rural low-cost housing will still have to compete with all the others.

Homes will still be sold on the open market to people outside the community, and landowners, including some of their Lordships, the Churches and others, will be reluctant to make the land available, in spite of the Minister's statement about covenants. I did not quite understand that statement, incidentally. That will make it impossible for low-cost housing schemes to get off the ground in the first place.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Surely the whole point of the covenant is that they will be prepared to sell the land with that assurance.

Mr. Fearn: Being a Conservative Member, the hon. Lady may have understood what the Minister said, but I do not think that it was clear. Perhaps the Minister will deal with that point later.

Those affected are often vital to the community. They include nurses, farm workers and now even teachers. Unless the House agrees to the amendment as it stands, the housing blight in rural areas will not improve and the House will again preside over the break-up of many rural communities.

Mr. Jopling: I must be losing my touch for judging the pace of progress of the business of the House. I was convinced during the debate on the timetable motion that there would not be time to discuss Lords amendment No. 269. Hence I made most of my remarks during the debate on the timetable motion, in hopeful anticipation of what my hon. and learned Friend the Minister would say. Now, having heard what he said, I shall add one or two remarks to supplement what I said earlier.

Mr. David Nicholson: Would my right hon. Friend care to note the pressure on the Labour Benches yesterday during the debate and the pressure now?

Mr. Jopling: There is one Labour Back-Bench Member present and we are delighted to see him.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North) *rose*——

Mr. Jopling: I must get on.

I am grateful for the kind remarks made about me and those who have supported me. I still believe that a better solution would have been that in the amendment. However, I do not intend to press that tonight, because the Government have a perfectly fair point. They have suggested, and it was recommended to me, that their solution should be tried for a little time. Therefore, I am happy to see how it works for 18 months and for us then to come back to it. I am grateful that the Government have said that they will review the matter. We shall have to do that.

The Government have given us the assurances that they back the scheme which the previous Secretary of State elaborated in June. They have said that there are guarantees of adequate repurchase funds and that the scheme for repurchase will be available in the majority of rural areas. I welcome also the promise of increases in the rural rented and shared ownership programmes that the Minister has explained to us. We have the basis for a helpful experiment. I welcome the efforts that I know that Government have made to meet the strong points that have been made here and in another place. They have worked extremely hard to help us.

We will have to see how the experiment works over the next 18 months, but the House is aware that I believe that the problems of rural housing amount to a crusade. I shall return to other problem arising on that issue over the months and years ahead. One of the problemss is with local authorities. We may have to return to that but there are other matters that we shall wish to discuss.

This is one of the most important issues with which hon. Members should be dealing and, on that basis, I have advised all my right hon. and hon. Friends who have been good enough to support me in the past few months not to press our objections to the Government's intentions tonight. Therefore, I recommend that they should support the Government and the motion before us.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): As the sponsor of the early-day motion on rural housing in the previous Session of Parliament, I should like to take this opportunity to say two things to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister. First, I should like to pay tribute to him for listening to the plea from the countryside on this key issue and congratulate him on the concessions that he is making tonight. Secondly, he will not be surprised to hear me say that we shall be wanting to review progress during the next 18 months or so to see that the measure alleviates the problems.

Mr. Howard: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

I express my gratitude to my right hon. and hon. Friends for their remarks. I wish to respond briefly to two points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). First, on the availability of resources, it is important to remember that, because the shares that are purchased have to be purchased at market value, whatever that is, the difference between the market value—the funds from which go to the housing association—and the cost of repurchase, is not as great as it might at first appear.

Secondly, I am looking at the point raised about the desire of some local authorities to make land available to housing associations at less than market price. I understand the problems to which that has given rise, and I and my Department are studying them. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr. Soley: With the lease of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

I should have learnt my lesson. We have just had a clear demonstration that it is always a mistake to be generous to the Conservative party. I said that I would give time to Conservative Members to speak on rural housing as we know that that issue is hurting them much more than the Labour party because of the distribution of seats. Clearly, there will be fewer Labour Members in a debate of this nature because we have fewer rural Members. We need to and shall put that right. The hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) jumped up to point out that there are few Labour Back Benchers here. What does he expect? Why should I ever again give Conservative Members time to debate the issue? I could have spent much more time on this and future matters, and I will do so if necessary.

I am troubled also by the way in which the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) said that he wanted to start a crusade on the issue. I welcome that, but I am more than a little puzzled that he is recommending that all his right hon. and hon. Friends should vote with the Government on what he sees as a watered down version of the Lords amendment, which is what he wanted initially. Now he is saying, "Let us make the crusade a bit weaker and lay down our swords for a while." He is urging them to make the crusade weaker in case they win.

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman should remember what I said in the timetable debate. The advice from the majority of the organisations which suggested those changes earlier in the year is that we should not object tonight to the Government's proposal and that we should let the experiment run.

Mr. Soley: If the right hon. Gentleman wants the stronger position recommended by Members of the House of Lords from all parties—including the Conservative party—he will vote with us. It is as simple as that. If the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale is going to have a crusade on this issue—I agree that it deserves one—could he widen it to join the crusade on housing in general? If there is a problem with housing in rural areas in terms of shared ownership, by God there is a problem with rented accommodation in all areas.

There is also a desperate problem for those people who are trying to buy. In the Conservative heartlands such as east Sussex—one of the richest areas in the country—67 per cent. of the people who do not own their own homes at present cannot afford to buy property there. There is a similar percentage—just over 60 per cent.—in Hampshire. In other counties in that area, over 90 per cent. of those who do not already own their own home cannot afford to buy. Furthermore, they cannot afford to rent, for all the reasons that I spelled out earlier.

The Minister attempted to sell to his hon. Friends the idea that somehow or other the changes that he is making—although less effective than those suggested by the Lords—will considerably help the shared ownership schemes in rural areas. I accept that they will help at the margins, but I do not accept that the Minister has faced up to the problem in both the rented and purchase sectors that I put to him earlier. Until the Minister does something about the housing finance mess that the Government have got themselves into, housing associations will never be able to provide the necessary number of homes in rural areas that are affordable either for renting or shared ownership because they will not have the necessary resources.

9 pm

The Government are in difficulties on this point for two reasons. First, they want the housing association movement to use more private sector money and are therefore squeezing Government grants. The House will remember that the Government went through some uncertainty a couple of years ago about whether housing associations were or were not in the public sector. My view is that they are clearly in the public sector, but that does not rule out the possibility that they can, or indeed should, look for private money. I have no objection to that. However, we should not kid ourselves that the housing associations are anything other than in the public sector.

If we are to enable housing associations to provide for the difference that was lost because of the cuts made in the council sector, we must increase the amount of money available to them and reform housing finance. What one must not do—the Government are busy doing this—is to make housing associations take over existing council housing. When a housing association in a rural area—especially in the south where this practice is now becoming quite common—seeks to take over council housing, usually at the request of a Conservative-controlled council, not one single house is added to the rented or purchase stock. It simply changes the management. However, the cost and the bureaucratic problems involved mean that housing associations spend less time on shared ownership schemes, on providing affordable housing or on doing the land deals that are necessary if they are to get some low-cost land, and that in turn compounds the Government's problem.

Housing associations are still unable to provide the necessary accommodation. That is why Conservative Members such as the hon. Members for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and for Taunton—the latter of whom I shall try to tempt back on board although he has had the audacity to try to bite the hand that feeds him—are getting into trouble. I advise them that this is the tip of the iceberg. I am aware that that phrase is unfortunate in view of recent history, but this really is the tip of the iceberg.

Unless the Government deliver a housing policy that provides affordable accommodation in the areas represented by Conservative Members, messing around with shared ownership schemes such as this will not help to solve their problems. Conservative Members will still find many of their constituents knocking on their doors, saying, "Where is my son or daughter going to live? Where are the local workers going to live?" I advise those hon. Members that that will continue.

Finally, I am struck by a headline that I have seen this evening, which reads

"Thatcher's plan to save the world".

Apparently the Prime Minister addressed the United Nations with two people standing by wearing white coats. I wish that she had first directed her attention to the housing crisis that she has created here. If she wants to ignore the homeless kids on our streets and the problems in the inner cities, okay, but she should at least address herself to the Conservative areas where people can no longer afford either to rent or to buy.

Many of the homeless kids on the streets of London, Birmingham, Manchester or Glasgow have come from rural areas. They are not necessarily inner-city kids. According to the Centrepoint study, about 40 per cent. come from outside London. Many come from areas represented by Conservative Members who, sadly, do not meet such people. Although Conservative Members had an opportunity to do so today, to the best of my knowledge only one Conservative Member went, but all credit to him for doing so. I wish that Conservative Members would talk to those kids, because many of them come from their areas. They have moved to London and to other cities because their local housing associations cannot deliver.

This vote is important for the rural areas. There is much more about which I would dearly love to have spoken, but I have had to leave those topics out because the Government have chosen not to allow us to do so. That is their choice. On this vote, more than any other, Conservative Members should be in the Lobby with us rather than helping to water down the famous crusade that has been discovered suddenly by the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale.

There is nothing convincing about a crusade when its leaders presumably whip up the troops for action, then, when they are ready to go, turn around and say, "Okay, sit down again, fellas. We have decided not to sail for the Holy Land today; we shall sail in a couple of years when we have seen what the Government have delivered". That is some crusade. It is not convincing and I do not think it will convince the electorate in the rural areas.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 232, Noes 195.

Division No. 378] **[9.06 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*

Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. Tom Sackville

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

It being more than two hours after the commencement of the proceedings, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to the Order this day, designated those amendments which appeared to him to involve questions of privilege.*

Lords amendment No. 266 agreed to. [Special Entry.]

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put forthwith the Question on any motion made by a Minister of the Crown,* That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords amendment.

Lords amendment: No. 265, after clause 140, insert the following new Clause—*Charges: temporary traffic signs.*—

" .Notwithstanding any enactment or rule of law to the contrary, or the provisions of sections 138 to 140 above, a highway authority may not impose a charge for permitting temporary traffic signs to be placed on or near any road in their area by an organisation representative of road users under section 65 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended by the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 in its application to Scotland."

Motion made, and question proposed, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Question put forthwith, pursuant to the Order this day—

The House divided: Ayes 212, Noes 126.

Division No. 377] **[9.22 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*

Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendment proposed in lieu of the Lords amendment: (a), after clause 140, insert the following new Clause—

Charges: temporary traffic signs—

'(1) In section 65 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (powers and duties of highways authorities and roads authorities as to placing of traffic signs) after subsection (3) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3A) No charge may be made—

(a) in England and Wales, by a highway authority which is the council of a county, metropolitan district or London borough or the Common Council of the City of London, or

(b) in Scotland, by a local roads authority,

with respect to the exercise of their power under subsection (1) above to permit a traffic sign to be placed on or near any road in their area if—

(i) the sign conveys information of a temporary nature or is otherwise intended to be placed only temporarily; and

(ii) the sign is to be placed by a body which is prescribed for the purposes of this subsection as being a body appearing to the Secretary of State to be representative of the interests of road users or any class of road users."

(2) Subsection (1) above does not apply in any case where, before this section comes into force, the payment of a charge has been agreed.'—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Question put forthwith, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 197, Noes 118.

Division No. 376] **[9.34 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry (Derbyshire NE)
Barnes, Mrs Rosie (Greenwich)
Barron, Kevin
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. (D'nt'n & R'dish)
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Ron (Blyth Valley)
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex (Mont'g)
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry (B'ham Hodge H'l)
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry (Falkirk E)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray)
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John (Norwich South)
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry (Alyn & Deeside)
Jones, Ieuan (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd S W)
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen (Barnsley West)
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martin, Michael J. (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Arg'l & Bute)
Mitchell, Austin (G't Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Richardson, Jo
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton & F'bury)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike (Glasgow, C)
Welsh, Andrew (Angus E)
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. (Carm'then)
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Schedule 11

ENACTMENTS REPEALED

Lords amendment: No. 582, in page 222, line 55, column 3, at beginning insert—

"Section 69.".

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Question put forthwith:—

The House divided: Ayes 191, Noes 105.

Division No 379] **[9.47 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Tom (Hazel Grove)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset N)
Batiste, Spencer
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald (Dulwich)
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John (Winchester)
Bruce, Ian (Dorset South)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, (Luton N)
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre F'rest)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cran, James
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth N)
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. (B'ham H'll Gr')
Hargreaves, Ken (Hyndburn)
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen (Wolv' NE)
Hicks, Robert (Cornwall SE)
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Howell, Ralph (North Norfolk)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B (Herts W)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger (B'ham N'thfield)
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby North)
Knight, Dame Jill (Edgbaston)
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John (Pendle)
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
MacKay, Andrew (E Berkshire)
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris (Bath)
Patten, John (Oxford W)
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David (Waveney)
Powell, William (Corby)
Price, Sir David

Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David

Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Fallon and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*

Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Ronnie Campbell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put forthwith, with respect to the amendments designated by him which had not been disposed of, the Question,* That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendments.

The House divided: Ayes 184, Noes 98.

Division No. 380] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*

Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*

Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Murphy, Paul
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Ronnie Campbell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put forthwith the Question,* That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords amendments.

The House divided: Ayes 176, Noes 86.

Division No. 381] **[10.12 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth

Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Fallon and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Allen, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fearn, Ronald
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Murphy, Paul
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. George J. Buckley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded, pursuant to the Order this day, to put forthwith the Question,*

That a Committee be appointed to draw up reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendments Nos. 272, 269 and 582; that Mr. Sidney Chapman, Mr. Christopher Chope, Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory, Mr. Paul Murphy and Mr. Clive Soley be members of the Committee; that three be the quorum of the Committee; that the committee do withdraw immediately.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-Upon-Tweed) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you confirm that now the House has gone through the procedure of voting for huge blocks of amendments without separate debate or even separate vote it is now required to vote on the composition of a committee while the guillotine precludes any amendment to the composition of that committee? Presumably this is the only occasion when the House appoints a committee the membership of which cannot be varied by the House?

Mr. Speaker: That is the case, but, of course, the House can vote against that committee, as is happening.

The House having divided: Ayes 164, Noes 24.

Division No. [illegible]] [10.34 pm

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fineberg, Sir Geoffrey
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Munro, Sir Hector

Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Alton, David
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Fearn, Ronald
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Livsey, Richard
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Alan Beith.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Reasons for disagreeing to certain of the Lords amendments reported, and agreed to; to be communicated to the Lords.

Employment Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 8

POWER TO EXEMPT DISCRIMINATION IN FAVOUR OF LONE PARENTS IN CONNECTION WITH TRAINING

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 7, line 27, leave out subsection (1) and insert—

"(1) The Secretary of State may by order provide with respect to—

(a) any specified arrangements made under section 2 of the Employment and Training Act 1973 (functions of the Secretary of State as respects employment and training), or

(b) any specified class or description of training for employment provided otherwise than in pursuance of that section, or

(c) any specified scheme set up under section 1 of the Employment Subsidies Act 1978 (schemes for financing employment),

that this section shall apply to such special treatment afforded to or in respect of lone parents in connection with their participation in those arrangements, or in that training or scheme, as is specified or referred to in the order."

10.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3.

Mr. Nicholls: The purpose of the amendments do not, which were introduced in Committee in another place, is to extend the scope of clause 8 to cover employment and enterprise programmes as well as training schemes. The clause, without the amendments, would have given the Secretary of State the power to exempt, by order, special treatment in favour of lone parents in training for employment from being unlawful discrimination against married persons under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. However, the clause as it stood would not have allowed exemption of similar arrangements which it might in future be thought desirable to introduce in the Department's other programmes, perhaps in the field of employment and enterprise.

The clause was generally welcomed when it was introduced towards the end of proceedings in this House, as were the Government's amendments aimed at widening the scope of the clause when they were introduced in another place. The amendments are designed to cover the whole range of the Department's current and possible future employment and enterprise measures, including activities such as the enterprise allowance scheme, job clubs and job share. But they do not give the Government a blank cheque. The Secretary of State would have to make orders specifying the special treatment for lone parents and the particular arrangements or scheme to which the exemption would apply. The orders would be subject to the negative resolution procedure. The amendments do not represent a commitment by the Government to extend special help for lone parents to other areas of the Department's activities. We have no immediate plans to do so. We shall first need to see what happens in employment training.

However, the amendments provide the necessary flexibility to allow for future developments in provision for lone parents and for that reason I commend them to the House.

I want to say a word or two about the attitude that some Opposition Members may have to these provisions. I said that they were generally welcomed, but I am aware that there is a feeling that they perhaps should have been extended more widely and that instead of merely being targeted on lone parents they might have been extended to couples, on a means-tested basis. Inevitably money is always limited and the Government had to decide what they could do to help the most significantly disadvantaged group to come forward for employment training. There is no doubt that lone parents are significantly disadvantaged and they consist overwhelmingly, although not exclusively, of women. So the Government thought it right initially to introduce this scheme to help lone parents. However the debate may have proceeded since, at the time the proposals were welcomed.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): As the Minister said, amendments Nos. 1, 2 and 3 extend the application of clause 8 from training schemes alone to other employment and enterprise programmes. The new areas that he mentioned which would be affected by the amendments are the enterprise allowance scheme, job share and job clubs and the like.

We supported clause 8 in Committee and on Report, albeit with reservations about the non-application to married people. However, several developments have come to light since then and they have changed our welcome to dismay; indeed, they force us to divide the House over the amendments.

We are now in possession of the full facts—I am surprised that the Minister did not mention them—about the implications of the industrial tribunal decision to which the then Minister obliquely referred in Committee on May 17. We have spoken to the woman who took the case against the Government, and several times this week we have spoken to the Equal Opportunities Commission which represents the woman and supports her claim.

I apologise to the House for listing the fairly complicated scenario of that case, but the case is extremely important. The facts are that lone parents can have child care costs of up to £50 a week paid when they take up a place on employment training. As the Minister has said, married women did not have that entitlement. Kay Jackson, the woman in question, is married with three children under five. She had been offered a place on employment training but was unable to take up the offer because her allowance and her husband's salary would not have been sufficient for three lots of child care.

Much as she wanted to, Mrs. Jackson could not go on the training scheme. Therefore, on 5 January she took the Government to the tribunal on the ground that they had discriminated against married women. The tribunal upheld that claim on 19 January. The Government have just appealed to the Employment Appeals Tribunal, but the decision has not yet been made known. In any case, clause 8 and the three Lords amendments circumvent the decision. As the Minister has said, they allow the Secretary of State to make an order after Royal Assent that will make legal discrimination against married women in the

[Ms. Jo Richardson]

provision of child care. That means that the Government are changing the law retroactively to cover what they would have to put in place if they lost their appeal.

The discrimination does not apply just to employment training because with the three Lords amendments the Government have extended the discrimination to the areas that I have mentioned—the enterprise allowance scheme, job share, job clubs and the like. Lord Strathclyde somehow managed to avoid all mention of the industrial tribunal when the matter was debated in another place. However, he said:

"An extension of such help to all parents training on the scheme would be hard to justify."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 26 October 1989; Vol. 511, c. 676.]

He estimated that 20 per cent. of employment training entrants taking up child care costs would add an extra £100 million to the cost of the scheme.

We now know that because of the low take-up of employment training there are sufficient funds to pay for that. In other words, the £100 million could be found without going outside the amount set aside. I understand that about £3 billion was allocated for an employment training programme with 600,000 people over a year. When the Government failed to reach the target they reduced it from 600,000 to 540,000. They are still 100,000 entrants short. Money has been allocated for that and could be used to cater for married women who wish to take up employment training or enter one of the other schemes and apply for child care.

Many women do not go in for employment training either because they cannot afford to do so or because they are not eligible. The Government cannot fill all the places. Quite by chance last Friday I visited a training agency in my constituency. I am pleased to say that it is managed largely by women and has a good equal opportunities policy. The people in the agency complained bitterly that married women could not take up the places in the agency because it could not give them money for child care.

Why do not the Government kill two birds with one stone? The solution is here for all to see, except for those who do not want to see it. In the past few months, even the Government have claimed to notice the importance of women to the labour market. We are constantly hearing, and I am glad to hear it, of notices from the ministerial committee on women's issues saying that women will be required in the workplace in the 1990s, but here we have the opportunity, and apparently the money, to extend these schemes to allow married women to take them up and to have child care, but the Government will not do it.

10.45 pm

In the White Paper of December 1988, the Government told employers, in paragraph 1.8, that they

"must recognise that women can no longer be treated as second-class workers."

I echo that, and I hope that every hon. Member does. I am infinitely grateful for this change of heart. Many employers, aided and abetted by the Government, have treated women as second-class workers for the past decade and even longer. They have removed protection for part-time workers, the majority of whom are women, reduced the jurisdiction of wages councils for the lower paid, the majority of whom are women, and taxed workplace nurseries as a perk—a perk for whom? The majority of those affected in that case are also women. It sticks in my throat when the Government say that women should be treated like first-class citizens when they do not take the legislative action that would enable them to be so.

Let us take the Government at their word and see what remedies they propose. The White Paper suggests broadening company training policies, flexibility of work and hours, and job sharing. This is specifically

"to facilitate the employment of women with families."

In that case, why is there nothing about child care, possibly the single most important facility for women wanting to start work or return to work, and why does that not apply to married women?

I shall recap the argument briefly because I want it to be clear in my mind and the minds of my hon. Friends. When a decision of the European Court goes against the Government, they always say that they are bound by British law and do not want to take any notice of European law—at least, that is the general impression that they give. When British law does not suit them, as it apparently does not in this case, they change the law, as the amendments do.

The Government appear to be awaiting a decision on ET. Assuming that they lose their appeal, and Mrs. Jackson wins, will they honour that decision, or will they use the provisions in these amendments to overcome what Mrs. Jackson has so rightly won in her long case? What will happen to the other six or seven cases that are continuing?

I strongly disapprove of the Government introducing changes on the basis of a negative order. Such important changes should be subject to the affirmative vote of both Houses of Parliament. I should like an answer from the Minister, but I have a strong feeling that he will resist extending the provision to married women. Therefore, I shall invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the amendments.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): The amendments raise certain issues which I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to reconsider. We talk about the family, and we all have a concept of the family. Many of us think of happy children being brought up in a household which gives them the support, love and care that they need all the time. Yet the reality is that many children are brought up by lone parents. They are the children of divorced parents, parents who have never married or widowed parents. Such children have a much tougher life, perhaps, than those who are brought up in the sort of family that I described initially.

The Government have been scorned for some time for supposedly failing to recognise that the pattern of the family has changed dramatically from the old-style paterfamilias family with a head of household who works, who is undoubtedly a man, with a non-working wife and with children at home growing up extremely nicely. The truth is that the Government have recognised that the pattern has changed. They are not behind in reading social trends. They have noticed that a significant classification of the new poor is the single parent bringing up young children.

The majority of single parents are female, and they are the women who have such immense difficulty in getting out of the so-called poverty trap—in other words, being able to find a job—because they may not have been very well trained. Many of the bed-and-breakfast cases with which I am aware, even in my constituency, consist of women who have failed to cope with life in that they have not taken advantage of their education and training opportunities. There are others who have had children at an early age. For example, one of my constituents who is 17 years of age has twins and is apart from the father of her children. She is living with her mother. These girls—by and large they are no more than girls—find it extremely tough to make a start and become self-reliant, and they end up in bed-and-breakfast accommodation of the sort that we are all well aware of and concerned about.

I cannot do other than welcome the Minister's departmental commitment to support for what we are calling lone parents. It is a most laudable thing to be doing. I am delighted to know that the Department is providing lone parents with a £50 child care allowance when they embark on training schemes. That is exceptionally good news. I am more pleased than I can say. These are the very people who are in the greatest need. Are we not committed as a nation and a Government to helping the poorest of the poor, whether that involves overseas aid or aid within the United Kingdom? It must be our objective to help those who are in the greatest need.

Here we have the horns of a dilemma. If we are to help those who are in the greatest need, we must first identify them. We have to make a judgment, and lone parents have been recognised generally as being an extremely needy group. The Child Poverty Action Group—a most eminent group—supports this stance. Once we have identified such a group we have enormous pangs of conscience because there is the rest of the world to consider. There are many others who have needs and they must be treated equally and given the same sort of treatment as we afford to those who are in the greatest need. That is the dilemma, and perhaps that is the illogicality on which the Opposition find themselves resting this evening.

Although I wish to help all members of my sex, I find a little difficulty in solidly identifying someone who is not a lone parent as necessarily a married woman. There must be others who are bringing up children. There must be married men who are doing so, for a start. There must be parted women who are not married. There must be parted men who are not married. In all these groups there must be some who have children. However, I wish always to help my own sex.

I recognise the great difficulty that some married women find in returning to the job market. In the information technology industry, for example, there are equal opportunities and equal pay. Why are married women supposedly seeking work not entering that industry? Clearly, carrots must be offered there. Again, we are making a judgment on a particular group and saying that they need some form of special treatment. Yet if we were supporting a women-in-technology campaign, we would not also be supporting a men-in-technology campaign because there would not be that need. Therefore, I am forced by logic to accept that, however difficult it is, we must identify some groups as more disadvantaged than others at any particular point in time and channel assistance to them.

I firmly support the Government in their child care concept for lone parents. I have great concern for lone parents and I have employed many of them during my time as an employer. However, I make the plea that my hon. Friend the Minister should not ignore the readily identifiable needs of married women wanting to return to the job market. I am not suggesting that because lone parents are being helped other sectors of human society must also be helped; I am simply identifying them as a group which also has special needs.

On the understanding that the amendments are good and must be accepted by the House, I ask my hon. Friend to give a commitment that he will listen again to the Equal Opportunities Commission, which has voiced its concerns to me, and consider whether there are further ways in which his Department can help another disadvantaged group—the married women at home who have not been earning because they have been bringing up their children and supporting whatever concept of the family we happen to fancy at any given moment. I hope that my hon. Friend will think of their needs and consider ways to help them back into the job market, because the job market certainly needs them.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Many people would share the view of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), not only in stressing the importance of giving help to lone parents who wish to undertake training but in suggesting that there must also be ways of encouraging the many married women who want to re-enter the job market to do so, and not least those who have been out of work for family or other reasons and have not qualified for unemployment benefit.

One of the weaknesses of the employment training scheme is that insufficient attention has been given to encouraging women to return to work. That is to be regretted for a number of reasons, including a woman's right to choose whether she wishes to re-enter the job market and the fact that not only lone parents but also many married parents suffer hardship and face the necessity of having to go to work to try to make ends meet. This matter is important to employers and to the community because job structures will change over the next decade and into the next century.

The Government recognise that it will be necessary to encourage more women to return to work. The Secretary of State said recently that a survey of 2,000 companies showed that only one in three was trying to adapt employment and training practices to try to tap alternative sources, and that very few were far down the road towards providing child care facilities.

I have been corresponding with the Minister about cases in my constituency. The fishermen are away from home for much of the week and their wives want to work, but they do not qualify for the £50 per week child care allowance because they are married. In most instances, that prevents them seeking the training that they undoubtedly want. There is a clear need to extend the allowance.

The House should be grateful to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) for highlighting the case of Mrs. Jackson. The question of resources is important, but from what the hon. Lady said it appears that there might be sufficient resources—a point with which the Minister must deal in his reply.

We are discussing ways in which to encourage women and lone parents, male and female, to come back into the job market through training. There is not much point in getting them trained, however, if they cannot take up jobs because of a lack of child care facilities as a result of the current tax regime affecting workplace nurseries. We must go much further than reforming that tax regime, however.

[Mr. James Wallace]

The problem is especially acute for women who want to take jobs where there are no workplace nurseries. We must expand the state nursery sector.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, on an interpretation of social security law, a woman could be told to take a job, having gone through a training scheme, not get any child care benefits, be on a low wage and therefore be unable to take the job because she cannot get anyone to look after her child—she would not be able to afford it—and end up out of work, having been trained?

Mr. Wallace: That sounds a plausible set of circumstances. There is a barrier to returning to work, and much more must be done about it.

It is regrettable that the Government have not responded more positively to the modest extension that the hon. Member for Barking has suggested. The Lords amendments are good as far as they go, but they do not go far enough.

11 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I believe that lack of child care is one of the main reasons why women do not enter the labour market, why they do not get on once they get a job and why they do not go on training courses. Lone parents struggle more than other people, but married women in low-income families experience great difficulty in taking up employment and training opportunities.

It seems that the Government accept that training is necessary but also ensure that it cannot be taken up. The Equal Opportunities Commission believes that the Government discriminate. If, as we sincerely hope, the appeal that has been mentioned is upheld, the Government will once again be seen to be going backwards when the rest of Europe is going forwards.

We need universally available child care. The Government should be just a little daring and accept our amendment. My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) made some sensible and telling points.

Mr. Nicholls: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

Sometimes, when we have short debates, the quality of speeches shows that the debate could have gone on fruitfully for a good deal longer. With her usual perspicacity, the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) anticipated that I cannot tonight give her everything that she wants. She was perhaps most worried that, if Mrs. Jackson wins her case, what is proposed here might retrospectively take away from her what she might obtain in the court. If Mrs. Jackson wins her case, she and anyone else who has a case in the pipeline will find that the judgment is honoured and that there is no question of retrospection.

The hon. Member for Barking, my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) have all put their finger on the Government's dilemma. We are being accused not of not having done anything helpful, but of having come up with a good idea and not going far enough. The easy way to avoid laying oneself open to that criticism is to do nothing to help. The Government's detractors would say that that is no more than can be expected of the Government and that no great harm has been done.

The difficulty is that experience has shown that women who wanted to return to the labour market and used the community programme as a vehicle were at a distinct—if unintended—disadvantage: if they had not been unemployed for six months, they could not go on to the programme. When employment training was being devised, we were anxious to do all that we could to ensure that women did not suffer from that disadvantage, and drew up a number of measures to try to help. One was the provision that those who had not been available for work but had been on the order book for more than six months should be eligible to come back; still more significant was the proposal that those who had been out of the labour market for at least two years should be entitled to take part in employment training. All those steps were warmly welcomed, and there can be no doubt on either side of the House that the variations in the criteria for eligibility for ET have been of significant advantage to women. The problem is knowing where to draw the line when resources are inevitably limited. The line taken by the Government is that it is right to target the resources available for child care on lone parents, who—to an overwhelming degree—are at the greatest disadvantage. The hon. Member for Barking advanced the beguiling argument that if there was an underspend on the programme because fewer people were going on to it owing to the rate of decline in unemployment, there might be some spare cash around. Ultimately, however, that argument does not hold water: it is impossible to plan the principle of a programme by simply trying to cash in on a temporary or notional underspend.

There is no question of retrospective legislation. All that we are doing is restoring the balance to its previous state, which at the time was greatly welcomed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West is entirely right to remind us that the family has a wider context than that of the lone parent, and that married women also suffer disadvantages. We have tried to help them in the ways that I have suggested, but it would be going too far to say that, irrespective of whether a person is married or a sole parent, that person should automatically receive help.

In answer to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), let me say that I entirely understand the argument that there is not much point in receiving help with child care during training if, once the training is over, people cannot obtain jobs because they cannot afford child care. The logical consequence of that understandable argument is that we should do nothing to help, but, given demographic pressures, it must be a good idea to provide quality training to help women back into the labour market.

Ms. Richardson: I am afraid that I cannot accept what the Minister has said. He sounds awfully pleasant all of a sudden—almost beguiling, as he said that I had been—but he tossed aside my suggestion that the Government have resources to spare within the scheme because of an underspend, and said that the Government could not spend those resources. I honestly do not know how the Government will cope with the demographic changes that the 1990s will bring unless much more is done to encourage and support the married women—and, in some instances, married men—who want to join the work force, or return to it.

It is all very well for the Government to say, "They will just have to manage. We will target only lone parents"—deserving though they may be. The fact is that employers will not be able to cope unless married women are allowed, encouraged and helped to return to work. The Government have a golden opportunity to spend money that they have not spent so far, but they will not take it. I cannot think what to call such behaviour, but there are all sorts of words for it: stupidity is one.

I intend to divide the House simply to show that Opposition Members believe that the Government are not going nearly far enough in their efforts to return women to work and to support training and retraining for them.

I welcome the support of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) and the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). It has been a useful debate.

The Minister suggested that I wanted a debate simply because I wished to be reassured that the Bill will not override whatever Mrs. Jackson may win. That was not the principal reason. However, I am distressed to find that the Government skated over that very important industrial tribunal case instead of welcoming it and applying the principle to other married women who have not had the opportunity to state their case.

Mrs. Mahon: Will my hon. Friend confirm that if Mrs. Jackson wins the ruling will apply only to her and that, as with equal pay, women will have to make individual applications? That is very unsatisfactory. It does not work like that in other countries.

Ms. Richardson: If Mrs. Jackson wins, I understand that she will win only for herself. What is called class action does not apply to all married women. I wish to goodness that it did. I think that six or seven other cases are in the pipeline. Married women who have not gone through the procedure will not be entitled to the award that Mrs. Jackson may win for herself in a very brave and dedicated way.

I invite my hon. Friends to vote against the Lords amendment. We are not opposed to lone parents receiving help, but we want it to be extended now to married women.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 120, Noes 55.

Division No. [illegible]] **[11.11 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Greg Knight and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Alton, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Haynes, Frank
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Ruddock, Joan
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 4, before clause 11, to insert the following new clause—*Exemption of Sikhs from requirement to wear safety helmets on construction sites*—

".—(1) Any requirement to wear a safety helmet which (apart from this section) would, by virtue of any statutory provision or rule of law, be imposed on a Sikh who is on a construction site shall not apply to him at any time when he is wearing a turban.

(2) Accordingly, where—

(a) a Sikh who is on a construction site is for the time being wearing a turban, and

(b) (apart from this section) any associated requirement would, by virtue of any statutory provision or rule of law, be imposed—

(i) on the Sikh, or

(ii) on any other person,

in connection with the wearing by the Sikh of a safety helmet,

that requirement shall not apply to the Sikh or (as the case may be) to that other person.

(3) In subsection (2) "associated requirement" means any requirement (other than one falling within subsection (1)) which is related to or connected with the wearing, provision or maintenance of safety helmets.

(4) It is hereby declared that, where a person does not comply with any requirement, being a requirement which for the time being does not apply to him by virtue of subsection (1) or (2)—

(a) he shall not be liable in tort to any person in respect of any injury, loss or damage caused by his failure to comply with that requirement; and

(b) in Scotland no action for reparation shall be brought against him by any person in respect of any such injury, loss or damage.

(5) If a Sikh who is on a construction site—

(a) does not comply with any requirement to wear a safety helmet, being a requirement which for the time being does not apply to him by virtue of subsection (1), and

(b) in consequence of any act or omission of some other person sustains any injury, loss or damage which is to any extent attributable to the fact that he is not wearing a safety helmet in compliance with the requirement,

that other person shall, if liable to the Sikh in tort (or, in Scotland, in an action for reparation), be so liable only to the extent that injury, loss or damage would have been sustained by the Sikh even if he had been wearing a safety helmet in compliance with the requirement.

(6) Where—

(a) the act or omission referred to in subsection (5) causes the death of the Sikh, and

(b) the Sikh would have sustained some injury (other than loss of life) in consequence of the act or omission even if he had been wearing a safety helmet in compliance with the requirement in question,

the amount of any damages which, by virtue of that subsection, are recoverable in tort (or, in Scotland, in an action for reparation) in respect of that injury shall not exceed the amount of any damages which would (apart from that subsection) be so recoverable in respect of the Sikh's death.

(7) In this section—

"building operations" and "works of engineering construction" have the same meaning as in the Factories Act 1961;

"construction site" means any place where any building operations or works of engineering construction are being undertaken;

"injury" includes loss of life, any impairment of a person's physical or mental condition and any disease;

"safety helmet" means any form of protective headgear; and

"statutory provision" means a provision of an Act or of subordinate legislation.

(8) In this section—

(a) any reference to a Sikh is a reference to a follower of the Sikh religion; and

(b) any reference to a Sikh being on a construction site is a reference to his being there whether while at work or otherwise.

(9) This section shall have effect in relation to any relevant construction site within the territorial sea adjacent to Great Britain as it has effect in relation to any construction site within Great Britain.

(10) In subsection (9) "relevant construction site" means any construction site where there are being undertaken any building operations or works of engineering construction which are activities falling within Article 7(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (Application outside Great Britain) Order 1989."

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Tim Eggar): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 5, 11 and 13.

Mr. Eggar: I hope that it will assist the House if I explain the background to the amendments and the reasoning behind them.

The Health and Safety Commission has long been concerned about safety standards in the construction industry. As long ago as 1986, the commission issued a consultation document on proposals for regulations that would require all workers on construction sites to wear head protection where there was a risk of injury. These proposed regulations, which have the support of both sides of the industry, should significantly reduce the number of head injuries on construction sites. The Government are committed to laying the regulations before the House as soon as possible.

The Government have also had to consider the impact of the regulations on the Sikh community. For religious reasons, orthodox Sikhs are unable to wear anything on their heads in public except a turban. Most of the responses to the 1986 consultative document commented on that issue. Broadly speaking, employers and employer organisations in the industry argued against an exemption on health and safety and industrial relations grounds. The Sikh community, on the other hand, argued in favour because of the hardship that Sikhs would otherwise suffer. The Government have had to take a difficult decision. We had to balance strong feelings and views about the importance of health and safety on one side with strongly held religious views on the other.

It may help the House if I rehearse briefly some of the arguments. The dangers of head injury on construction sites are well known. They are undoubtedly greatly reduced by the wearing of helmets. We are confident that new regulations will considerably reduce the number of head injuries and result in an overall improvement in health and safety standards.

The House will not be surprised to learn that Sikhs also feel strongly about the issue. The tenets of his religion are more important for the turbaned Sikh than his own safety. There are more Sikhs employed in construction than in any other industry. It is estimated that the figure could be as high as 40,000. The practical consequences of a statutory requirement on Sikhs to wear helmets would be that many thousands of Sikhs would be faced with a straight choice between their religion and their job. That would cause real hardship and could also result in a loss of skilled labour to the construction industry.

It is rare for an issue fundamental to the faith of one particular religious group to come into conflict with public policy. But on other occasions it has been seen as right that the law should take account of deeply held religious beliefs. A precedent exists in the Motor-cycle Crash Helmets (Religious Exemption) Act 1976. Looking back further, there is the whole British Sikh military tradition. Sikhs were allowed to wear turbans instead of steel helmets when they fought for this country in the first and second world wars.

The Government believed that the balance of the argument lies in taking account of the deeply held views of the Sikh community. Making an exemption for Sikhs in this way will mean that the overall improvement in health and safety arising out of the new proposed regulations will be slightly less than it might otherwise have been. I have no hesitation in accepting that.

Having decided to make an exemption, it was essential for us to do all that we could to make it workable. That is why we introduced Lords amendment No. 5, which I know is a cause of concern to my hon. Friends the Members for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) and for Crosby (Mr. Thornton), among others, and which was debated at length in another place. I should say to my hon. Friends the Members for Shipley and for Crosby that the effect of their proposed amendments would be to render worthless a Sikh's right not to wear a helmet because an employer could justify a general requirement to wear a helmet on health and safety grounds. We believe that that would make our exemption unworkable.

You will appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this has not been an easy decision for the Government to make, but I am convinced that our approach is the correct one. I am confident that it will command widespread support in the House.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I strongly oppose Lords amendment No. 4, which will divide communities and discriminate against the indigenous population. The British people have accepted millions of immigrants from the new Commonwealth since the war. As a result we have, for better or worse, ceased to be a white, homogenous society and become a multi-racial society, with all the problems that that brings.

The British people were never consulted and all the polls show that if they had been consulted they would have consistently opposed mass immigration, which has fundamentally changed the country in which they live. Despite that, however, they have accepted the newcomers with a generosity and tolerance that few other countries have shown. The British people have accepted that they must integrate with the newcomers. They have accepted that everyone should be treated equally under the law and to ensure that there is no discrimination they have rightly been told that they must accept the Race Relations Act 1976.

Since the British people have so generously accepted the newcomers, it behoves the newcomers to integrate and to become English. Whether they are brown, black, yellow or white, they should become English in England and Scots in Scotland. They should accept our laws, our history, our traditions and our tolerance. Unfortunately, the great and the good in this country are not satisfied with having created a multi-racial society—they now want a multi-cultural society, which will prevent assimilation and Anglicisation and will result in Britain ceasing to be one nation and becoming several nations.

11.30 pm

The new clause is fundamental to that change of policy. An ethnic minority, albeit for religious reasons, is to be treated differently under the law from the rest of the community. Separate laws for separate communities are divisive and unwise, particularly when they involve the safety of others. What will be the position if somebody drops a heavy object from the top of a scaffold and it lands on a Sikh? If the Sikh were wearing a safety helmet, the object might just bounce off and cause no damage. If he is wearing a turban, however, he may be severely injured and fall on top of somebody else or knock somebody off the scaffolding. Others will thus be put at risk by the new clause. The Government should also consider the position of a worker on the top of scaffolding who accidentally drops something. Again, if it hits someone wearing a safety hat it may cause no damage, but if it hits a Sikh wearing a turban, it may kill or severely injure him. What about the psychological effect of that on the person responsible for the accident?

In industry safety should be paramount and religious belief should take second place. I understand that the new clause is opposed by employers in the construction industry and by the trade unions and that when it was debated in the House of Lords nearly all the Opposition speakers opposed it, although they did not press it to a Division.

When immigrants from different countries and with different beliefs come to a Christian country they should be prepared to accept our laws and our way of life. If they do not wish to do so, they have a choice. They do not need to work in the construction industry because there are plenty of other jobs available. Alternatively, they could wear a metal helmet over their turban. There is no consistency in the law. People wear hard hats in power stations but I am told that the new clause does not include power stations. How will Sikhs deal with that?

The new clause discriminates against British workers who do not wish to wear hard hats for other reasons, which in some cases might be health reasons.

Mr. Corbyn: Has it occurred to the hon. Gentleman that many Sikh building workers and Sikh people living in Britain were born here, hold British passports and are therefore just as much British workers as any white worker?

Mr. Townend: I suggest that they should be prepared to accept the same laws as white British workers.

I was perturbed to read the remarks of the noble Lord Strathclyde when he moved the new clause in the other place. At column 738, he stated:

> "We are firmly committed to improving safety standards in construction and we are convinced that the regulation will be a significant step forwards. However, the many representations that we received from the Sikh community convinced us that the regulations would cause real hardship for orthodox Sikhs. . .
>
> It was decided on balance that in this case the wider issues of religious freedom and"——

these are the significant words——

> "relations with the Sikh community must take precedence".—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 16 October 1989; Vol. 511, c. 738.]

[Mr. Townend]

It is the last sentence that worries me. Does this mean that in future legislation exemption will be made to maintain good relations with ethnic minorities? Such discrimination against the general population would be very much resented by the indigenous population, as other happenings have been in recent years.

My hon. Friend referred to crash helmets for motorcycle riders, an issue that caused considerable problems. I remember a sad case which occurred soon after I became a Member of the House. A gentleman said that he had his own reasons for not wearing a crash hat and asked why he should be treated differently from the Sikhs. He broke the law numerous times, was arrested many times by the police and was actually put in gaol.

We have also allowed the ritual killing of animals, which is abhorrent to many people in this country who regard it as cruel.

I beg the Government to go no further down this path as it is divisive and discriminatory. We must stop encouraging the development of a multi-cultural society. We must all be equal before the law whether we are brown, black or white. I sincerely ask the Government to think again and at this late stage not to press the new clause.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): In response to what my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) has just said, I simply say, as a member of the Conservative party, that it is no part of the philosophy that I recognise in my party to trample on the religious practices or beliefs of anybody in this country or outside. As I understand it, part of the burden of my hon. Friend's objection to what is proposed in the new clause is that Sikhs not wearing hard hats on building sites take a risk. I am prepared to accept that they take a risk, but I ask my hon. Friend to consider how important observance of their religion must be to them if they are prepared to take such a risk.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said in his wide-ranging and thoughtful introduction to these proposals, for many people in the Sikh community, certainly in my constituency in west London, in Southall which is next door, in Hayes and Harlington and in a number of neighbouring constituencies, building work is a traditional trade. Many Sikh people work on building sites.

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. Friend accept that in many cases employers already have a difficult enough time persuading employees to use safety equipment, and will it not make things much more difficult if a certain section of the work force is exempt from the regulations? Will he also deal with the point that I raised about the danger to other workers?

Mr. Hughes: I am about to come to building employers and problems of sites.

I do not know whether all hon. Members have received this letter, which is dated yesterday, from Mr. Robbie Browne-Clayton, director of economic and public affairs at the Building Employers Confederation, telling us how heinous it would be if we allowed the new clause to be inserted into the Bill. I must tell the confederation that the record of its voluntary code of practice to persuade its members to wear safety equipment, hard hats and so on does not stand up to close examination. It is a bit rich for that body now to complain about what the Government are doing. The final paragraph of the letter from the confederation complains about amendment No. 5 and states:

> "It has also been suggested that to admit the possibility of a defence of justifiability would effectively negate the whole exemption. This we do not accept."

The letter, however, does not go on to argue the confederation's case. The confederation must understand, as my hon. Friend the Minister explained, that without amendment No. 5 the rest of the amendments would not be worth the paper they are written on as people would be able to get round the changes.

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): What evidence does my hon. Friend have to support his remark that builders, in general have done little or nothing to improve safety on sites? Builders supported the recommendations to which the Minister referred earlier and which will be laid before the House in the future. It is three years since builders gave their support to those recommendations. It is only because the Government have been considering representations from the Sikh community that those recommendations are not already in force. Given the support that those recommendations have received from builders, what evidence does my hon. Friend have to support his remarks?

Mr. Hughes: It is significant that my hon. Friend's reinterpretation of my remarks strengthens my point. I said that the record of the confederation was patchy and not good, but my hon. Friend said that builders had done nothing. I did not say that; I said that the confederation's record does not stand up to examination. It claimed that a voluntary code would work, but it has not. The Bill is necessary because of the standards in general.

I want to pay tribute to the person who has done an enormous amount towards the introduction of the amendment, Michael Truman, who was the Conservative candidate for Southall at the previous election. I know that that is a party-political point, but I hope that Opposition Members will bear with me. He brought me into the campaign and I know that Ministers at the Department of Employment and at the Home Office will acknowledge that he lobbied vigorously for the amendment. He brought a number of Sikh representatives to the House and to the Departments and he deserves a great deal of credit from the House.

With a few exceptions, the majority of hon. Members are white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, or in some cases Catholics. It is therefore easy for us to assume that laws which suit us will suit everyone. Whether people want Britain to be, or think that it should be, a multi-racial society is beside the point. Britain is a multi-racial society and that will not change.

There are times—this is one of them—when we must consider modifying our laws. Surely the benchmark as to whether that change is reasonable is whether it is fair to the community concerned and whether it brings any disadvantage to the rest of the community, white, black or Asian. I believe that this change does not disadvantage anyone, but recognises the religious conviction of the Sikh community. I am proud that my Government have recognised that and introduced the amendments.

11.45 pm

Mr. Thornton: I listened with considerable interest to the opening remarks of my hon. Friend the Minister. I am pleased that at long last the regulations to which he referred will, I hope, shortly be coming before the House.

There is total agreement on the desirability of hard hats being the norm and the rule on construction sites for safety purposes. The Minister has conceded that this will add immeasurably to the overall safety on sites. He has also conceded that the Government's concession in amendment No. 4 will weaken this improvement in safety. I accept that it is difficult to quantify the extent to which it will do so and I do not seek to quantify it. I also accept that the Government had an extremely difficult choice to make. They have come down in favour of an exemption for the Sikh community.

It is fair to say that, although these moves have been generally and widely welcomed, the employers in the construction industry feel strongly that no exemption should be allowed. However, my motion to disagree does not relate to this general exemption but to the Lords amendment which was moved thereafter and to which the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) referred: the amendment related to justifiability.

That amendment adds to, rather than clarifies, the problem. It adds to the difficulties that employers will face on building sites. It may be that, under normal circumstances, the exemption which amendment No. 5 grants to Sikhs will cause few, if any, problems. It may be possible for sensible and sensitive employers to allocate different work on that site. However, that is not always the case. We all know construction sites on which particular dangers and difficulties exist. The amendment is specifically directed at such sites.

If an employer has decided that, because of its specific circumstances, a site requires that all the work force should wear hard hats, he would be left with no defence against a claim that something was being done to the detriment of a Sikh who was required to leave his site or move to another part of the site where further detriment—perhaps by loss of earnings—would be caused to that worker. I do not believe that the Government wish to impose such an additional difficulty, or that this is, in any way, what the amendment seeks to do.

In answer to Lord McCarthy, in the other place, the Lord Strathclyde said:

"The Government feel that to refuse to employ Sikhs on such grounds"

—that their own health or the health and safety of other workers might be endangered—

"because they would not wear safety helmets is unjustifiable. The employer no doubt would argue that the condition is justifiable, as he is applying it to all his employees equally."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 30 October 1989; Vol. 512, c. 82.]

It seems to me, and to the employers, that this is wholly unreasonable. The matter is already covered by existing legislation.

The Minister said that my amendment is a wrecking amendment that would negate the Lords amendment. Not so. There is adequate race relations legislation to cover the point. Employers have to justify to courts or tribunals that the decision taken was reasonable in the circumstances.

I recognise the Government's dilemma: they have spent three years considering representations made to them and have come to the conclusion that it is right and proper to grant Sikhs this exemption. I do not accept that my motion will negate the Lords amendment, which, if carried, will add enormously to the difficulties of site management and cause problems for employers and workers alike. Lords amendment No. 4 will give the Sikhs what they need—Government recognition of the risks that Sikhs are prepared to take, as my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West said, for their religious beliefs.

Whether this will affect other workers and how much they might have to suffer because of other people's beliefs are fine points. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to tell us why present legislation cannot guarantee the exemption that the Government are granting. I hope that he will be persuaded that such legislation is enough and that there is no need to accept the Lords amendment.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): There has been a good debate on the first group of amendments, although we were unhappy with its outcome, and the issues were given serious consideration. This debate has been unfortunate in that the contribution by the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) contained connotations which we found unacceptable and which lowered the tenor of the discussion.

The hon. Member for Bridlington said that Sikhs should accept our laws because they live in our country. That is a non-starter. The Lords amendments would allow Sikhs to wear turbans on construction sites. If we reject the measure, presumably employers will not take Sikhs on such sites, in line with the situation before the Lords amended it.

This is not an easy issue for me to discuss. For one thing, I do not have a Sikh community in my constituency. It is also difficult to adopt a clear position on this sensitive subject. We should probe the arguments on both sides better than we are doing in order to understand the legislation. First, there is a clear danger to Sikhs. The Minister has admitted that. I do not know the extent of the danger, but it is clearly a matter of some significance or there would be no reason to say that helmets should be worn on construction sites and no need for the other parts of safety law to operate.

The hon. Member for Bridlington spoke about danger to other workers. We can think of sites other than high buildings—tunnels, for example—where such danger could be caused. In such cases danger caused to Sikhs could give rise to all sorts of problems for people who go to their aid. Perhaps we do not fully understand the likelihood of that, but it may be that debates on earlier legislation when the wearing of helmets was discussed will give us knock-on information for this debate.

Discrimination in favour of Sikhs may, on balance, be justified but to some extent it could create problems of counter-discrimination to other people who would feel unhappy about that. We must question whether discrimination in favour of Sikhs exacerbates problems instead of trying to resolve them. Perhaps we should discuss the wearing of turbans and helmets in a wider context. They have been discussed in the application of legislation to motor cycles and now such legislation is to apply to the construction industry. Presumably industries other than construction could also be affected by this legislation.

We need to respond to deeply felt community views, but it does not follow that we should take such views into

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

account in all circumstances. There may be some in which we should override them. It is like accepting the argument that Salman Rushdie should withdraw his book because of feelings in some communities.

We are also faced with the general argument about religious freedom. In the other place, Lord McCarthy said;

> "We should allow religious groups in this country who feel as deeply as the Sikhs on this matter freedom to do what they want unless we can demonstrate that they are significantly damaging people other than themselves by their actions.
>
> To me the issue turns on whether other workers are being damaged, whether the employer is being put at risk and whether measurable damaging circumstances can be shown."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 16 October 1989; Vol. 511, c. 744.]

That is a fruitful position to take and we should discuss it while we have the opportunity before we move on from the amendment.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I support the amendments because they are most important to the many orthodox Sikhs among the 40,000 or so Sikhs in the construction industry. They would be faced with an appalling dilemma by the new requirement.

A long-standing characteristic of British life has been our freedom of religion and our tolerance of the requirements of different faiths. The provisions are directly related to the religious requirements of the Sikh faith. That faith goes back for more than 500 years, and it requires of its adherents that they coil their hair and wear it beneath a turban. That requirement is one of the five Ks which are the articles of the Sikh faith. The safety helmet provision would have been incompatible with that religious practice.

12 midnight

The British Sikh community therefore welcomed the amendments moved for the Government by Lord Strathclyde in the other place. In particular, they noted the opposition of Lord Stoddart of Swindon, speaking for the Labour party, who condemned what he called discrimination in favour of one particular religion, which he viewed, by some extraordinary way of reasoning, as somehow being discrimination against other sections of the community. It is right to respect the devotion of the Sikhs to their religion and to make these provisions. The Gravesend Sikh community has expressed its concern through its Gurdawara. I commend the Government for their sensitive response to the representations by hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members.

Mr. Eggar: We have had an interesting debate, and the contributions from my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Derbyshire North-East (Mr. Barnes) have shown what a difficult issue this is, and how the Government have had carefully to balance conflicting and firmly held views.

I can say to my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) that exemption for Sikhs could, in theory, pose a risk to others who work on the site, but the chances of a third party on the site being injured as a result of a Sikh being injured because he was wearing a turban rather than a hard hat is fairly remote. Sikhs work on construction sites at the moment, wearing their turbans, and we are not aware of any injuries that have occured in the circumstances that he has outlined.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East asked me to describe the scale of the problem. The last year in which there was a detailed examination was 1981-82, and in that period there were 2,000 accidents on construction sites involving head injuries. That is roughly the same number as occur now, although there might have been a slight decrease—we do not have any firm statistics. About one death a year has resulted from head injuries.

Unfortunately, because of the way that the statistics are collected, we cannot say how many of those injuries occurred to Sikhs. However, it is accepted by both sides in the construction industry that some strong legislative action has to be taken to improve safety on construction sites. There is no dispute about that, and it was recognised as a result of the 1986 consultation paper.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) is not noted for his lack of generosity to those of us grinding away on the Front Bench, so it was slightly unfair to say that the reason why the consultation period has taken so long is that Ministers have been considering the position of the Sikh community. It was only in February this year that the recommendation was made by the Health and Safety Commission, and it was only at that point that Ministers were able to make a judgment on the conflict between the requests of the HSC and the feeling of the Sikh community.

My hon. Friend has suggested that Lords amendment No. 5 is unnecessary because it would still be for the employer to demonstrate that a requirement to wear a safety helmet was justifiable because, if a person were not to wear one, he would be a danger to others and to himself. The arguments on this matter are evenly balanced, as it is on a number of points in this difficult subject.

Having once decided, however, that there should be an exemption for Sikhs, it must be for the Government to ensure that the exemption is a real one and is beyond doubt. The problem with the argument that my hon. Friend advances, and that of the building employers—I understand the concern that has been expressed—is that it would muddy the waters and introduce some uncertainty and lack of clarity where, above all, we must have certainty and clarity.

Mr. Thornton: Is my hon. Friend aware that section 1 of the Race Relations Act 1976 states that, if a "requirement or condition" can be shown to be

> "justifiable irrespective of the colour, race nationality or ethnic or national origins of the person to whom it is applied",

indirect racial discrimination will not have occurred? That is the legislation to which I referred earlier. If the amendment is agreed to, it will deem that the enforcement of the safety helmet policy on a Sikh who is not prepared to wear a helmet would not in any circumstances be justifiable. The point that I am making—with respect to my hon. Friend, I feel that he has not answered it—is that existing legislation is sufficient to guarantee what the Government are saying should happen, which is that the general exemption should apply. The burden of proof would be on an employer to show before a court or other tribunal that what he was suggesting was justifiable. It cannot be right that there should be no element of justifiability.

Mr. Eggar: There may be a minority of employers who, irrespective of the exemptions that I hope the House will grant this evening, would claim that the normal wearing of a safety helmet justifies their refusing to employ Sikhs, or moving their existing Sikhs to other work. That is the point that is made by the Building Employers

Confederation. This requirement would amount to indirect racial discrimination under the 1976 Act, but under that Act the employer could argue as a defence that his action was justifiable as he was applying the condition of wearing a safety helmet purely on health and safety grounds. In other words, if we did not agree to amendment No. 5, an employer could override the exemption which the House is being asked to grant.

I return to my original answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby. If we accepted his argument, we would bring uncertainty where, above all, we want certainty and clarity. The argument of my hon. Friend on the burden of proof is not one which we would necessarily accept. There is a conflict between the legal advice that has been given to him and that which is available to me. It is a difficult area, because no clear decision has been made by an industrial tribunal. The law is not as straightforward as my hon. Friend has suggested.

We have had a useful and constructive debate on a difficult issue. I am grateful to my hon. Friends and to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East for contributing to it. I ask the House to agree to the amendments.

Ms. Richardson: I apologise to the Minister for not rising to my feet as swiftly as I should have done before he replied to the debate.

We think that the Government have it about right. We accept that there are groups in our society who have certain deeply held beliefs that should be recognised and respected. If that means that such people—in this instance, the Sikhs—are prepared to endanger themselves by wearing a turban and not a hard hat, that is for them to decide. Their views should be respected.

I was very shocked by the speech of the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend). Indeed, I felt extremely uncomfortable about it. I am sure that I echo the feelings of my hon. Friends in saying that we want a multi-cultural society—not an integration of those who have come to live among us or, in many cases, were born here. We do not want them so assimilated that they disappear. We want to benefit from their cultures.

Mr. John Townend: Does the hon. Lady think that she is expressing the views of the vast majority of the British people? In my part of the country people think that there should be integration and assimilation and that we should become one people, the British people, regardless of colour.

Ms. Richardson: Those whom I meet in my constituency and elsewhere are much more tolerant than the hon. Gentleman gives them credit for. I do not know about the people of Bridlington. I do not know whether Sikhs live in Bridlington. I do not know whether those whose views the hon. Gentleman has apparently expressed have ever met Sikhs or discussed this matter with them. Perhaps they do not understand their deeply held beliefs.

I remind those hon. Members who can recall the event that some years ago the same arguments were rehearsed, from both sides of the House, about the wearing of crash helmets. I am proud and pleased that I voted for a measure that allowed people to wear turbans instead of crash helmets. There have not been any bad effects, although I do not pretend to know whether anyone has been killed. Nevertheless, it is proof of the pudding. We were tolerant then, for goodness sake let us be tolerant now.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 5 agreed to.

Clause 20

DISSOLUTION OF TRAINING COMMISSION

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 15, line 1, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

> **"(2) Subject to subsection (2A), all the property, rights and liabilities to which the Training Commission was entitled or subject immediately before that date shall on that date become property, rights and liabilities of the Secretary of State.**
>
> **(2A) Any liability in respect of pensions, superannuation allowances or gratuities which, but for the passing of this Act, would have arisen or existed on or after that date as a liability of the Training Commission to or in respect of the chairman or any former chairman of the Commission shall instead be a liability of the Paymaster General."**

Mr. Nicholls: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss Lords amendments Nos. 7, 16, 19 to 26 and 29.

Mr. Nicholls: These amendments all follow from the provisions of the Bill that dissolve the Training Commission. Between them, the amendments have the single main purpose of transferring land currently held by the commission to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

The Training Commission has always been able to hold title to both freehold and leasehold land and buildings. Its property is not part of the civil estate, which is mostly held by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment through the Property Services Agency. The Training Commission mainly exercised its land-holding power in relation to much of its jobcentre network and skills training agency sites. The arrangement has been particularly appropriate because the buildings held in that way by the Training Commission are mainly specialist in nature. Upon dissolution, it will be necessary for that property to be transferred to a new owner. When the Bill was being drafted a final decision on who that new owner should be had still to be taken. The Bill was therefore published with the provision that the Secretary of State should designate a Minister to hold the land title.

We have since concluded that the title should be held by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. Having direct land-holding powers within the Department will give my right hon. Friend more direct accountability and responsibility, as well as improving administrative and operational efficiency. Before he can hold title to the land, my right hon. Friend must be constituted a corporation sole, which is what the main amendment in the group, No. 21, provides. The other amendments in the group simplify the drafting as there is no longer any need to differentiate between land going to the designated Minister and other property going to the Secretary of State. Now, with one exception, everything will transfer to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, with all the associated rights and liabilities. The only exception is that the Paymaster General will exercise his usual responsibility for the pensions and similar payments due to the chairman and former chairmen of the commission.

I hope that, with that brief explanation, the House will be content to agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

12.15 am

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I must confess to some puzzlement. The Minister has spoken only about the transfer of assets and the staff concerned, yet I understood that this group of amendments was to do with the dissolution of the Training Commission. If that is the case, I want to speak about that as well as about assets, property and staff.

It is not clear whether future employers will stand by any employment agreements on wages, job conditions or pensions of staff. The Minister should say something about that. It would be interesting also to know the value of the property that is to be transferred and how the Minister predicts it will be farmed out to the successor bodies.

The main issue here, however, is the abolition of the Training Commission. It is incredible that we are having such a brief debate on this subject, which is vital to the nation's future industrial prosperity and our work force's training opportunities. It is not clear why these proposals were not brought before the Standing Committee. Perhaps the Minister will be good enough to tell us why the Government waited until debates in the other place to raise the issue.

There have been numerous and confusing changes in training schemes recently. We used to have the Manpower Services Commission, which was a tripartite body comprising three employer, three trade union and three education authority representatives who ran the youth training scheme and the technical and vocational education initiative in schools and colleges. It included local councillors and local bodies that represented all three interest groups. They approved, or did not approve, schemes, but in some cases did their job too well for the Government. They found fault with the quality of schemes, whether because of the content, the training or unsatisfactory or unsafe conditions, and some of them said so. The Government curtailed their role and then disbanded the MSC. The Government then created the Training Commission, which is now to be disbanded. The new idea is to have training and enterprise councils. How many bids have there been in each area to run TECs?

Will the Minister confirm our information, which is that in many cases there is only one bid? Would he care to comment on the likely outcome in terms of the breadth and quality of the training? Are all the leading figures in industry and commerce and top management in the private sector, who will run TECs, to be white and male —with one exception, I gather, in Newcastle somewhere? If so, is that not possibly in breach of the sex discrimination and racial discrimination legislation, perhaps not technically, but in spirit?

I am puzzled how employer-led schemes are expected to succeed in some areas. The Governmnt are fond of telling us how successful their efforts to do away with unemployment have been, but there are numerous constituencies where unemployment is very high. In Liverpool, Riverside, for example, 25·3 per cent. of the available work force is unemployed. In Glasgow, my home town, no fewer than eight constituencies are in the top 20 of high unemployment. The official figure in Maryhill, my constituency, is 18·5 per cent., but the real figure, after allowing for the Government's fiddling of the figures, is considerably higher. There are many other constituencies with high unemployment—in Manchester, Birmingham, Tyne Bridge and Sheffield, for instance. If there are not too many employers about, how are they supposed to organise training schemes for the available work force?

This policy might seem very reasonable in Horsham —where unemployment is running at 1 per cent.—and in Mid-Sussex, Wokingham, Chesham, Amersham and Mole Valley, where the rate is similarly low. It is simply not relevant, however, in areas of high unemployment. I wonder whether the Minister has thought his way through the problem, or whether areas such as Glasgow have, as usual, been written off as being of no importance because the Government do not care what happens to those who will not, in any event, vote Conservative.

How can such schemes possibly work, in the light of the attitude of management to training? As we travel along this road, we can predict exactly where we will arrive. An MSC/NEDO report concluded some time ago that British companies rarely considered training one of the main components of corporate strategy, and did not treat it as a boardroom issue. In another place, the Government even rejected a modest proposal that training organisations should be consulted before appointments were made.

Thus we shall have a work force trained in a narrow range of skills to suit individual employers. In a world of rapidly changing technology, their skills will be bound by whatever the local management sees fit to provide. They will be trained, but not educated. Can we believe that all employer-led agencies will be keen to foster a critical intelligence and the asking of awkward questions? Some will train; many will poach. Would it not, after all, be better if we retained the present arrangements and tried to improve them? Would it not be better if management got on with running their businesses, while those who know something about education and training got on with their business?

Mr. Wallace: I cannot accuse the Government of curtailing debate on the winding-up of the Training Commission: that provision was in the Bill originally, and was also debated in Committee. A more substantive criticism concerns the way in which the Manpower Services Commission was suddenly wound up to make way for the Training Commission, which is now being wound up in its turn. There has been little consistency or stability in the provision of training.

I shall ask only one or two questions; the next debate may allow broader discussion of some of the issues. First, can the Minister give us some idea of the value and extent of the property and the assets with which we are dealing? Having become "incorporated"—I hope that that will not be too painful—what does the Secretary of State intend to do with the assets to which he will have sole title?

We know that, for better or worse, TECs are taking over from the Training Commission. What statutory provisions underpin them, though? How will those involved in them be accountable to the House for the money that they spend—in many instances, vast amounts?

Mrs. Mahon: I am very concerned about the way in which the amendments have been brought to the House, and about how responsibility for training is being given to people who have clearly failed in the past. The private sector has a very poor record. My constituency contains a TEC, and we know the names of the good and worthy whom the Minister has seen fit to appoint.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Business men one and all.

Mrs. Mahon: They are indeed—and they are exactly the same people who were appointed to the business in the community scheme, which also operates in my area, and to the Eureka project for an educational museum, funded mainly by private means. In the past, such people have largely relied on the public sector.

I am also concerned about the fact that there is no employee representation on the TECs. The proposal will not provide a coherent national training programme. I am bitterly disappointed that it has been brought before the House in this way.

Questions were asked in the other place about the European social fund. The figure of £60 million was mentioned as having come from the European social fund during the last 10 years. Most of that money was targeted on special projects. I hope that the Minister will say something about the future of that funding. Who will be accountable for the huge sums of money that will be provided by the public sector?

Mr. Nicholls: With the leave of the House, I shall reply briefly to the debate. In doing so I hope to clear up a misunderstanding. The amendments are specific. They do not relate to the dissolution of the Training Commission per se. They relate to the narrower and doubtless fascinating, although somewhat arcane, debate about who should own the land after the Training Commission is dissolved.

When these matters were first considered, a final policy decision had not been reached on precisely which Minister should be responsible for taking over the land holding. The traditional view was that all this should be done through the Property Services Agency via my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. However, it was thought to be more sensible in the case of what might be described as a specialised property to place it in the hands of the sponsoring Minister. That is why it was proposed that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment should take over the land holdings —not because of any particular desire on his part to indulge in empire building but because it seemed to be logical that he should take them over.

The amendments, I repeat, do not refer to the debate about why the Training Commission should be abolished. However, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) put his finger on it when he said that we had that debate in Committee. Having already this evening been accused of being surprisingly nice, I hesitate to confound that new assessment of me by significantly lowering the tone of the debate. However, perhaps I could delicately remind the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) that the reason for the abolition of the Training Commission was because one of the main limbs of that tripartite structure—the TUC—came out against employment training. Bearing in mind that that was the Training Commission's biggest programme at the time—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Maryhill lines herself up behind the wreckers of employment training.

The fact is that the Manpower Services Commission, the predecessor of the Training Commission, was responsible for designing the programme, together with trades union commissioners. However, they then decided, for what one can only conclude were party political reasons, to oppose it. It would have been a complete nonsense for the commission to continue to function when one of its main limbs was campaigning against what it was designed to do. The decision was taken, therefore, to abolish the Training Commission.

I am going over somewhat old ground that has been debated before, but it is right to make that point in order to clear up any apparent confusion among Opposition Members.

Mrs. Fyfe: I thank the Minister for clearing up some of the confusion, but he is labouring under the delusion that we are simply talking about trade union involvement in what was formerly a tripartite body. I have read thoroughly the debate in the other place on the issue. There were many references to the fact that education and training bodies were not represented on the commission. The Minister has chosen to deal only with uncontroversial property matters. He is dodging the issue of the role of the trainers and educators.

Mr. Nicholls: If I am to be accused, even pilloried, for keeping myself within order, I shall have to suffer those slings and outrages with as much fortitude as I can command. The amendments are specific; if Opposition Members wanted to broaden the debate on the commission, they should have worked out how to do so.

I do not think that I shall be giving too much away to some hon. Members if I say that TECs and general Government training policy will be considered in the next debate on industrial training boards. This narrow debate is on the land-holding capabilities of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I hope that the House will agree that I have addressed those concerns quite directly.

Mr. Wallace: I asked two relevant questions within the narrow confines of the debate on the extent of the land holdings and what the Secretary of State proposes to do with them.

Mr. Nicholls: The land holdings will be those formerly held by the Training Commission. Jobcentres will be among the properties affected, and, within the meaning of the statute, my right hon. Friend intends to own them.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 7 agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 8, before clause 21, insert the following new clause—*Consultation in connection with industrial training orders*—

". In section 1 of the Industrial Training Act 1982 (establishment of industrial training boards), the following subsection shall be substituted for subsections (4) and (5)—

"(4) Before making an industrial training order the Secretary of State shall consult—

(a) such organisations or associations of organisations appearing to him to be representative of substantial numbers of employers, and such bodies established for the purpose of carrying on under national ownership any industry or part of an industry or undertaking, as he thinks fit; and

(b) such other organisations, associations or bodies (if any) as he thinks fit.""

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 27, 28, 30, 32 and 33.

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

12.30 am

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

May I welcome the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to his new post following the reshuffle? Man and boy, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) stayed as my shadow for over six years, and I very much hope that the hon. Member for Sedgefield will have such a happy and long career on the Opposition Front Bench.

The amendments, which we moved in another place, are designed to enable us to change statutory industrial training boards to voluntary employer-led bodies or to employer-led boards. The change is part of the changes to the existing training framework necessary to meet the challenges of the next decade.

The White Paper, "Employment for the 1990s", which we published some months ago, set out the scale of the challenges facing Britain, such as the effect of changing demography—in particular, the shortage of young people—the growth of overseas competition, the changing patterns of employment and changing skill needs.

The White Paper set out the framework required to meet those challenges. In future, training must help business succeed, become the responsibility of employers, provide standards that are set by industry, allow adults and young people to receive qualifications, be delivered locally and be flexible to suit local needs. The commitment of employers is fundamental to that. One of the most encouraging features of the current training position is the strength of employers' response to the training and enterprise councils' initiative.

In the debate on Lords amendment No. 6, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) asked how many training and enterprise councils had been approved. Although the concept was introduced only last March, 35 TECs have been approved for development funding. Plans for a further 50 are well advanced. Already, over half the working population is covered. In the north-west, there are TECs in Cumbria, Oldham, east Lancashire, Rochdale, south-east Cheshire and Wigan. In my area, the west midlands, there is a major TEC in Birmingham and one in Walsall. There is also one in the north-west midlands. In the Yorkshire and Humberside region, there are TECs in north Yorkshire, Sheffield, Calderdale, Kirklees and Rotherham.

The TECs are covering the country, and there is tremendous enthusiasm for the concept. It would be a great tragedy if we had the normal political knockabout on this concept. The idea is crucial to this country. The TECs will plan and provide training locally, help the training of employed and unemployed people and will give training and enterprise not only a higher profile locally but a much better delivery locally than we have ever had.

Mrs. Mahon: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the White Paper acknowledges that, going back to the beginning of the century, the private sector has failed miserably in providing training? We compare very unfavourably with our European counterparts.

Mr. Fowler: The case is not quite as the hon. Lady states it. We certainly need to catch up with countries such as Germany, France, Japan and the United States. The position to which the hon. Lady refers has not suddenly emerged but has been a characteristic of this country all this century. *[Interruption.]* It serves no one to sloganise, least of all to clamour and shout out as hon. Members are doing from a sedentary position. This is a serious matter which requires a serious policy response. Training and enterprise councils are a serious response.

I ask the Opposition to talk to the people who are on TECs locally—the business leaders. The thing that has impressed me most about the TECs is the enthusiasm that has been shown. People who have been involved in training for decades longer than I have noted the new spirit that has arisen over the past few years, not least for demographic reasons.

We need training arrangements that deliver not only training locally but standards in each industry at the sectoral level. In other words, our training system must be founded on standards and recognised qualifications based on competence. Those standards must be identified by employers and be nationally recognised. We need a system of employer-led organisations to identify, establish and secure recognition of standards, sector by sector or occupational group by occupational group.

Such a system of standard-setting bodies will be effective only if employers are committed to it. The Government's objective is therefore to see established throughout industry and commerce standard-setting bodies created by employers themselves, to which they subscribe and which will secure their continuing voluntary support. That approach is far preferable to one of regulation and compulsion.

The statutory system, whatever may have been said about it in the past, has not delivered the goods. Many firms in the few sectors covered by the statutory systems are not happy with performance. The engineering industry training board is an example. The group of 14 major companies in the engineering industry has campaigned against the continuance of the EITB in its present form. The levy system is bureaucratic by any measure, has ceased to be an incentive to train in many industries and is not providing money in that respect. The statutory framework constrains the development of effective commercial operations. The offshore petroleum training board, for example, cannot train workers employed for work onshore because of the statutory limitation on it.

Above all, industry training boards have failed to solve the training needs of their sectors. As the White Paper sets out, we want to move to a system which is based on employer commitment and which is voluntary, and independent and employer led. In saying that employers have the key role to play in securing those improvements, I am not seeking to deny the important part that other groups such as trade unions and educationists rightly play in training matters. However, without the commitment of employers, the good will and active encouragement of others will achieve little. In the vast majority of sectors that already have independent, voluntary arrangements, the views of trade unions are sought and taken into account, and in a range of those sectors, trade unions are represented on the governing body itself, including the glass, aviation, insurance and timber trades and many other industry organisations.

We want to move to a non-statutory system. At present, only seven statutory industry training boards are in existence, compared to over 100 independent, voluntary training organisations. We want to move to a system in which all sectors are covered by non-statutory, independent and voluntary arrangements. Those bodies must be able to command the active support of senior management in their sector. They must be seen by their sector as the body with the major role of dealing with Government on vocational, education and training matters, and their most important functions are the identification of key skill and training needs, and the establishment of occupational standards. In that way, they will complement the work of the training and enterprise councils at local level.

When I published the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s", I announced that we would be consulting the seven remaining ITBs with a view to securing their replacement by independent and voluntary bodies. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has held detailed discussions with all the main employer interests involved. I am pleased to tell the House that employers in the majority of sectors covered by those boards have come forward with proposals for the creation of such bodies.

Those new organisations will be progressively taking over the key activities of the boards covering the sectors of road transport, hotel and catering, clothing and allied products, plastics processing, offshore petroleum and engineering other than engineering construction.

In the case of construction and engineering construction, I have accepted the strong arguments of employers that statutory arrangements should continue there for the time being. There are particular problems in those areas concerned with a highly mobile labour force. In those industries there is much labour only sub-contracting, a high level of self-employment and a high use of short-term contract labour.

I shall be telling the two ITBs concerned that they will be reconstituted for a further three-year period, using the new powers being sought in the Bill, ending in 1993 for the construction industry and 1994 for engineering construction. At the end of that period, the Government will want to review the statutory arrangements.

In the future, there will be significant changes in the statutory boards. That includes the way in which we will wish to move to an employer majority on the boards using powers in amendment No. 10. They will become employer-led bodies but they will be statutory bodies, and the levy powers will continue.

12.45 am

The positive response from employers to my request to develop their own voluntary training arrangements promises well for the future success of the new bodies. They should provide a firm basis for the improvement in our training performance. It was necessary to see the shape of the proposals from employers for the replacement of statutory ITBs—those which are being replaced—before we could draw up appropriate amendments to the Industrial Training Act 1982. The powers we are seeking in the amendments will make it possible to transfer the staff and assets of ITBs to successor bodies so that key functions can be maintained and the continuity of employment of staff secured.

Amendment No. 8 changes the requirement on me to consult before making an order affecting the scope of an ITB. Amendment No. 9 will enable the key activities of ITBs to be continued without disruption during the transition to non-statutory status. It enables a board, with my agreement, to pass on its assets to a successor to be used for charitable purposes connected with training for employment.

The new clause also safeguards the position of staff involved in such a transfer by extending the application of the Transfer Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to them. That means that their existing terms and conditions of employment will be preserved, and that is important.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Secretary of State confirm that that includes existing pension rights?

Mr. Fowler: There are different arrangements for pension rights. This concerns the working terms and conditions. However, I understand that the inquiries that have been made of the boards and their constituent parts suggest that most will want to take advantage of the existing industry training board pension scheme. The hon. Gentleman probably knows that there is an industrywide scheme to cover this issue and I think that staff will continue to use it. These terms do not cover the pension arrangements. There is nothing unusual about that since that has never been the case with such transfers.

Mrs. Mahon: In the previous debate, I mentioned the £60 million that has come from the European social fund and said how useful that has been. Does the Secretary of State believe that we will be able to attract that sort of funding when training is privatised?

Mr. Fowler: I heard what the hon. Lady said during the earlier debate. We are talking to the Commission about that and our intention is to ensure that that is the case. We are well apprised of the issue.

The general purpose of the new clause is to ease the transition from statutory ITBs to a voluntary approach. Firms in the industries affected and the staff of the ITBs involved will benefit from the change to voluntary status being achieved with a minimum of disruption.

Amendment No. 10 changes the balance of interests represented on ITBs, as well as providing the employer leadership that we believe is necessary to improve ITB effectiveness. It will enable the move from statutory ITBs to employer-led successor arrangements to take place more smoothly.

The net result is that in the two sectors in which industrial training boards remain the employer leadership of the statutory boards will provide the basis for the reorganisation and achieve greater effectiveness. I hope that it will also pave the way for the development of voluntary arrangements in due course, but that is not the intent at the moment.

The overall effect of these amendments will be to create the conditions for voluntary employer-led training organisations to flourish. In important sectors of industry employers are now to be given a real opportunity to control and direct the work of their training body. They now have every incentive to play a full part, unfettered by the bureaucracy—perhaps the necessary bureaucracy—of a statutory system.

I agree that it is vital that that opportunity is taken. We shall be publishing a report shortly on research that we have carried out into the amount of funding and resources that are given to training in this country. We estimate that, at the moment, employers are spending about £18 billion per year on training—although those figures are probably

[Mr. Fowler]

several years out of date. There is no question but that there is and has been a marked increase in the interest and financial commitment given to training, especially over the past two years, and that it takes account of the demographic trends and changes in the work force.

To myself and to many in the training world, there is no greater challenge in the 1990s than that of providing better training. The difference between nations and companies will be the differences in their skills—and in the skills of individuals. The new arrangements will help to bring about that change, and that is important and necessary for this country.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): First, I thank the Secretary of State for his kind words of welcome, although I find the idea of shadowing him for six years somewhat mind-numbing. In all fairness, I should tell him that my hon. Friends and I had in mind for him the more educative experience of opposition. He should regard the next year as a sort of training scheme for when that occurs, shortly after the next election.

This series of amendments deals specifically with industrial training boards. In 1981 there were 23 industrial training boards, but following a review by the Manpower Services Commission, their number was reduced to seven. The 16 that were wound up were replaced by voluntary bodies that seemed to multiply hugely so that there are now 102 non-statutory training organisations. In the White Paper published in December 1988, the Government proposed the abolition of the remaining seven industrial training boards. The amendments to be inserted before clause 21 in effect pave the way for that abolition

The two most controversial candidates for abolition are obviously the construction and engineering boards. As far as I understand what the Secretary of State has told us tonight, both the construction industry training board and the construction part of the engineering industry training board will remain in full in their present form, at least for the time being, and obviously I welcome that.

More generally, it is worth remembering that the boards were set up not because the voluntary sector had succeeded, but because it had failed to provide the type of training that people wanted. It is against that background that we must look at the advantages of the present industrial training board system. The first advantage is that the boards have statutory force—in other words, they have the force of the Government behind them. They are not dependent simply on the good will of individual companies.

Secondly—we believe that this is particularly important—they are tripartite bodies that involve the employer, educational interests and trade union interests. Many employers, believe it or not, accept that trade unions play a vital part in ensuring that training is dealt with adequately.

Thirdly, the boards have levy-raising powers, which, at least for some training measures, are absolutely necessary. In any event, however, those levy-raising powers are, in many cases, the principal source of funds for those training boards. Even where levy exemption procedures apply, the levy exemption is allowed only where certain training criteria are met by employers. Therefore the existence of the potential power to raise a levy can act as an incentive to employers for training practices.

Fourthly, tangentially, as a result of the levy, the ability arises to claim from the European social fund. The boards are treated as publicly funded bodies and, therefore, are eligible for grants under the rules of the ESF.

I want to direct my remarks principally to the engineering industrial training board. The 1981 review, "Framework for the Future", that paved the way for the abolition of 16 of the 23 boards that then existed specifically paid tribute to the work of the EITB and said that it had done a job that was irreplaceable by the voluntary sector. What has changed so dramatically between the publication of that Government report in 1981 and the White Paper in December 1988?

I understand that about 550 staff are employed by the EITB. I do not believe that anyone doubts the immense contribution that that board has made to training in the engineering industry, although I am not sure that the Government share that view. It is only right that we pay tribute to the work of that board and to the commitment of its staff to training. The Secretary of State may say that we still have tremendous training inadequacies in the engineering industry and that therefore, in some sense, the board has failed. I believe that the argument runs the other way—what would our training facilities be like but for the existence of the board? Surely that is the test of its effectiveness.

We should regard the levy-raising powers of the board seriously and it is instructive to look at its most recent accounts. Some £20 million of the £32 million revenue of the EITB comes from the levy in one form or another. I shall be obliged if the Minister could confirm that. I do not know many people who believe that a voluntary series of subscriptions could raise the same amount of money and, therefore, perform the same task on behalf of the board. As a result of matching grant from the ESF about £13 million in this financial year will go to the industry, not to the board, for training programmes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) is correct that £13 million is a lot of money and it is roughly equivalent to half the board's revenue. I appreciate that it is not the same as the board's revenue, but it is a substantial chunk of money which goes to the engineering industry for training. It is unjustifiable to say that the board should be abolished unless there is a clear guarantee from Europe that matching grant will still be available following the transfer to the voluntary sector. It would be extraordinary if we forfeited money that is available for training, especially as my information shows—I should be grateful if the Minister would confirm it—that the matching grant from the ESF assists 25,000 of our people to train.

I know that the board believes that much of the money that goes to training would not be forthcoming from the industrial sector employers. If that money is lost, effectively it will be lost for good.

Mrs. Mahon: Does my hon. Friend agree that some of the excellent schemes in new technology for groups such as women who want to get back into the work force have come from that very source of funding? That is very important.

I am

Mr. Blair: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is one danger of saying that training should simply be left to market forces in the private sector. There will be perfectly legitimate schemes and interests which will not be met simply by the operation of market forces. I and a lot of other people fear that if there is a move to the voluntary sector it will not be in the employers' commercial interests to maintain some schemes which perform a valuable function now. Therefore, we must be sure of the proposed move's consequences before we make it.

A separate submission, dated May of this year, was made to the Department of Employment, in which the engineering industry training board listed nine key elements which they believed were at risk in the transfer to the voluntary sector. Those nine items, which I shall not list because they are fairly well known, add up to the requirement for a strong, politically supported national organisation which has a clear sense of direction and is adequately funded to provide the training needs in the engineering sector. When we consider that, and the paucity of guarantees and assurances which the Secretary of State gave tonight, we see that there is a pretty compelling case for the retention of an industrial training board in the public sector.

Many non-statutory training organisations operate in the voluntary sector. Some of them replaced earlier training boards which were abolished. I have looked a little bit at the evidence of how well these voluntary organisations work. An Institute of Manpower Studies report by Carol Varlaam which was published in December 1987 and done for the Manpower Services Commission found that more than one third of the voluntary organisations were ineffective when judged against the criteria applied. In July 1987 Mr. Alan Anderson carried out work for Manpower Research. He based his study on 42 of the non-statutory training organisations and found that the average number of staff at each one was slightly more than three and many of the organisations had serious funding problems.

At best, the evidence of the performance of these voluntary organisations is mixed. Therefore, against the background of the fact that they unquestionably do good work and have the ability to obtain funding from Europe and that transfer into the voluntary sector must, at the very least, as a result of the experiences which we have had, have uncertain consequences, it is highly irresponsible to propose the board's abolition without strong and satisfactory assurances that training will still be done adequately.

We know that the deficit on our manufacturing trade is about as serious as that in any modern industrial country, and the deficit in the engineering sector is £8 billion and covers virtually every sector, including new and old technology. It cannot be right at this time and with this trade deficit in engineering to abolish a critical element of our industrial training. If the Secretary of State is not serious about training in this country, he is not serious about our deficit; if he is not serious about our deficit, he fails in his responsibility to carry this country through into the 1990s. Therefore, without the proper assurances, we oppose the amendments.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I, too, welcome the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to his new position.

I should like to concentrate on the construction industry training board because it has a profound effect on my constituents.

I welcome what the Secretary of State has said tonight, but it is rather bizarre that we are discussing these important issues at this stage of the evening. It would surely have been better to make a statement earlier this afternoon. In that event, those of my constituents who have travelled down from Norfolk could have heard what the Secretary of State had to say 12 hours earlier, instead of having had to wait all day. It is strange that we have heard such an important announcement at this juncture.

Nevertheless, I welcome the Secretary of State's remarks about the CITB. The uncertainty that has characterised the events of the past few months has been unsettling at the headquarters of the CITB at Bircham Newton. The morale of the staff has suffered and people have not known where they stand. Rumours have circulated and many feared that the future of the CITB was at stake.

If the statutory levy had not been kept, there is little doubt that the CITC would have found it difficult to continue in the medium term. It is all very well firms saying, with the best will in the world, that they will pay a voluntary levy, but we all know that in construction, which the Secretary of State rightly said is different from other types of industry, when recessions come along firms cut back. They would cut back on the levy, the whole infrastructure of training would collapse and safety in the industry would suffer as a consequence.

I am slightly concerned about the proviso that the Secretary of State entered—that he will carefully examine how effective the new arrangements are and then review them in three years' time. That may well lead to continuing uncertainty. I hope that my right hon. Friend will look at the new arrangements after a year and a half. I hope that he will examine the new board's structure, the new revenue-raising arrangements and the new management structure. I hope that management will be given more scope to get on with the job with less bureaucracy. I hope that at the end of a year and a half my right hon. Friend will say that the statutory levy is to continue, not just for another year and a half but for a good deal longer.

A large number of highly qualified people work in a major complex in my constituency which has a profound effect on the local economy. Beyond that—we must look beyond constituency interests—the future of safety in the construction industry is at stake. The industry's safety record in this country is far from perfect. A large number of people are seriously injured or killed on sites and if we do anything other than build on the CITB's excellent record in training, that record will go downhill. If we build on its record of expertise, commitment and enterprise, we can go forward and create a safer construction industry.

Tonight's announcement has put aside a great deal of uncertainty. I hope now that we can put recent unsettling events behind us, that we can look to the future and, above all, to a safer industry. I hope that my right hon. Friend will bear in mind what I have said and that in a year and a half he will declare himself happy with the new arrangements and give a guarantee for a period much longer than three years, because so much is at stake.

Mr. Wallace: I join those who have congratulated the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on his maiden employment speech and I look forward to many more debates with him on this and related issues.

Much of the debate has centred around the Government's training strategy. It has been rightly pointed out that until now the private sector has had a poor record on providing adequate training. That was one of the principal reasons for the setting up of industrial training boards with compulsory levies. That took account of the fact that the private sector, left to its own devices, had signally failed. That is frankly admitted by the authors of the equivalent of the White Paper on Scottish training and enterprise. They say that the performance of the private sector has been a source of considerable disappointment.

We have moved to training and enterprise councils and in Scotland to local enterprise councils and to the different structures promoted by the Scottish Development Agency and Highland Enterprise. We must hope that they will succeed. We may express considerable reservations and concern, but if that is the only structure for training on offer for the time being, it is in the country's interest that it should succeed.

Many of us who represent rural areas have doubts about the availability of people who have the time, commitment and expertise to take an interest in training. In many respects such people are the local managers and deliverers of Government training schemes. Many of us have constituencies with many small businesses run by self-employed people. Most of the successful entrepreneurs in that field devote a great deal of time, including leisure time, to running businesses. One wonders whether they would have time to engage in promoting training schemes.

If the TECs are to be successful there must be a change in the whole culture. The Secretary of State has expressed optimism about that. However, it is not simply a question of that change applying to employers, important though that is, because training, while it is clearly in the interests of employers, must involve educators, trade unions, local authorities and other authorities. As my noble Friend Lord Rochester said in another place, it must also involve trainers. I hope that the Secretary of State and his Ministers will recognise that, and that consultation with the many other bodies will not just be lip service. Those bodies have an important role to play in the whole area of training and without them it would be impossible to initiate and continue adequate training schemes. I hope that their views will be properly taken into account, not least when setting up successors to the training boards to which the amendments relate.

Some hon. Members have already spoken about the weakness of the levy system. I accept that in industries such as construction and engineering it has been necessary to ensure a degree of fairness. We must ensure that the burden of training does not fall on those who are self-employed or who run small businesses and who have the good will to see the need for proper training. They must not be left to provide all the skilled people for industry.

People in the CITB who have found loopholes to avoid paying the levy have been a source of considerable irritation to those who are honest and pay up. One of my constituents, the first to attend my surgery in 1983 after I was elected, complained that he had been billed for a substantial amount as his levy to the CITB. He was in a remote area of Orkney and did not see any benefit accruing because the CITB did not provide any training in the area. He was aware that many people, some of whom he had trained, had set up in business and, no doubt, were using the expertise that he had passed on, and who were exempt from the levy. That constituent feels a sense of unfairness and injustice. That must be addressed when we look to a continuation of the construction industry training board.

The Secretary of State mentioned the offshore petroleum board, which I understand does not impose a levy. Surely in the aftermath of Piper Alpha and other accidents and tragedies offshore it is important to have a board charged with responsibility for training, not least for safety training. The offshore liaison committee has been arguing since 1985 that the low paid or the unemployed should not have to subsidise the oil industry by paying for their own survival training. A recent survey of Shell's Tern field catering staff showed that 87 out of 93 had paid for their own survival training. With offshore safety so much in the forefront of our minds, one cannot leave it to the employers to get together and organise training because experience has shown that they have not been subsidising or providing safety training courses. There must be a Government role in ensuring that there is adequate safety training for offshore workers.

1.15 am

The hon. Member for Sedgefield dealt with the employment industry training board. I endorse his remarks, and I shall not go over them again. He made a powerful case for the valuable work that the EITB has done. Its important contribution in a vital skill centre should be continued, not least because of what it has done in maintaining the standards of training in the important engineering sector.

The Secretary of State said that during the transitional period he intends to ensure that the key activities of the board are continued. In this respect, I should like him to confirm that some of the important work being undertaken by the EITB will continue. For example, it does work on women in industry, something that is not seen as commercial in the short term but, given our earlier debates, will be important in the long term. It provides a comprehensive careers advice service, which should also be maintained.

What timetable does the Minister envisage for making appointments to the board? It is important, as it looks to the future, that it should know who the personnel involved will be.

Is there any chance that money from the European social fund will be lost because the levy will no longer be seen as public money?

Will the Minister confirm that the CITB and the EITB, which play such important roles as managers for YTS and employment training, will continue in those managerial roles under the new scheme?

We are not satisfied that the new arrangements for training are yet set out in sufficient detail for us to embrace them with enough confidence to permit the winding up of the training boards. They are not perfect, but in many other ways they are a vital part of the provision of skilled training. For that reason, if the House divides, we shall not be supporting the Lords amendments.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to his new responsibility for employment. My hon. Friend dealt with the Secretary of State for Employment when he was responsible for energy. I hope that the Secretary of State is not too tired to understand what I am saying. The Opposition now have a shadow Secretary of State for Employment who will give the Secretary of State a good going over. He has got it coming, as the Secretary of State for Transport, when he was responsible for Energy, got it when my hon. Friend was responsible for energy. I hope that the Secretary of State will put down his notes and take the message on board.

When I was a lad, and into my youth, the industry in which I worked had a first-class training system. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State is not listening. He is talking to his junior, and he should not be. He should be listening to what Opposition Members are saying because all day Opposition Members have been making sensible contributions, but all too often these slick Ministers will not listen to what we say. The Secretary of State is a smart-Alick when he is speaking from the Government Dispatch Box. He appears almost every other week and introduces a different training scheme. The schemes are changed time and time again. He might get things right one day. He would do so if he listened to what my right hon. and hon. Friends and I have to say. He should understand that we have a special interest in the subject.

The Secretary of State makes it clear from the Government Front Bench that he does not like trade unions. He keeps on saying so. I watch him on the "box" when he thrashes the trade unions. He should understand that the trade unions have had a massive role in training. That has been my experience, and I was 35 years in the mining industry. I know that since 1979——

Mr. Nicholls: That is a long time ago.

Mr. Haynes: It is a long time ago, but I have a good memory. The young Minister must listen. If he does so, he will get a good training and work education. He will learn also how to represent constituents. I did not stand in court all day filling my pockets.

Mr. Nicholls: Not like the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair).

Mr. Haynes: I am talking about the Minister, not my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield. The junior Minister is making many comments from a sedentary position.

I know what work is. I have told the House before that there is such a thing as a No. 10 shovel. It is as big as a table top. That was my implement—an implement of torture. I know what bloomin' work is. The Minister should have listened to the contributions from the workers, and there are many workers on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): And on this side, Frank!

Mr. Haynes: I cannot understand why my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) is sitting on the Government Benches below the Gangway. My hon. Friend is the Opposition's deputy Chief Whip. It may be that he did not want to sit behind me. If he wished to sit opposite me, he will have to be satisfied with a profile.

The Secretary of State told us about his involvement in training and talked about qualifications. What qualifications does the right hon. Gentleman have for training people in industry? What experience has he had of training youngsters and others to undertake skilled jobs? I do not think that he has had any. That will remain my view unless he intervenes to tell me about his qualifications and experience.

I resent someone with no qualifications preaching to me about training, and especially about safety, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham). In the mining industry, which I left to come to this place, there have been many more deaths in the past few years than hitherto. That is tragic. The increase in the number of deaths is related to the Department and the Secretary of State. There are not enough inspectors to ensure that management and employees are doing the job properly under the appropriate safety regulations. Employees might not have received proper training.

When I was a lad and a youth in the mining industry, there was proper training. Managers and workers worked together in the interests of training and safety and to protect one another. I was taught to be my own safety officer, and that is the way to go about it. At the same time, however, we were also responsible for the chaps who worked on either side of us. The Secretary of State, the junior Minister and the Minister of State do not know about training and work. I have an idea that the Minister of State, who has just joined the Department from the Foreign Office, is in the same league as his right hon. and hon. Friends—*[Interruption.]* We can have a joke now and again, but training and safety are serious matters and should be dealt with properly.

The question of 1992 has been mentioned in the Chamber on many occasions. If the United Kingdom is not prepared for 1992 it will go down the Swanee. In our preparations for 1992 should be the proper training of management and employees. That is in the interests not only of their health and their lives, but of the economy.

I am concerned about some of the Secretary of State's comments tonight about training. He has failed in the past; he must have failed, as he keeps coming back to the House with different schemes. He has been talking about this, that and the other. My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield mentioned the training boards, which have now gone. My experience in life is that if something is not making a profit, something has to go. More often than not, the employee has to suffer. The training scheme is run down because the Government do not put in enough money. The Secretary of State is responsible for that, and he knows it.

I remember serving on an employment Bill Standing Committee where we discussed many aspects of employment, including training and safety. The junior Minister did a first-class job on behalf of the Government. Why? It was because the Secretary of State was hardly ever there. I was Opposition Whip on that Committee and I told the right hon. Gentleman that he could have Thursdays off because of Cabinet meetings—but I told him that I expected him back in the evenings if the Committee was still sitting. We did have some late sittings, and the junior Minister was there all the time. I am not afraid to admit that I helped him from time to time. The Committee did a good job on the Bill, but I cannot say the same for the right hon. Gentleman.

The Secretary of State should stand at the Dispatch Box and say that there will be decent training schemes throughout industry. That is important for those who

[Mr. Haynes]

work in industry, it is important for the economy and, most of all, as the Prime Minister keeps telling us—and we know, without her telling us—we must get ready for 1992. If we are not ready, the right hon. Gentleman is going down the Swanee with us.

Mr. Fowler: It is very reassuring to know that in the reshuffle on the Opposition Benches the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) marches on and has not changed. He will be relieved to know that it is quite possible that a new employment Bill will be introduced in the next Session, and we very much look forward to him serving on that.

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State is wrong—I am the Whip for energy.

Mr. Fowler: I was simply making an offer. I was rather hoping that the hon. Gentleman was not going on any more of his foreign trips—

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I work in the Whips Office. I am here every day. I do not go on foreign trips, so he can come off that one.

1.30 am

Mr. Fowler: I must have made a mistake. I apologise. I recognise the seriousness of what the hon. Gentleman said about training, and I agree with him about its importance, particularly in regard to Europe and 1992.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) for his comments about the construction industry training board. It will be reviewed in three years' time. It is an exception to the general policy. It is sensible that there should be a review, and I hope that what I have announced today will end, as my hon. Friend suggested it would, the uncertainty that hung over it. I pay tribute to the work that it has done in an industry which stands apart from many of the other industries about which we have been talking.

In the few minutes that remain to me, I shall not be able to respond to everything that has been said, so I shall reply in the usual way. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) accused the Government of not being serious about training. I must remind him that his party opposed, root and branch, the introduction of employment training for long-term unemployed people for month after month. We tried honestly to introduce a scheme that provided training for such people, but the Labour party and the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), opposed it at every turn. I hope that, when the hon. Gentleman puts his mind to the subject, that policy will change. It is all very well his uttering words about the importance of training, but we want some commitment from the Opposition.

In a scheme that is training more than 400,000 long-term unemployed people, 210,000 people are on the employment training programme, which has been opposed at every stage by the Labour party. I believe that that is an entirely indefensible position, and one of the first things that the hon. Member for Sedgefield should do in his new post is assess that policy and change it. There is no justification whatever for opposing a training programme which all the research shows is producing good training for long-term unemployed people and brings them back into employment. We all agree about the importance of training, and there is no need to labour the point. One of the troubles with the case of industrial training boards is that they have not raised skill standards. There is also a range of levy arrangements with ITBs. It is not true that they are all provided with vital resources from the levy. The offshore petroleum board imposes no levy, and the hotel and catering board levy touches only 1 per cent. of firms in the industry. The proposals have come from the different industries themselves.

With the new TECs, we wish to see the local delivery of training; with the new industry training organisations, we wish to set new and good national standards.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I cannot give way: it is not remotely possible.

Employers, the public and those involved in the TECs have demonstrated a new enthusiasm for training, and I hope very much that the whole House will share that enthusiasm.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to the order this day, proceeded to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: Ayes 97, Noes 32.

Division No. 384] **[1.35 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Boswell, Tim
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Burns, Simon
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Renton, Tim
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*

Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Alton, David
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Blair, Tony
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Illsley, Eric
Kennedy, Charles
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded, pursuant to the order this day, to put forthwith the Question,* That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords amendments:—

The House divided: Ayes 97, Noes 33.

Division No. 385] **[1.47 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Boswell, Tim
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Burns, Simon
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Renton, Tim
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Alton, David
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blair, Tony
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Illsley, Eric
Kennedy, Charles
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Remaining Lords amendments agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

ROAD TRAFFIC

That the draft Passenger and Goods Vehicles (Recording Equipment) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 24th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question agreed to.

Electricians (Registration)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

1.58 am

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): It is of great concern that, with the advent of the single European market, the United Kingdom electrical contracting industry will be at a serious disadvantage compared with its counterparts in most of the other Community countries. That arises from the fact that on the continent the industry is regulated in the sense that operatives can carry out electrical installation work only if they are suitably qualified. In addition, the work has to adhere to mandatory safety standards. Furthermore, work generally has to be inspected to ensure that those standards are met.

In the United Kingdom, the electrical contracting industry works within a self-regulated framework. One consequence of that is that anybody who wishes to call himself or herself an electrician can do such work and is not bound even by the safety standards of the Institution of Electrical Engineers. That system leads to shoddiness, with the effect that sub-standard electrical wiring resulted in 3,500 accidental fires in dwellings and 2,800 accidental fires in other occupied buildings in the United Kingdom in 1987. That is according to the Home Office document entitled "Fire Statistics United Kingdom 1987". Mr. Gresty, the county trading standards officer of North Yorkshire county council, was kind enough to send me examples of extremely bad wiring practice. It is vital to take action to eliminate it.

The feeling in the industry is that the existing system of self-regulation will not enable it to compete fairly with unscrupulous continental operatives who will be able to work in the United Kingdom outside the influence of our system of self-regulation. The irony is that they will be able to do that without any qualifications and without having to concern themselves with safety standards in the United Kingdom, although they would be prevented from doing such work in their own countries by the various regulatory systems that exist there. Clearly, they would be able to cut corners and complete work more cheaply, but the safety consequences would be disastrous. Our industry is not asking for regulations on a basis comparable with those in the other EEC countries, but it is asking to be able to compete fairly with its EEC couterparts. I am sure that the Minister will find that a reasonable argument.

A key step towards addressing the problem is that the Electrical Contractors Association—with, I am glad to say, help from the Government—carried out detailed research and has just produced a report entitled, "Access for the British Electrical Contracting Industry to the European Single Market". That study investigated the issue of regulation in the electrical contracting industry in EEC countries and its possible impact on fair trade.

The main conclusions that I draw from the study are that the systems of regulation are variable in the EEC countries and there is no possibility of our self-regulated approach being adopted by the EEC for 1992. Therefore, we have to react to what exists on the continent in order to ensure fair competition and we need to do so as expeditiously as possible.

It is important to note that, if we fail to respond to the needs of the industry, our existing self-regulated system will not be able to monitor and establish the extent to which unscrupulous operators were coming to the United Kingdom and what work was being done. Clearly, the consequences of that would be serious when one is dealing with the potentially hazardous issue of electricity supply.

The industry is not asking for a system of regulation along the lines that exist on the continent. It is asking for a voluntary system of self-certification of work which will be based on an assessment of contracting companies in terms of their skills and the application of mandatory technical standards. If a company wishes not to take part in the voluntary system, it would be free to do as it does now, but it would not be qualified to certify its own work. A third party would have to inspect the work and approve it.

Continental contracting companies would be free, like British companies, to decide which of those options to pursue. The key point is that all companies, whether British or continental, would be treated exactly the same. The other main element in all this is the need for reciprocal recognition arrangements to be put in place so that British contracting companies can compete fairly on the continent.

As our existing system of self-regulation would generally be unacceptable on the continent, it would result in an almost total barrier to trade and for the electrical contracting industry 1992 and all that would be a complete farce. An urgent solution is needed.

I want to say a little more about the structure of the self-certification process proposed by the ECA and the two conditions that have to be satisfied for that to happen. As I have already said, if a contractor wishes voluntarily to be able to self-certify its work, it must meet certain qualifying criteria regarding the company and its staff. Some of the criteria that I should like to see are that the company must be commercially competent, its staff must be qualified electricians and there must be a minimum level of experience of, say, three years. The criteria would need to be assessed by an independent Government-approved body similar to the one that already exists for the gas industry—the Confederation for the Registration of Gas Installers.

The second main condition which must be met for self-certification is that work must adhere to existing IEE wiring regulations. That adherence must now become mandatory. The ECA—proposed structure suggests that those wiring regulations should become part of the normal building regulations which must be adhered to as part of the normal local authority planning permission procedures relating to construction work. Just as the local authority inspects construction projects to ensure that they meet agreed planning permission and building regulation guidelines, under these arrangements inspection of wiring could be carried out by the contracting company itself if it was qualified to self-certify or by a third party if the company had decided that it did not wish to be able to self-certify. The inspection work could be carried out by the local authority or by the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting—both of which will have to adapt themselves to some extent to be able to carry out that work.

The upshot of all this is that continental electrical contractors would be able to work in the United Kingdom, but within the necessary IEE technical regulations that would ensure safety and fair competition. It must be stressed that 1992 must not result in the deterioration of electrical standards. On the contrary, the number of electrically caused fires, fatalities and serious accidents in the United Kingdom causes concern and unquestionably justifies raising the standards of our electrical installations.

The other vital condition is that the reciprocal recognition arrangements which aim to allow British contractors to have fair access to continental markets must work effectively. I understand that there is agreement in principle on an industry basis between the ECA and the international trade association—the Association Internationale d'Entreprises Electriques.

Although the groundwork on reciprocal recognition is being done by the industry, I nevertheless believe that the time has come for Government to start playing a more active role in this matter. I am especially anxious that the Minister should press the EEC Commission to do whatever is necessary to ensure that the system of reciprocal recognition works in the interests of British industry. The Government can obviously do that far better than industry and I hope that the Minister will move quickly on this.

What are the possible legislative consequences? I believe that the Government have all the powers that they need. Does the Minister agree that the function of the approved body, to which I have referred and which would allow contractors to self-certify their work, could be dealt with under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974? I refer specifically to schedule 3, clauses 4, 5, 6 and 7. Does the Minister also agree that incorporating electrical wiring into building regulations could be dealt with administratively and would not require legislation? I should be grateful if the Minister would confirm that.

The Consumers Association has written to me about incorporating electrical wiring into building regulations. It states:

> "The fact that anyone can set up a business in this field of work without qualifications or experience is highly unsatisfactory . . . We think that the Wiring Regulations drawn up by the IEE should have the force of law . . . We would, therefore, welcome any changes in the Building Regulations which would make it mandatory to meet the IEE standards."

I hope that the Minister will accept the proposal that I have put before the House, which is based on the views of the ECA, the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union and others. Not to accept the proposal would pose a serious risk to our electrical contracting industry in terms of loss of trade and jobs. It would also have serious consequences for consumers because of the threats to safety that could arise from a deterioration in standards.

Will the Minister accept in principle the ECA structure that I have put before the House on the question of self-certification, third-party inspection and reciprocal recognition? If the Minister will not accept that structure in principle, will he tell the House exactly what he intends to put in its place and the timescale for producing alternative proposals, bearing in mind the urgent need for our industry to start preparing for 1992? I gave the Minister notice of that question, so I hope that he can give a reply.

I am sure that the Minister recognises that the industry is not advocating anything other than that the industry should be able to operate in a free market while recognising the different ways in which the continental industry is regulated and is likely to be regulated in the foreseeable future. I am sure that the Minister also recognises that much of what I have advocated for the electrical contracting industry already exists for gas installations. Will the Minister confirm that he accepts the idea of having an approved body which would assess contractors to see if they satisfied the qualifying criteria for self-certification? I understand that the requirements for the approved body have already been defined by the ECA. Those requirements are comparable with what would be needed for Europe.

Will the Minister also confirm that he will give support to the electrical contracting industry by encouraging the EC Commission to establish a system of reciprocal recognition that will ensure that United Kingdom contractors are able to compete fairly at home and on the continent?

2.12 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I wish to intervene briefly to congratulate the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) on his good fortune in securing an Adjournment debate on such an interesting and important subject.

I declare an interest as one who has built up an electrical contracting business which is listed among the 10 largest in the industry. I have also represented the Electrical Contractors Association for some time in the House.

The Minister will be aware that our industry is in a unique position. It is in a healthy state, but it needs help from the Government to be able to compete vigorously in Europe. For many years in this country any Tom, Dick or Harry could set up here, and now any Fritz, Pierre or Sebastian will be able to do the same. At the same time, however, even the most qualified electrician here will have considerable difficulty in setting up and competing in Europe. That is why it is most important that the Government should establish reciprocal trading arrangements so that members of the ECA can go abroad to compete and to demonstrate that healthy state of our electrical contracting industry, which will then stand it in good stead when competing in Europe.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Do I take it that the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) had the permission of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) to make a speech?

Mr. Thurnham: Yes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: So that it can be recorded in the *Official Report*, I should tell the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West that it is a courtesy to inform the Chair when it is agreed that other hon. Members are to take part in the Adjournment debate.

2.15 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) for raising this interesting issue this morning. He brings considerable expertise—no doubt based on his own background in electrical engineering—to it. I was interested to hear the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), who is also an expert on this matter.

I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West that electrical installation

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

engineers should be competent and properly qualified. But electrical contracting is one area where considerable regulation already exists or is being developed: first, self-regulation on the part of the industry and, secondly, regulation through the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the control of supply and the building regulations.

First, I shall turn to voluntary self-regulation. The Electrical Contractors Association examines all the companies that apply to it for membership for technical skills, competence in contracting, sound business practices and the qualifications of their staff and operatives. Once admitted to the ECA, registered contractors are required to conform with the association's rules and standards. The ECA has for 40 years offered guarantees to customers, in support of their registered contractors. These guarantees cover not only the work undertaken by the contractor but also completion of the project if the original contractor experiences difficulties.

The National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting, a consumer safety organisation, has about 9,500 contractors on its register. By its own estimate, the NICEIC believes that about 75 per cent. of electrical contracting work in all sectors—domestic, commercial and industrial—is undertaken by contractors registered with it. Contractors are registered only after undergoing a full day's inspection by an NICEIC inspector and annual inspections take place thereafter.

I applaud the work of both these organisations and I am confident that the schemes run by the ECA and NICEIC—which are by no means mutually exclusive—offer the consumer excellent standards of safety and quality of service. It is primarily through the increasingly effective promotion of these schemes that the industry will be able to put its own house in order, since, as contractors realise that they will be unable to compete for trade without the backing of a recognised body, they will quickly be forced to seek recognised status or suffer in the market place.

Turning to health and safety, the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989—made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974—will come into force on 1 April 1990. The purpose of the regulations is to require precautions to be taken against the risk of death or personal injury from electricity in workplace activities.

On the control of supply, the Department of Energy has issued regulations for the safe and secure supply of electricity. Regulation 27 enables an electricity board to take into account compliance with the IEE wiring regulations in assessing whether an installation should be connected.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West has referred to the suggestions from parts of the electrical industry that electrical installation work should be brought within the scope of the building regulations, as indeed is already the position in Scotland. We believe that the existing arrangements to ensure that such work is carried out in a safe manner are working well. Nevertheless, we are considering whether, particularly in the light of developments at the European level, it might be desirable to reinforce them with a general legal requirement in the regulations.

If we should decide to go down this path, there are a number of practical difficulties that would first need to be resolved. In particular, we would have to find ways of ensuring that we were not simply adding an unnecessary and burdensome layer of bureaucratic control to the industry's own voluntary arrangements. We are discussing these issues with representatives from the industry, and, in accordance with our normal practice, we would consult widely on detailed proposals before deciding whether or not to introduce a requirement of this nature.

If electrical installation work were to be brought within the scope of the building regulations, an additional regulation made under section 1 of the Building Act 1984 would be necessary, and an approved document would be issued setting out how compliance with that regulation would be achieved.

I have already referred to developments at the European level. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that these are of prime importance.

The Electrical Contractors Association's report on the way in which the electrical installation industry is controlled in all the member states of the European Community is a most useful document. I am pleased to say that the Government made a large contribution to the funding of that research.

The report concludes that, on the whole, the industry is more highly regulated in other member states than in the United Kingdom and that this, in effect, creates barriers to entry for United Kingdom contractors. That is a serious allegation, and we shall wish to examine equally seriously whether barriers are, in practice, significant and, if so, how they should be tackled on a Community basis.

I do not, however, believe, for the reasons which I have already set out, that the right answer would be the introduction of statutory registration, either under schedule 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, or by other legislative means.

To achieve equality of market access in Europe, the ECA has advocated a system of reciprocal recognition. Appropriate reciprocal arrangements would, in the ECA's view, require some sort of formalisation of the current structure of self-regulation, based on recognition of contractors qualified to self-certify that their work complies with technical standards, while the work of other contractors would be subject to third-party inspection. An independent means, both of accrediting suitably qualified contractors and of providing inspection of other contractors, might be necessary.

These are, I think, suggestions which certainly deserve further exploration. The arguments were further developed by the hon. Gentleman. A key element would be the creation of an independent industry-wide approval and inspection body, perhaps modelled on CORGI, or perhaps on the NICEIC in a rather different and more broadly based form. To such a body, the Government would accord recognition but not, as I have said, statutory backing.

It is for the industry to carry these proposals forward. I gather that the ECA is currently consulting its continental European counterparts through the pan-European association, the AIE, and that the hope is that the AIE will arrive at an agreed approach to reciprocal recognition before the end of the year. In countries with statutory registration arrangements, the agreed approach will need to be brokered with Government and dealt with on a Communitywide basis. In the United Kingdom I shall be taking a close interest in any formalisation of the United Kingdom arrangements which may be necessary.

not least in the light of our current examination of whether the building regulations might be widened to include electrical installation.

Mr. Randall: Bearing in mind the agreement in principle in Britain between the ECA and the AIE on reciprocal recognition, does the Minister agree that the Government have an important role to play in pushing the matter forward through the EEC Commission?

Mr. Chope: The Government are certainly considering the appropriate steps to take in the light of these developments. I have nothing to report to the hon. Gentleman this evening, but I assure him that submissions are on their way: my Department is considering the matter.

Whatever the outcome, we must ensure that our electrical installation contractors are not disadvantaged in the single market. That the other member states have more statutory regulation of their electrical installation industries than we have may not matter in itself. Indeed, it does not necessarily mean that their standards of workmanship are higher. It would be fair to say that we have high standards in this country. That is not to say that we cannot improve them, but it would be wrong to suggest that our standards are lower than those of other countries.

The hon. Gentleman quoted Home Office statistics. They do not break down to wiring faults in the manner that he suggested. The best statistics that I have were produced by the Department of Energy and deal with domestic fatalities. Although one is too many, I am pleased to say that in 1987 there was only one death as a result of domestic wiring faults.

Mr. Randall: May I refer the Minister to table 49(a) in the report to which I referred? Under the heading "Dwellings", the report says that there were 3,549 accidental fires resulting from electrical wiring. Under the second heading of "Other occupied buildings" the report says that there were 2,875 electrical wiring fires. These are Home Office statistics.

Mr. Chope: I do not dispute the overall statistics, but I am advised that whether the fires were caused by wiring faults is open to dispute. I shall note the documents to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Mr. Randall: I do not want to use the Minister's time, because I know that he wishes to answer the questions that I put to him, but the document breaks down the causes of fires and one of those specified is electrical wiring. Other electrical causes are mentioned and one could increase the number of accidents by including those caused by electrical appliances. I have specifically mentioned wiring which is the matter that would be covered by EC regulations and which we wish to see in legislation.

Mr. Chope: I shall not disagree with the information in the documents to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I shall seek further information on the basis of what he has said.

If regulation leads to unfair barriers to trade for the United Kingdom's reputable installation contractors and thus to restrictions on European competition, we shall wish to consider carefully how those barriers might be removed. For the time being the ECA's proposals for reciprocal recognition in conjunction with technical control through the building regulations offers a possible way forward. I cannot say that the Government accept that as the solution, but, as I say, it certainly offers a possible way forward and we are considering it sympathetically.

I think that I have answered all the points that the hon. Gentleman raised. If not, I shall be happy to clear up any that remain in correspondence.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 9 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

Order for further consideration, as amended, read.

To be further considered on Monday 13 November.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (CRYSTAL PALACE) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Monday 13 November.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Wednesday 15 November.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Monday 13 November.

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Wednesday 15 November.

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

That the Petitions against the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Tuesday 14 November at Seven o'clock.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (No. 2) BILL

Motion made,

That the Promoters of the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read) and, having been amended by the Committee in the present session, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Monday 13 November at Seven o'clock.

PRIVATE BILLS *[Lords]* [SUSPENSION]

Motion made,

That so much of the Lords Messages [2nd November, 7th November and 8th November] as relates to the River Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill *[Lords]*, the Happisburgh Lighthouse Bill *[Lords]*, the Great Yarmouth Port Authority Bill *[Lords]*, the Southampton Rapid Transit Bill *[Lords]*, the Heathrow Express Railway Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]*, and the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill *[Lords]* be now considered.

That this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered this day at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Bill

1. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the forthcoming food Bill; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I have received a wide range of representations. I intend to introduce new legislation as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

Mr. Riddick: Can my right hon. Friend assure me that the forthcoming food Bill will not impose unnecessary bureaucracy and regulation on Britain's very successful food industry? Is he aware, for example, that many small, traditional family bakers could be driven out of business by the proposal to refrigerate or to freeze their products, particularly when those products are sold on the same day as they are produced? Will he do everything in his power to ensure that the small corner bread shop is protected?

Mr. Gummer: The particular point to which my hon. Friend refers comes from a different source, but,in general, it is vital for the success of the British food industry that British consumers should feel that food is entirely safe and that we are acting on their side when we try to ensure that any gaps in the existing law are filled. I put food safety first and I hope that we will be able to achieve that end with the least amount of bureaucracy.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister ensure that the new Bill contains clear regulations concerning the importation and sale of irradiated food? Does he share my concern about reports that irradiated food, such as prawns and shell fish, has found its way into this country, been sold to companies, processed into canned food and sold in our shops? Will he ensure that the new Bill contains clauses to prevent such activities?

Mr. Gummer: If what the hon. Gentleman says were true I would be extremely concerned. I heard this allegation, yet again, but I was disappointed to find that those who made it had not bothered to put in front of me the evidence that they claimed to have. I asked immediately for that evidence and three days later, it arrived. I am having it examined urgently. The hon. Gentleman is right. I believe that consumers should choose whether they want irradiated food. All irradiated food should be properly labelled; then it will be for the consumer to decide.

Saccharin

2. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further consideration he has given to the case for reducing the level of saccharin intake on health grounds and its implications for his decision to abolish the minimum sugar standard for soft drinks: and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Maclean): I have asked my independent advisory committee for advice on the level of saccharin in certain foods. The revised soft drinks regulations retain, for the present, their statutory maximum level on the use of saccharin.

Mr. Shersby: In view of the urgent advice which my hon. Friend seeks from his expert committees about the need to reduce the level of saccharin in the diet, is it not unwise at the same time to abolish the minimum sugar standard of soft drinks and thus open the way to the use of more artificial sweeteners, instead of safe and nutritious natural sweeteners?

Mr. Maclean: Just because we are removing the minimum sugar standard in drinks does not mean that there will be an increase in artificial sweeteners. We are maintaining the present regulation which insists on not more than a certain amount of saccharin in all soft drinks and food.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister agree that if the level of saccharin were reduced to protect the health of the people of the United Kingdom, that would give an opportunity for the greater use of cane sugar from the Commonwealth and help Commonwealth producers?

Mr. Maclean: It may and it may not. Most soft drinks already contain much more than the minimum level of sugar. Even if it was found that there were risks connected with saccharin and people used less saccharin in soft drinks, an increase in the amount of sugar in soft drinks would not automatically follow.

Sir William Clark: Is my hon. Friend aware that if the abolition takes place, a large tonnage of sugar will be lost to the market? Has the Ministry made any estimate of what that loss will be? My information is that it will be about 150,000 tonnes a year. If that is so, what effect will it have on the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries —the Commonwealth countries which, under the Lomé convention, have quotas of cane sugar coming into this country?

Mr. Maclean: I repeat the point: the abolition of the minimum requirement of sugar will not result in a substantial reduction in sugar in soft drinks. Many soft drinks, by their nature, require sugar for their flavour and texture. We believe that labelling is the correct requirement and if people want drinks with less sugar, those drinks should be labelled so that people can make their own decisions. The consumers' safety is paramount.

Fisheries Policy

3. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to attend a meeting of the Council of Ministers to discuss fisheries policy.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Curry): I shall attend the next meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers on 27 November.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: In a recent Adjournment debate the Minister gave a commitment that there would be an announcement on a decommissioning scheme this side of Christmas. Is the Ministry in a position to make such an announcement?

Mr. Curry: I see no reason to change my position: we should settle this by Christmas. However, this will not be on the agenda of the Council of Ministers, and I do not intend to raise it with the Council.

Mr. Robert Hicks: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is considerable unease about the implications of the recent statement by the European Court, and the subsequent action taken, on the availability of fish off the south-west coast in the English channel? Will he assure the House that during the next negotiations he will seek an enhanced total allowable catch to take account of the additional fishing vessels in our waters?

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend raises two points: the first relates to the so-called quota hoppers. We are confident that we still have a substantial provision, which is supported by the court, to defend ourselves against the great bulk of those hoppers. Whether I press for additional amounts of fish depends on the scientific evidence available to us. I cannot give an undertaking that we shall do so if the evidence from the scientists shows that it would be imprudent. I cannot invent fish, and there are not enough of them about at the moment.

Mr. Robert Hughes: The Minister discusses quotas and the total allowable catch with the scientists. Will he conduct an urgent investigation into the quality of scientific advice? It cannot be right that one year we are given one total allowable catch, and the next year it is cut by a third. We do not know where we are. Will the Minister make provision for an increase in the allowable catch, set up a far-reaching inquiry and ensure that the scientific evidence is right so that we can achieve stability in the industry?

Mr. Curry: I am always willing to review the methodology of the collection of information on total allowable catches. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is done by an international body. What I am not willing to do, once that evidence is presented, is to apply some sort of political coefficient to it just because that is convenient for political reasons. We depend on scientific advice reached objectively. I shall review it, but I will not invent fish.

Geese and Ducks (Defeathering)

4. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest situation as regards the EEC proposal to ban the use of mineral hydrocarbon wax for defeathering of geese and ducks.

Mr. Gummer: The European Community has made no proposal to ban the use of mineral hydrocarbon wax for this purpose.

Mr. Coombs: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the great concern in the British poultry industry about a proposed Government regulation to ban the use of mineral hydrocarbon wax in the defeathering process, as part of a more general ban on mineral hydrocarbon oils? Is he further aware that the food science laboratory says that such waxes and oils have no effect on human health and that the previous Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food concurred with that view? Even if the ban were imposed, it would not apply to our European competitors; as a result it would hand a large part of the British poultry market to those competitors and there would be no improvement in the health of the people eating the birds.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend would want me to reassert that the primary purpose of Government legislation in this area is the safety of the public. That must come first. I am looking at the representations from the industry, and I realise its concern.

It would, of course, also be ridiculous to put ourselves into a position in which people could not buy British products but could buy continental products which had been treated in exactly the same way as those that we had prohibited in Britain. This matter must primarily be sorted out in the European Community and I am considering the best way of doing that.

Mr. Ashton: If the Minister cannot tell us about geese and ducks, can he tell us about defeathering Prime Ministers? Is there to be a stalking horse or not?

Mr. Gummer: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will come often to agriculture questions, because the industry that we are discussing and the consumers who use its products are the most important in Britain. We want to ensure that the industry is healthy and we do not like it being used for cheap political jibes.

Food Labelling

5. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussion he has had since taking office with retailers on the subject of food labelling.

Mr. Maclean: I have met a number of retailers individually and collectively and have discussed with them a wide range of labelling matters.

Mr. Marshall: Apart from these discussions, has my hon. Friend discussed with the industry the need for proper refrigeration and storage? Does he agree that if all retailers were as good as Marks and Spencer, Tesco and Sainsbury there would be no problem of food poisoning?

Mr. Maclean: I have visited some large superstores especially to look at refrigeration and I am well aware of the high standards in the vast majority of superstores, markets and shops in this country. Nevertheless, my colleagues in the Department of Health are examining measures to improve our refrigeration and storage yet further and we are co-operating fully with them.

Mr. Martyn Jones: If the Minister persists in allowing irradiation, will he make sure that irradiated food is labelled as such and does not have a stupid label stuck on it whose meaning would not be obvious to the consumer?

Mr. Maclean: It is very simple. I repeat the promise made from this Dispatch Box on many occasions: irradiated food will be properly labelled with the words "irradiated" or "subjected to ionising radiation". A logo is not in itself sufficient.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that if his welcome food labelling initiative is to be successful, the labels on food packages must be honest? What plans does he have to ensure that the origin of food products is clearly marked and that labels marked "British beef", "British lamb" or "British eggs" mean what they say?

Mr. Maclean: I am delighted to tell my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Minister made that very point in an important speech yesterday. I agree with my right hon. and hon. Friends that labelling must be honest. For example, Britain has set up UKROFS—the United Kingdom register of organic food standards—to ensure that the important organic food sector is not damaged by anyone who puts on food an organic label which it might not deserve. We are trying to introduce that system across the EEC because it is best to have EEC-wide organic food standards.

Mr. Ron Davies: If the Minister understands the importance of information in facilitating consumer choice, why on earth does he not pursue a more vigorous policy? Will he acknowledge that the scheme that he presently favours is only voluntary and will not provide essential information such as the amount of sugar in a product or allow a consumer to differentiate between saturated and unsaturated fats? They are major deficiencies. Will the Minister reconsider the scheme for which he is arguing in the Council and recognise that, if nutrition labelling is to be effective, it must be not only comprehensive but mandatory?

Mr. Maclean: I reject the hon. Gentleman's point. Britain is in the lead in nutritional labelling in the EEC. The hon. Gentleman must face the political reality that not many other EEC countries agree with the Government's labelling initiative on nutritional standards. As there is no prospect of a compulsory scheme being accepted at this stage, I see no point in bashing my head against a brick wall on this point. However, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that there are requirements in the directive. We can have mandatory labelling for certain nutrients if we perceive a particular risk. The British Government are insisting on a review of the voluntary proposals in three years' time to see whether they are working adequately.

Dairy Sector

6. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he is next due to meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the dairy sector.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend and I regularly meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss a range of issues affecting the industry.

Mr. Knox: When my hon. Friend next meets the president, will he bear in mind the importance of maintaining milk prices to ensure the continuing viability of dairy farms, particularly small dairy farms, which are essential if the fabric of the countryside as we know it is to be retained?

Mr. Curry: I agree totally with my hon. Friend. Dairying is essential to the countryside. Real incomes in the dairy sector increased by 16 per cent. last year because quotas brought stability and profitability, and we aim to keep it that way.

Mr. Cryer: When the Minister next meets the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the dairy sector, will he take into account the fact that there is a large butter surplus—[HON. MEMBERS: "No, there is not."] It is part of the dairy sector. When the Minister distributes the large dairy surplus in the form of butter, will he make sure that there is no confusion and disruption in Bradford, for example, because there are too few outlets for free EEC butter? Instead of obstructing distribution and refusing to allow new outlets, will the Minister adopt a different policy and thereby avoid the confusion, frustration and bad tempers that arise because of the long queues that are formed as a result of the Government's policies?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is somewhat out of date. There is no longer a butter surplus. The justification for the scheme to which he refers is no longer relevant: it was to dispose of a surplus that no longer exists. If I had my way, I would not continue it at all.

Mr. Andy Stewart: My hon. Friend knows well that we cannot discuss dairy farming in isolation from other sectors. For example, wheat prices are 40 per cent. below what they were four years age and bread prices are up by 20 per cent. As three companies mill 95 per cent. of Britain's flour, is it not time that we referred them to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

Mr. Curry: I agree with my hon. Friend that the arable sector has been under considerable pressure. That is why we are seeking to assist it in the European negotiations. We have always been hostile to the co-responsibility levy, which is such a burden upon the arable sector. I am sure that we shall continue to seek higher profitability in this important sector of our countryside.

Dr. David Clark: Will the Minister explain to the House why, having been informed by Dutch agriculture authorities on 1 November of the presence of lead-contaminated animal feedstock in the United Kingdom, he waited five days until 6 November before imposing restrictions? Why did he not issue precautionary notices to farmers immediately, warning them not to give this contaminated feedstock to their animals, thereby avoiding unnecessary cattle deaths and potentially hazardous milk entering the food chain?

Mr. Curry: The Minister acted with exemplary promptness. The hon. Gentleman has made a profession of trying to promote this sort of scare. We took action immediately. We recalled the contaminated feedstock and we have taken steps to ensure that no milk is distributed from the farms and no animals are slaughtered off the farms. We have taken every measure that could be taken and acted with a promptness of which the hon. Gentleman would have been proud had he been responsible for it.

Hens

7. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the testing of small flocks of free-range hens.

Mr. Gummer: I have received a large number of representations. These were taken into account in the preparation of the new orders of 26 October and will result in a considerable reduction in the cost of testing, particularly for small flocks.

Mr. Baldry: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the testing requirements for salmonella for small flocks have caused considerable concern for organisations such as the Women's Institute and for people such as my mother-in-law, who sell free-range eggs at stalls at

Women's Institute branches and at farm gates? These organisations and individuals will welcome the much simplified testing arrangements, the substantially reduced requirement for testing and the substantially reduced costs of testing for salmonella. Any reasonable-minded person will feel that my right hon. Friend has struck a fair balance.

Mr. Gummer: I have received many letters from people who have stated that we have done exactly what was right. I do not know whether my hon. Friend's mother-in-law was among them. We had to put the safety of the eggs first. If we had not done that, smaller flocks such as those owned by my hon. Friend's mother-in-law might have been blamed for a future outbreak of salmonella. That would have been damaging to the consumer and to my hon. Friend's mother-in-law.

Mr. Beith: Why was it that when one of my constituents from Wooler made representations to the Minister on this matter and was featured in a national newspaper, a newspaper cutting was sent to the regional eggs inspector, who was dispatched on a 300-mile trip to warn my constituent to stop selling eggs that were not in boxes and had not been through a packing station? Does the right hon. Gentleman intend to enforce these crazy packing rules on all free-range eggs sold in shops, or is enforcement reserved as a form of intimidation that is more characteristic of East European regimes than one would expect in this country?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is being less than kind. We sought to help his constituent—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman should hear me out. In the course of becoming aware of the lady's problem, we discovered that she might inadvertently have been breaking the law. She may have been doing what the hon. Gentleman said: selling her product through the village shop. We have laws that are designed to protect people from being ripped off. If we allowed free-range eggs to be sold that were not boxed some people would try to obtain a premium from eggs that were not produced in that way. I thought that the hon. Gentleman belonged to a party which believed in protecting the consumer. I put the consumer first.

Mr. Key: As a rural Member, I have been under pressure from a number of members of the Women's Institute, including my wife, about egg production. I hope that my right hon. Friend can clarify a serious issue that arises from the orders that he has laid. There is genuine confusion about small flocks. When there is talk about a small flock of fewer than 25 birds, does that mean chickens or a combination of 25 chickens and ducks, for example? Will my right hon. Friend clarify the position?

Mr. Gummer: We are talking about 25 chickens. The combination position is quite different. I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that those of us who believe that we should be allowed to buy free range eggs, in the knowledge that they are both safe and free range when we pay for them, do not want the market to be undermined by those who want to get rid of the restrictions. We do not want them to move in and make a fast buck.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister confirm that in recent months six consignments of imported eggs have been found to be contaminated with salmonella, yet all those consignments have been sold on the British market without let or hindrance? What is the point of driving 1,600 British egg producers out of business, as the Government have done during the past year, and then allowing foreign producers to fill the gap in the market without being subject to equivalent safety tests? Should there not now be effective health controls on all eggs supplied to British shops?

Mr. Gummer: Of course I can confirm those figures because they are my own figures; they were given to the hon. Gentleman by my Ministry. The hon. Gentleman does himself and his party no service if he does not admit that the Government are fighting for our regulations on salmonella to be extended throughout the whole of the European Community. That is the only fair way to go about things. In the meantime, the 97 per cent. of eggs that people buy in this country, which are produced by this country's farmers, are all the safer because they are protected by our regulations. The hon. Gentleman should be fighting for people in Britain to buy British eggs, knowing that they are better protected. He and his hon. Friends should not constantly try to undermine the market.

Mr. Alexander: Is it not true that free-range hens can often be more at risk of salmonella than battery hens because of birds of the air and others farmyard detritus? Have the figures that my hon. Friend has produced helped to resolve that argument?

Mr. Gummer: When the salmonella arguments began, there were those who immediately jumped to the conclusion that the problem would help them in their argument in favour of free-range hens rather than battery hens. The very best that can be said is that there is no proof that the risks of salmonella are any less in free-range eggs than they are in any other sort of eggs. Indeed, my hon. Friend is right to say that there are natural hazards which could perhaps lead to somewhat greater risks in free-range eggs.

If we are to have a healthy egg industry in Britain, we must ensure that our eggs are better protected than other eggs. People should be aware that the eggs that they buy are much safer and much more likely to be healthy eggs if they buy British. Whether my hon. Friend or his constituents want battery eggs, perch eggs or free-range eggs, they should first ensure that they are buying British eggs.

Sheep

8. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the present state of the British sheep industry.

Mr. Curry: The industry is pleased that the essential decisions on reform of the sheepmeat regime have been taken and is anxious to get on with the job of securing export markets.

Mr. Livsey: What assistance will the Minister give to those sheep farmers in the less-favoured areas who this autumn have suffered a drop of at least one third in the sale value of their breeding ewes? That is a serious loss. Will the Minister therefore consider paying compensation to farmers who have sustained that loss due to changes in the transitional arrangements of the European Community sheepmeat regime?

Mr. Curry: There has been a drop in breeding ewe prices, although of late the recovery has been quite sharp. Some uncertainty played a part in that, but weather conditions resulting in lack of grass and forage also played a significant role. I am not prepared to consider compensation, but I am prepared to set out the final details of the regime so that there is certainty. The producers whom the hon. Gentleman and I represent in our constituencies will have a buoyant export market and stability to look forward to, which is far more useful to them than living in a permanent state of uncertainty with the threat of a change in their regime always imminent but never quite happening.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree that the British sheep industry recently suffered the grievous loss of a trans-shipment of sheep from New Zealand to a constituent of mine. They were a special strain of sheep which is gradually becoming extinct and they died as a result of the activities of customs officers at Honolulu airport. Will my hon. Friend make the strongest representations to the Americans to ensure that sheep coming to Britain in future will not have to remain for an hour and a half on the tarmac without air conditioning?

Mr. Curry: I entirely endorse my hon. Friend's comments. We have already taken up that matter most strongly with the United States authorities and will continue to press it.

Mr. John P. Smith: Will the Minister give the House a categorical guarantee that British sheep farmers will not be any worse off as a result of the negotiations currently taking place in Brussels?

Mr. Curry: I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the Commission's proposals to limit hill livestock compensatory allowances to the less-favoured areas. I can tell him categorically that we are opposed in principle to the Commission's suggestion because it discriminates against British farming.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend will be aware that in Scotland the Highland clearances removed the people so that sheep could be put in the glens and on the mountains. Is he satisfied that the changes that have taken place in the common agricultural policy will not result in a second Highland clearance, this time of the sheep? Will he confirm the strategic need to maintain the livestock on Scotland's hills?

Mr. Curry: I certainly confirm my hon. Friend's remarks. Continuing with the previous system would have threatened that livelihood in the hills and we were under continual pressure on that. However, as I have already said, we are determined to fight for the future of the British uplands which, in many cases, is based upon sheep.

Pesticides

9. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his advisory committee on pesticides last met; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: The advisory committee on pesticides last met on 19 October when it reviewed a number of pesticides, the labelling of timber treatment products and the operation of the wildlife incident investigation scheme.

Mr. McCartney: Is the Minister aware that on Tuesday this week I introduced a Bill to ban pesticides such as lindane? Is he also aware that since then I have been inundated with telephone calls from doctors, solicitors and members of families complaining of cases in which people have suffered from illnesses similar to that produced by lindane poisoning? This is a grossly under-reported area of the market. Will the Minister meet the all-party home safety committee and appropriate Ministers from other Departments to discuss the serious matter of the poisoning of the home environment by lindane and other nasty chemicals which can still be sold in do-it-yourself stores throughout Britain?

Mr. Maclean: I took the opportunity of reading the speech that the hon. Gentleman made when he introduced his 10-minute Bill last Tuesday. The possible effects of lindane on the food chain have been reviewed by my Department's independent advisory committee on pesticides and we are satisfied that the uses of lindane in the agricultural sector are now so limited that there is no damage to the food chain. However, the Health and Safety Executive is reviewing lindane's industrial and home uses and I cannot comment on that at this stage.

Mr. Boswell: Is not the Department to be congratulated on its recently published attractive booklet on pesticide use which deals with the issues in an adult manner? Will my hon. Friend undertake to release as much information as possible within the limits of confidentiality to contribute to a full debate on this important matter?

Mr. Maclean: I thank my hon. Friend. I thought that the booklet was excellent, and I hope that it will be widely circulated among hon. Members and the community. It explains the rigorous checks that the Government apply to all pesticides, and the work of the independent academic experts who give the Government the best advice in the world.

Mr. Mallon: Is the Minister aware of the deep concern about the use of the chemical nuvan as a pesticide in fish farming, especially salmon farming? What advice has he received from the advisory committee about the damage done by that chemical to the natural life of the sea, and to the environment in general?

Mr. Maclean: That pesticide is due for review by our independent advisory committee, and I do not wish to say anything before that review is completed.

Straw Burning

10. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to review the effectiveness of the current measures designed to regulate straw burning.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. Friend the Minister has already announced a far-reaching review of straw and stubble burning, which will take account of the many representations that we have received. We hope to announce the conclusions of the review shortly.

Mr. Porter: I appreciate that my hon. Friend will wish to strike a happy balance between those who want a total ban and farmers who regard burning straw stubble as a necessity. I commend to my hon. Friend the proposal for a proper regulated licensing scheme, which I feel would strike that happy balance.

Mr. Maclean: We shall consider every proposal put to us, including that one. I promise all hon. Members who wrote to me about the matter that we shall consider their views, and those of their constituents, very thoroughly.

Mr. Morley: Given the considerable potential for commercial and energy-based use of straw—and given that the arguments for burning it are tenuous, and that burning leads to habitat destruction, pollution and considerable nuisance for those living in rural areas—does the Minister agree that it is time that he drew up distinct proposals for an outright ban, rather than byelaws which have been shown not to work by the National Society for Clean Air?

Mr. Maclean: First, I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the Front Bench. I have enjoyed his speeches in the past. I repeat that we shall consider carefully all representations made to us. My Department already encourages alternatives to straw burning through a variety of publicity campaigns. Those alternatives include straw incorporation and its use as a fuel, and we make grants available to assist firms wishing to develop equipment for such purposes.

Hill Compensatory Allowances

11. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on discussions held with the European Community concerning hill compensatory allowances.

Mr. Curry: We are firmly opposed in principle to Commission proposals that would discriminate against British farmers in the less-favoured areas, where they are essential to the welfare of our countryside.

Mr. Howells: Can the Minister give an assurance that any withdrawal of FEOGA funds will be made up by the Government? Can he give a further assurance that the hill compensatory allowance for this year will be increased?

Mr. Curry: We oppose the Commission's proposals in principle, and our first battle involves making certain that we impress on our negotiating partners the fact that we will not surrender a principle that is so important to us. All other issues are subsidiary to that.

Liquid Milk

12. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest estimate for the volume of liquid milk available for use in the confectionery industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The main use of liquid milk bought by the confectionery industry is for the manufacture of chocolate crumb. The current estimate of supplies for this purpose in the period January to August 1989 is 155 million litres, which compares with 153 million litres in 1983.

Mr. Gregory: Why is the volume of liquid milk available to the United Kingdom confectionery industry consistently held back? Companies such as Rowntree of York are forced to invest millions of pounds in machinery to take powdered milk when they would prefer to use liquid milk. Will my hon. Friend hold urgent discussions to ensure that quotas are increased so that the industry can use this natural product?

Mr. Curry: There is a proposal to increase quotas, but we are opposed to it because we believe that there is no case for an increase across the Community as a whole. My hon. Friend will know, however, that the milk marketing board is altering its seasonal scale to encourage producers to produce milk more in the trough. I hope that that will go some way towards solving the problem.

Mr. Martlew: In view of that reply, will the Minister ask his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to write a letter of apology to the Dairy Trade Federation after the ridiculous and crass speech that he made yesterday to the federation? He criticised it for its inability to affect the amount of dairy imports when in reality there is not enough milk in this country for manufacture. Will the Minister ensure that his right hon. Friend sends that letter of apology and is briefed before he speaks again to the federation?

Mr. Curry: Not the least of my right hon. Friend's talents is his ability to tell home truths to people who might not be interested in receiving them.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

13. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to be able to announce the level of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments for 1990.

Mr. Curry: An announcement on the 1990 hill livestock compensatory allowance rates and the scheme conditions will be made as soon as possible, following completion of the autumn review of the economic conditions in the hill and upland areas.

Mr. Hague: Does my hon. Friend agree that continued livestock farming in the upland areas is indispensable to much of Britain's finest countryside, not to mention many rural communities? If so, does he agree that an increase in the HLCA payments to help hill farmers through their current difficulties would be the best value for money of any environmental expenditure?

Mr. Curry: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of hill farmers as we have neighbouring constituencies which share the same characteristics. Our first priority is to make sure that we get this right in Brussels. Then it will depend on getting it right in the United Kingdom.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Haynes: In the shambles of the privatisation of nuclear energy, who should take the blame? Should it be the advisers who advise or the Ministers who decide?

The Prime Minister *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes up a lot of time.

The Prime Minister: If there were a shambles, that question would arise. As there is not, it does not.

Q2. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is an intrinsic part of Conservative philosophy to conserve our environment and our heritage? Further, does my right hon. Friend accept that all those who are concerned with preserving the rain forests will applaud the practical lead that she has given towards that end?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the Government have given a lead in tackling the problems of climate change. In particular, we have given a lead in our aid programme for conserving the forests, especially in Brazil, where, through my right hon. Friend who is now the Secretary of State for the Environment, we signed the first such agreement between an industrial country and a country with tropical forests. We have also signed one with India. I was able to announce at the United Nations the earmarking of £100 million under our tropical forest action programme. That is good news, both for developing countries and for the developed world.

Mr. Kinnock: What is the Prime Minister's answer to the question put to her and her colleagues by Brighton ambulance man Brian Murray, holder of the British Empire Medal, who asked: "Why do they have such short, ungrateful memories?"

The Prime Minister: We have great gratitude to the ambulance men. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, through the Whitley council they were offered a 6·5 per cent. increase backdated to April and in London 9·3 per cent., backdated to April, both of which would amount to quite a considerable small lump sum if it were taken now. They had also reached an agreement on 24 October about how to run the emergency services. We very much regret that that agreement is not being honoured. It was fully agreed between management and people.

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister is so confident of the case, why does she not let Mr. Murray and his colleagues go to arbitration? Does she recognise that to lavish praise on ambulance people at the time of a disaster and then to stop them going to arbitration is gross hypocrisy?

The Prime Minister: No. This is negotiated through the Whitley council. It was negotiated through the Whitley council and was recommended for acceptance.

Mr. Leigh: When my right hon. Friend completed her interview with Mr. Brian Walden, did she receive any complaints from the programme staff about the fact that the Leader of the Opposition had wriggled out of giving his interview? When she was Leader of the Opposition, did she ever fear to have her intellectual competence questioned?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that he must ask a question on which the Prime Minister has ministerial responsibility.

Q3. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bell: During the course of her busy day, would the Prime Minister take time to read yesterday's *Evening Standard* headline:

"Thatcher's Plan to Save The World"?

Will she kindly tell the House, in the scheme of things, what ambassadorship she would offer the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), what post she would offer the deputy leader of the Tory party, the deputy Prime Minister, the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), and what are her plans for the universe?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would do me the courtesy of reading the speech.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I thank my right hon. Friend for persuading our right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to listen to the pleas of Andrew Gorst, a 14-year-old pupil at Ripley St. Thomas in my constituency, who keeps 48 hens and has some very satisfied customers. He would have had to pay as much as someone with 10,000 hens but now he will pay at a very reduced rate. I should like to say "Thank you very much" to my right hon. Friend.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure my right hon. Friend the Minister deserves all the compliments for listening to the case of a small farmer and taking the requisite action.

Mr. McGrady: Does the Prime Minister agree that her announcement in New York yesterday of £5·5 million for environmental research is a poor substitute for the £33 million that she withdrew from the natural environment research council in February this year? That affected 160 scientists, 41 of whom are involved in research into ozone and the glowing heat effect. Will she reinstate that budget?

The Prime Minister: The grant allocated to the natural environment research council by the advisory board for all research councils was put up, having regard to the importance of the work of the British Antarctic Survey, to the importance of the world experiment on the circulation of the oceans—we shall take part in that—and to the need to put more into satellite work on monitoring climate change.

Mr. Gale: Can my right hon. Friend think of any circumstances in which it might be proper to take industrial action against the sick, the disabled and the infirm? Can she think of any occasion on which such action has been condemned by the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: It is always a matter of great regret and concern if strike action is taken against the sick and the infirm, particularly when there was an agreement on 24

October with regard to accident and emergency services which is not now being operated. We must also bear in mind that nine out of 10 miles done by the ambulance service are not for accidents and emergencies but to get people to hospital, whether as in-patients or out-patients. Most of those non-emergency people are managing excellently to get themselves to hospital. But that does not alter the main point of my hon. Friend's question—that action should not be taken against the sick.

Q4. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McCartney: When the chairman of the Conservative party recently said that the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), had resigned because of long-standing serious differences with the Prime Minister on economic policy, was he telling the truth?

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the statements that I made at the Dispatch Box last week.

Disabled People

Q5. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on recently announced measures to assist the disabled.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has recently announced a number of measures to give extra help to some 500,000 disabled people and carers. These will add a further £100 million on top of the £8·3 billion a year being spent on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people in real terms. That is nearly double what was being spent in 1979.

Mr. Hannam: I thank my right hon. Friend for the recent improvements, especially the carers' allowance and the mobility allowance for deaf-blind people. Does she recall her 1979 commitment to introduce a system of cash benefits to meet the costs of disablement? Will she therefore take a personal interest in the current review of disability benefits to ensure that that promise is implemented to help the 6 million disabled people in Britain to live a life of dignity?

The Prime Minister: I hope that my hon. Friend will consider that we have honoured our pledge by increasing the amount spent on the disabled by 90 per cent. in real terms—that is, over and above inflation—since 1979. The number of people receiving help with their extra costs through mobility allowance has increased sixfold and through attendance allowance threefold over the past decade. That is a record of which the Government can be proud. I certainly assure my hon. Friend that we shall be seeking to do more to help many disabled people who at present do not receive mobility allowance or attendance allowance.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Prime Minister aware that although her figures are correct, the impression that she seeks to create is false? In the past 10 years the real value of the average male take-home pay has risen by 20 per cent. while the average real value of disablement benefit has risen by less than 1 per cent. That is why her boast about helping disabled people has a hollow ring.

The Prime Minister: I do not think that the many people who now receive disablement benefits but did not receive them before will find that that comes with a hollow ring. There are many people in receipt of disablement benefits who never received them before. Spending on the disabled has increased from £1·8 billion in 1978-79 to £8·3 billion in cash terms. That is an increase of £4 billion in real terms. Of that real increase, £3·5 billion is attributable to the increased number of beneficiaries—those who otherwise would not have received benefit—and £500 million to the increase in the average amounts paid.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to help the disabled is to target help to those who are most in need? Does she particularly welcome the new benefits of up to £65 per week for families with severely disabled babies?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning the sum of £65 per week which is intended to help those people. I know my hon. Friend's personal record in this matter and the tremendous interest that he has taken in that aspect of disablement and we all honour him for the lead that he has given.

Q6. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Prime Minister aware that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) this morning again put the Government's view that there is no compatibility between the dangers faced by firefighters and those faced by ambulance workers? Where does the Prime Minister think that ambulance workers were at King's Cross or the Brighton hotel, when she was particularly pleased to see them—waiting outside like glorified taxi drivers? When will she stop treating the women and men of the ambulance service as though they were members of her Cabinet? Why does she not pull out the Army, pay ambulance workers the money and stop risking lives?

The Prime Minister: First, the point about comparability with other emergency services was considered by the Clegg commission, which was set up by a Labour Government but whose recommendations were honoured by a Conservative Government because the Labour Government did not have the money—they just made promises. The Clegg commission did not uphold the demand for comparability between the services. The London ambulance service has been offered 9·3 per cent., backdated to April. The way to conduct the negotiations was through the Whitley council.

Q7. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, whatever the route selected for the M3 around Winchester, it will inevitably cause serious environmental damage? As it was the Government of the day who diverted the route from the open country to the north of Winchester to the sensitive area to the south-east of Winchester, will she reassure the House that the Secretary of State for Transport will speedily be given sufficient funds to ensure that whatever route is finally selected it will be friendly to the special and historic environment around Winchester, which is a national asset?

The Prime Minister: I know of my hon. Friend's interest in this as he has been in correspondence and has been to see me about it. He knows that at the moment my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport are considering the reports of two independent inspectors, who held public inquiries into proposals for that road scheme. I cannot anticipate what their decisions will be, but I know that they fully understand the importance of environmental issues in cases such as this.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): May I ask the Leader of the House to give the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER—Opposition Day (2nd Allotted Day—2nd Part). Until Seven o'clock there will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The need for a clear change of Government policy on Cambodia".

Motion to take note of EC documents on a European environment agency and a monitoring and information network. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at Seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 14 NOVEMBER—Supplemental guillotine motion on and consideration of Lords amendments to the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Motion relating to the National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations.

Motion to take note of EC document on Bovine Somatotropin. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at Seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 15 NOVEMBER—Motion to take note of the White Paper on developments in the European Community January-June 1989 (Cm. 801).

THURSDAY 16 NOVEMBER—It will be proposed that the House will meet for prorogation at 9.30 am.

The House may be asked to consider any Lords Messages and other business as necessary.

[Monday 13 November
Relevant European Community Documents
(a) 8030/89 European Environment Agency
(b) 9785/86 Fourth Community Environmental Action Programme
(c) 9182/88 Access to Information on the Environment
(d) 8882/89 Environment and Natural Resource Information Collection

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 15-xxxii (1988-89), para 4, and
HC 15-xxxv (1988-89), para 7
(b) HC 22-ii (1986-87), para 12 and
HC 22-xi (1986-87), para 1
(c) HC 15-xv (1988-89), para 2
(d) HC 15-xxxvi (1988-89), para 9

Tuesday 14 November
Relevant European Community Document
(a) 8975/89 Bovine Somatotrophin
Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 15-xxxv (1988-89), para 11.]

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Leader of the House assist the House by saying when the Chancellor's Autumn Statement will be, assuming that there is to be one next week? I am sure that even Conservative Members are anxious to hear the good news from the Treasury.

Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 68, "Treatment of widows of servicemen"?

[That this House recognises the unfair treatment of the war widows and widows of servicemen who retired before 31st March 1973 and those widows who married their husbands after their retirement from the Armed Forces both prior and subsequent to 6th April 1978 and urges Her Majesty's Government to remove these artificial time bars in order that all war widows and widows of servicemen may receive the current rate for those pensions irrespective of the date of their husbands' retirement or the date of their marriage.]

With Remembrance Sunday imminent, and with the widespread all-party support of more than half the Members of Parliament, will the Leader of the House find time for an early debate on our treatment of widows of service men?

Given today's long list of private Bills and the huge congestion in private business and carry-over motions, will the Leader of the House make an early and positive response to the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure? I hope that he will feel able to do so. Again, I am sure that such a statement would be warmly welcomed in the House.

Given the announcement of yet another guillotine motion and the fact that the Session has ended with a plethora of such motions, late nights and masses of last-minute Government amendments to legislation, does the Leader of the House recognise that in economic policy and in Cabinet government, as well as in legislative terms, the Government have ended the Session in a shambles, while Labour Members are happy to end it with a substantial majority of the British people looking forward to a Labour Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is doing his best to justify his change of perch on the Opposition Front Bench. We are not at all impressed by this repeated assertion about a shambles. The British people will continue to support the Government with total confidence.

Let me give the hon. Gentleman an illustration of the orderly way in which we respond to his questions. He asked first about the possibility of an Autumn Statement. For the convenience of the House, I should say that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer hopes to be able to make the Autumn Statement on Wednesday.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point about war widows, I am sure that he will not need me to emphasise the extent to which the Government and the House have great sympathy for war widows. We recognise the sacrifice that they have made. As a matter of fact, they already receive preferential treatment in terms of pensions and allowances, which have recently been extended and improved by the Government. Further improvements are due to come into effect next April. I hope that this will be seen as a sign of the extent to which we have their interests in mind. Obviously, given the time left before the end of the Session, I cannot offer the prospect of a debate next week.

On the hon. Gentleman's last point about the private Bill procedure, I congratulate him on having recognised so quickly after his appointment the importance of this complex topic. I do not pretend to be a master of the minutiae of the Joint Committee's report. This is a topic on which we clearly need to consult a wide range of

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

interests as well as listening to the views expressed in the House. When I have done that, I hope to come forward with proposals that could commend themselves to the House. The matter deserves such serious attention. In the meantime, I hope that hon. Members will take my comments seriously and in good faith and will permit private business to proceed this evening and for the rest of the Session in a constructive and orderly fashion.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that I need not remind the House that there are two statements before the Standing Order No. 20 debate. Business questions should refer to the business for next week, not to more general topics.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many Conservative Members would make the request that has been made by the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), for a debate at the earliest possible opportunity on the pensions of pre-1973 war widows? If this country can afford to pay off the national debt, does not my right hon. and learned Friend believe that we have a debt of honour that should be paid off to those widows?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I take this fresh opportunity to emphasise the extent to which all hon. Members have deepest sympathy for war widows. [HON. MEMBERS: "Do something."] That is why the Government have already taken certain steps and announced further steps which will take effect next April. I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's request for a debate at an early opportunity, but plainly it cannot take place next week.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Leader of the House may be aware that last year his predecessor said that an Opposition Day given to the minority parties because there had not been time in the 1987-88 Session would be carried forward to the present Session. Unfortunately, there has been no time for it this Session. Will he give an undertaking that the matter has not been forgotten and that next Session, in addition to the three days allocated in the Standing Orders, the minority parties will be entitled to their remaining day?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's acceptance of the fact that it has not been possible to do more this Session. I cannot focus on the precise arithmetic for next Session, but I shall consider the point as carefully as possible.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): May I add my plea to that of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) about war widows? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that early-day motion 68 has now been signed by 328 hon. Members from all parties? Does he think that it is fair that the widow of a private killed in the second world war receives £2,946 a year, whereas the widow of a private killed today receives £6,491 a year? Does he accept that it is no good to continue to say that the Government have great sympathy for those people? We want some action and I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend would meet the wishes of every hon. Member if he were to arrange a debate next week on this question.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already made clear our willingness to contemplate the possibility of a debate. It is fair to remind the House that the Government have made substantial improvements and extensions to the arrangements for war widows. Further changes are to take effect next April. I fully understand the force of my hon. Friend's point, but it is right to emphasise that our sympathy has been expressed in a practical way as far as possible.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Does the Leader of the House accept that early-day motion 68, which stands in my name and that of 328 other hon. Members, and its two supporting amendments, represents the views of more than 75 per cent. of hon. Members? Feelings run extremely high. Will the Leader of the House assure us that if there is to be no substantive announcement in the Queen's Speech about paying this small amount of money to give equal treatment to all war widows, there will be a debate immediately following the debate on the Gracious Speech?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I emphasise again our understanding of the extent to which sympathy for war widows is widely shared throughout the House, and it is entirely natural that that should be so. If I have the figures correctly in mind, a change such as that suggested by the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) would cost about £600 million—[HON. MEMBERS: "So what?"] That is not a matter on which I am authorised to make a commitment from the Dispatch Box this afternoon. However, in relation to what I can do, I have said that I shall certainly see whether we can find an opportunity for a debate next Session. I understand the strength of feeling and I shall try to respond by offering the opportunity for a debate.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would look strange if the House seems to be taking no interest in the momentous events in eastern Europe? Will he find an early date for a debate on that subject and especially our relations with those countries?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the importance that my hon. and learned Friend attaches to events in eastern Europe, which are of momentous importance. He will have an opportunity to discuss that topic in one or other of the debates on the Gracious Speech.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is it still too late to arrange for next week the long-delayed debate on parliamentary pensions, and when now will it take place? Is the Leader of the House aware of the importance of that debate to the widows of many of our former colleagues?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the extent to which the right hon. Gentleman in particular has an interest in that topic, which concerns hon. Members of all parties. I personally regretted very much the fact that we had to postpone the debate from today, but I thought that it was right to do so in the light of the decision announced by you, Mr. Speaker. I can see no prospect of having that debate next week, but I shall try to find an early opportunity for discussion of that much-postponed and important matter.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): As the usual awning will be erected outside the House of Lords next week under which dignitaries may queue for the Queen's Speech, will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House of Lords that that awning will stay there permanently until the House of Lords agrees to a better system to prevent our constituents from having to queue in the rain to go round the line of route?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not entirely certain, after my limited tenure of this office, of my authority to make such a bold assertion to those who run another place. I will certainly look into the matter to see whether there is anything that I can sensibly do about it.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I am sure that the Leader of the House shares the general concern felt by hon. Members on both sides of the House about the death of Beverley Lewis, the deaf-blind and mentally handicapped woman. Does he agree that we need a public inquiry to find out what happened and so avoid further tragedies? May we please debate that next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman, as so often, raises a matter of importance. That is obviously a tragic case. The right hon. Gentleman may be aware that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health has already called for full reports on the matter from the health and social services authorities. Those reports and the inquest findings will be examined carefully to discover whether they reveal gaps in the legislation or other arrangements that exist to deal with such cases.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Wednesday's debate on the European Community is an opportunity to look ahead and not simply to consider previous White Paper developments? Does he also agree that it can include the matters raised by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence)—developments in eastern Europe—and should above all emphasise the Government's enthusiasm for the European Community? In view of the doubts that have arisen yet again recently about the Government's attitude on a number of key aspects of the development of the European Community, should we not show once again that we are approaching the forthcoming Strasbourg EC summit with total enthusiasm for new developments?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that that debate will provide an opportunity for expressing those positive sentiments. Although the debate deals with the report relating to the Spanish presidency, hon. Members will want to refer to eastern Europe as well as to Community matters. If my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) participates, he will no doubt be able to contribute his own unique blend of positivism to the discussions.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Has the Leader of the House yet come to a decision about the letter that he received from my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) about the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland making statements to journalists before Northern Ireland questions? No doubt those statements were kept out of the way until Northern Ireland questions were over. Will the Leader of the House undertake as soon as possible to arrange for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to reply to and clarify the contradictions and confusions that have arisen from the statements made by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland inside and outside the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure whether there will be an opportunity to make any such special arrangements, nor should there be any need to do that. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has already made the position very clear. There has been no change in Government policy. The overriding aim of all our policies in Northern Ireland is to bring terrorism to an end. The way forward to political stability must involve talks between the political parties and with the Government. However, those who support terrorism can play no part. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland made it very clear that there is no question of Ministers having dealings with Sinn Fein as long as it supports terrorism, as it plainly continues to do.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Does the Leader of the House accept that it is a matter of deep regret that the business of the House next week will not permit a debate on British Rail's proposal to construct a high-speed link through Kent? Is he aware that British Rail's decision last week to defer the presentation of its Bill for another year and not to consider any other route is a matter of great concern? Will he therefore arrange a debate on this vexed subject as soon as possible in the new Session?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Of course, I understand my hon. Friend's concern with this subject. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has welcomed the announcement of a joint venture between British Rail and Eurorail to design, finance and build the Channel tunnel rail link. It is for British Rail and Eurorail to judge how and when to seek legislative approval for their proposals and they have decided that it is wiser to introduce a Bill in November 1990 so that all the details of the route through London can be finalised. I shall bring my hon. Friend's understandable concern with this matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): What about the deputy Prime Minister stepping in next week, perhaps at Question Time, to give the Prime Minister a bit of a break? What with rushing all over the place saving the world and so on, she has become so muddled that in a letter to me on Monday she referred——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should be the first to know that there is an important debate after this. I did ask for questions to be confined to next week's business.

Mr. Lamond: With respect, Mr. Speaker, I asked whether the deputy Prime Minister would step in next week in place of the Prime Minister. She is so muddled that she has forgotten which Ministers she moved in the reshuffles beause they are so frequent. It is misleading for hon. Members to receive letters asking them to get in touch with Ministers who have not been in the office concerned for more than three months.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman may understand his point, but I do not think that the rest of the House does.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I see that more hon. Members are now rising. I do not like to curtail business questions but today I shall allow them to continue for a further five minutes. We must then move on for the reasons that I have already stated.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that last year there were just under 8,000 serious accidents in schools of which seven were fatal, and that schools do not have the protection of the first aid provisions of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974? May I draw his attention to early-day motion 174 standing in my name and signed by no fewer than 323 other right hon. and hon. Members?

[That this House applauds the Approved Code of Practice which followed the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 (Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974) and which requires that, even in low hazard industries, every employer of more than 150 people should ensure the on site availability of a qualified first aider; believes the same requirement should apply to children in schools; further recognises the value of teaching first or emergency aid in schools; and applauds the initiative of the St. John Ambulance in issuing its publication Emergency Aid in Schools, which, accompanied by a video, shows how children can be taught a basic course between the ages of six and twelve years so that they are competent in assessing emergency situations, restarting breathing and circulation, dealing with bleeding, shock and unconsciousness especially resulting from drug or solvent abuse and burns and scalds an so qualifying for the St. John Ambulance Three Cross Emergency Aid Award.]

It calls for mandatory first aid protection to be offered to schools similar to that offered to even low-hazard industries. Please may we have a debate on the issue, which affects almost every household in the land——

Mr. Lamond: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Browne: —at some time, and is strongly supported by more than half the Back Bench Members?

Mr. Lamond: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I know what the point of order is likely to be, but put it briefly please.

Mr. Lamond: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I signed the early-day motion and support the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), but I do not see how the point that he is making has any relevance to next week's business. I expect fairness.

Mr. Speaker: Nor did points raised by the hon. Gentleman, but I agree.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): May I ak the Leader of the House the question that I put to him last week? Can he arrange for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to come back to the House and make a further statement about his abdication of the Government's golden share in Jaguar and its consequences for thousands of my constituents and other denationalised industries, such as British Steel, and the possible—I stress "possible"—denationalisation of electricity and water? Is it not a fact that all creditor companies that want to take over privatised concerns regard those pieces of paper called golden shares as totally worthless? Why does not the Secretary of State come to explain that to the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I told the hon. Member last week, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already made a statement to the House about the Government's special share in Jaguar. However, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise wider aspects of that decision, he will have an opportunity to do so in debates after the House resumes, and on other occasions when the Secretary of State is here.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): May I also refer to my question on last week's business statement when I asked my right hon. and learned Friend whether we could have a debate on toxic waste? He said that no one is interested in arranging such a debate. Is he speaking for the Opposition Front Bench and the Government Front Bench? If not, can we have a change of heart as it is an important subject which should be debated in the House in conjunction with the Select Committee report?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot imagine that I put the matter as brutally as my hon. Friend recollects. It is a topic which clearly deserves consideration. In due course we will have to see whether either side of the House brings it forward for debate.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a further statement on Jaguar next week in the light of the evidence given to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry by Sir John Egan in which he stated that Jaguar asked the Secretary of State not to waive the golden share? Will he also ask his right hon. Friend to say what discussions he has had with Ford in relation to research and development, jobs, the buying of British components and the location of Jaguar and all future models in the west midlands?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The matter of Jaguar is one for the shareholders. Competition policy in general, including implications for relations with Ford, is something which my right hon. Friend will consider on the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading. I should have thought that any evidence given to the Select Committee would be considered by that Committee rather than by my right hon. Friend in mid-flight.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend for a debate or statement next week on the future of concessionary travel and bus passes for the elderly, the disabled and the blind after the expiration of the present scheme early next year? Is he aware that the London boroughs have not got their act together on this? The people concerned are worried that they might lose their passes—they must not.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Although I cannot promise a debate, I am sure that the fact that my hon. Friend has raised it so clearly in the House today will be considered by the authorities in London as they decide what to do next.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that I have been unable to call the remaining hon. Members, but I must now call the statement from the Secretary of State for Energy.

Electricity Privatisation

3.55 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. John Wakeham): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about electricity privatisation and nuclear power.

The Government remain determined to complete electricity privatisation, with all the benefits it will bring, in the lifetime of this Parliament. The preparations for the new system have brought issues into the open. In particular, attention has been focused on the costs of nuclear power. The Government have for some time recognised that our nuclear power is more costly than power from fossil-fuelled generating stations. *[Interruption.]* Nevertheless, it has an important role to play in providing diversity of supply and in protecting the environment.

On 24 July, my predecessor told the House that the improved transparency brought about by the preparations for privatisation had revealed substantially increased costs, relating primarily to the Magnox stations. This led us to the conclusion that the Magnox stations should remain under Government control.

Contract negotiations for nuclear stations have moved on since July. Discussions have taken place about financing new nuclear power stations. The Government told the House on a number of occasions during the passage of the Bill that the arrangements for nuclear power would strike the appropriate balance between the interests of the taxpayer, the electricity consumer and the shareholder. In the event, unprecedented guarantees were being sought. I am not willing to underwrite the private sector in this way. *[Interruption.]*

Given those factors, the Government have concluded that the English advanced gas-cooled reactors and Sizewell B should remain, along with the Magnox stations, in a Government-owned company. This company will inherit all the nuclear-related assets, expertise and support currently residing in the Central Electricity Generating Board, including the CEGB's rightly praised expertise in health and safety. Safety will continue to be paramount. Standards will be maintained at their present high level.

I am happy to announce that Mr. John Collier, chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, has agreed to become chairman of the new nuclear company. He brings to this vital task a wealth of experience in the nuclear industry and well-recognised leadership qualities.

The company will be a substantial one, with a positive cash flow. *[Interruption.]* It could provide between 15 and 20 per cent. of electricity supplied in the mid 1990s. The company will retain the ability to construct and operate new nuclear capacity. It will not own any fossil-generating stations. Thus the prospects for fossil generators will remain essentially unaffected.

The CEGB's other power stations will be allocated between National Power and PowerGen as previously announced. Both companies will be major fossil-based generators, and will be privatised in this Parliament, as will the distribution companies.

We want to preserve the strategic role of nuclear power in order to maintain adequate diversity of electricity supply, avoid too great a reliance on a single fuel and obtain the benefits of this environmentally clean source of energy. As a result of privatisation, there will be competition in the electricity market, which is likely, of itself, to lead to greater fuel diversity. There are already a number of proposals for new generating projects based on combined cycle gas turbine technology, which of course leads to lower carbon dioxide emissions. Oil-fired stations have a role to play.

In the light of their performance to date, it should be possible, subject to the views of the nuclear installations inspectorate, for the lifetime of at least some of the Magnox stations to be extended. The Government will make available funds for any justifiable investment for this purpose.

In view of the factors which I have mentioned bearing on diversity, some of which relate to fossil fuels, the non-fossil obligation will be set at a level which can be satisfied without the construction of new nuclear stations beyond Sizewell B. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear.] The Government attach the highest importance to the successful completion and operation of Sizewell B in order to maintain the PWR option in the United Kingdom.

I am asking the CEGB to consider urgently what action it wishes to take with respect to its applications for my consent to build PWR stations at Hinkley Point C, Wylfa B and Sizewell C. The Government's statement is being communicated to the Hinkley Point C inquiry.

There will continue to be the opportunity, as has been made clear previously, for other non-fossil generation to contribute to the non-fossil fuel obligation. In particular, we will maintain the arrangements for the 600 MW special tranche for renewables announced by my right hon. Friend during the summer.

My proposals will not have an impact on the electricity industry's carbon dioxide emissions until about the turn of the century. By then we fully expect gas-fired stations to be playing an important role in electricity generation, and by maintaining the nuclear option we are creating the opportunity for a longer-term contribution from economic nuclear power.

The distribution companies need to be clear what their obligations will be for a reasonable period ahead. The Government will wish to review the prospects for nuclear power as the Sizewell B project nears completion in 1994.

The nuclear company has a long future as a supplier of nuclear-generated electricity. This should provide continuing attractive employment opportunities. The pension rights of existing staff will be protected, as will their ability to benefit from the sale of the rest of the industry. I shall be discussing the implementation of these proposals with all parties concerned, including the trade unions.

The price of the nuclear company's electricity will be set at a level consistent with its earning a return appropriate to public sector bodies. Since the price of nuclear electricity is likely still to be somewhat higher than that of fossil-fuelled electricity, the fossil fuel levy will be used to share the additional cost over all electricity suppliers.

This decision will help preserve diversity of supply and maintain the nuclear option. We will complete electricity privatisation in the lifetime of this Parliament, and in so doing will safeguard the interests of consumers, taxpayers and shareholders alike.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): That really was one of the most extraordinary statements that

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

the House has ever heard. We have been told that the Thatcher Cabinet has declared the privatised electricity supply industry a nuclear-free zone.

What a shambles the Government are making of the electricity industry. Against the advice of the Labour party and of many other knowledgeable people, including the members of the Select Committee on Energy, the Government insisted that nuclear power stations should be privatised. In the words of the then Secretary of State for Energy in April this year, private ownership of nuclear stations would get them away from political influence and make them better managed, better off and more accountable. Does his successor acknowledge now that those words, the ritual Tory incantation about privatisation, have proved false and misleading?

Today's announcement confirms what we and the Energy Select Committee said: the nuclear power stations have proved unsaleable. This madcap scheme has been stopped in its tracks by the financial facts of life. The Tories' friends in the City would not buy nuclear power stations at any price. The private sector wants to take over only the fossil fuel assets and the Government expect the taxpayer to pick up the bill for the liabilities—in this case, irradiated liabilities.

This statement leaves the Government's plans in tatters. They promised their friends that they would create competing private generating companies, yet this latest plan will establish a separate, publicly owned nuclear monopoly from which the Government's friends, running the privatised distribution companies, will be obliged by law to buy electricity.

So much for competition. We know that whoever decides the price of this nuclear power in future, it will certainly not be the customers who, we were told, would be of paramount importance.

The Government's cockeyed arrangements for conventional electricity generation, with one large and one small company, are also in tatters. The size of the large company was justified, they said, by its need for more than its fair share of conventional power stations to compensate it for taking on the responsibility for nuclear power stations. Without the nuclear element, the imbalance between the two companies is ludicrous and unjustifiable; one will have more than 50 per cent. of the capacity, the other less than 30 per cent. Unless the Government change that imbalance, the customers will suffer.

The Government must now reconsider these ramshackle arrangements, which have never been argued before this House. It is no good the Government or their officials or press officers blaming the advice that they received from officials or from people in the electricity industry. As the Prime Minister is fond of saying, advisers advise, Ministers decide. In this case, the Ministers had lots of advice about the costs and problems of nuclear power; the trouble was that they took the bad advice and ignored the good—entirely typically for this incompetent Government.

Despite the obfuscation in the statement, it also spells out——

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Should not a question be asked rather than a response statement made?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), as a former shadow Leader of the House, will appreciate the pressure on business today.

Mr. Dobson: Indeed, Mr. Speaker. Is the Secretary of State aware that, despite the obfuscations, this statement spells the end of the Government's commitment to an expanded programme of nuclear power? As late as 27 September, the right hon. Gentleman said that the stations he talked about today would be transferred to the private sector, reflecting, he said, the British Government's continuing faith in the future of nuclear power. Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that his statement today shows that they no longer have faith in nuclear power?

This is a humiliating climbdown by the Government, who have treated the industry and its staff as a plaything. The problem results from the Prime Minister's twin obsession with privatisation and nuclear power, and from having a Cabinet full of Ministers who are unwilling to tell her the truth. The House and the country will want the truth and we shall want a debate, because the people of this country and the people who work in the industry are entitled to know about their future. And this House is entitled to be consulted about the whole future of the electricity industry, which is now a shambles.

Mr. Wakeham: I think that the first thing that I should do is to congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment as a shadow spokesman for energy. I know that he long wanted what he thought was a proper Department to shadow. I hope that I have at least given him something to get his teeth into to start off with. I am sorry that he has made such a mess of his first opportunity. I cannot decide whether he supports or opposes what the Government have announced. "Shambles" is a word that springs freely from his lips. I heard it first when I was in the bath this morning and I heard it again this afternoon. It is utter nonsense.

The decision will help to ensure that the privatisation of the rest of the industry will take place as I have pledged within the lifetime of this Parliament. The hon. Gentleman suggests that the Government are doing this at any price. If he had listened carefully to my statement he would have heard me say just the opposite. I said that we were not prepared to pay the risk premium which the banks and National Power were demanding. The rest of the industry will be privatised, and we are determined to get full value for the taxpayer in the proceeds.

The proposals that we have put forward will ensure fair competition between generators, whatever their size. We have no intention of changing the allocation of assets at this stage because we do not believe that to do so would be in the interests of the consumer or of the privatisation. But the system of competition that we shall produce will be fair for generators—National Power, PowerGen and the substantial new independent generators which we expect quickly to come into the market. Far from announcing the death knell of nuclear power, the proposal that I have put before the House today is the best way of ensuring a long-term future for nuclear power in this country.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that I do not need to repeat what I have already said about the emergency debate. Bearing in mind that there will be other opportunities to ask questions, I will allow questions on this statement to continue until 4.30, when we will move on to the next statement.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he has taken a courageous and sensible decision today, which will pave the way for the successful privatisation of the electricity industry—I hope without any further difficulties, despite the fact that Opposition Members have been opposed to the plan all along? Does he accept that questions now arise about the structure of the generating industry as it stands? Does he recall that the structure was designed, on advice, to carry some of the risks of the nuclear programme? If he is not to do so now, at least in future will he ensure that the Government will not stand in the way of some evolution and change in the structure of the generating industry, to get away from the pattern of one very large generating firm and one very small generating firm, which may not be ideal for the future?

Mr. Wakeham: Obviously, my right hon. Friend, with his experience in these matters, must be listened to carefully by all hon. Members. I have said that I have no proposals to change the basis of the allocation between National Power and PowerGen, but I shall want to see that a proper competitive market is developing, not just because of the position of those two companies but because an essential part of the privatisation is the development of a substantial new element of independent generators, who must see that they are competing in a fair marketplace.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Secretary of State aware that, in his statement, he has simultaneously destroyed the case for privatisation, undermined the case for nuclear power by admitting that it is much more expensive, and retrospectively destroyed the Government's war against the mining industry, which he today admitted can generate electricity much more cheaply than the nuclear industry can?

Is he aware also of the unspoken part of his statement, which is that, if cheap coal can be imported from South Africa through the proposed new Humberside ports, the miners can be pressed yet again from another source? That explains the Prime Minister's refusal to join other Commonwealth leaders in taking sanctions against South Africa.

Mr. Wakeham: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's position. It was he, after all, who announced to the House that the option for PWRs was to be established in the United Kingdom. He said:

> "Nor does anybody doubt that there will be a nuclear component in our future energy policy and that it will probably be a growing one".—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1977; Vol. 940, c. 973.]

It is inevitable that I would have that to hand in case the right hon. Gentleman said anything.

There is a more important question, and I hope that those who are concerned about the future of the coal industry, as I am, will recognise that British Coal has an important future as a supplier of fuel, and will continue to have it. It must recognise, however, that the competition that it has to face is not primarily from imported coal. Instead, it is from natural gas and oil, and it must be a competitive coal industry.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): In thanking my right hon. Friend for clarifying the Government's commitment to the nuclear industry, may I ask him on behalf of the 3,000 nuclear workers in my constituency when the plans for the future of the Magnox stations will be available, when the details of the remedial works on the AGRs will be available, and when he will be able to advise British Nuclear Fuels plc about the future of its £123 million investment in the PWR fuel plant?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concerns that my hon. Friend has expressed. There is nothing that I can say today particularly, other than that I recognise the concerns and that we shall make whatever statements are possible as soon as they are possible.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the Secretary of State take it from me that he has much for which to thank his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson)? In the circumstances, he has at least had the sense and wisdom to accept the advice that his predecessor was too arrogant to listen to during the proceedings in Committee on the privatisation Bill.

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House that he recognises that the flotation is now in such a shambles that it must be delayed until clarity emerges? Will he say what obligations have been made to Westinghouse for the PWRs that are now being cancelled, and the cost that will fall on the taxpayer as a result of that decision? Will he accept that there is a real risk that state-subsidised nuclear power will dump privately generated alternative forms of electricity, and that he needs to allay that fear? Finally, will he acknowledge that this is the beginning of the end of nuclear power?

Mr. Wakeham: No, I would not acknowledge that for one minute. I believe that this is the best policy for the future of nuclear power in the situation in which we find ourselves. The hon. Gentleman is wrong when he casts doubt on whether the privatisation of the electricity supply industry can be achieved during this Parliament. I believe that this will substantially alleviate the difficulties that we have to overcome to achieve that object.

Mr. Bruce: Will it help?

Mr. Wakeham: There is no question but that this policy will make the job easier. There are still other matters to be dealt with.

As for the orders that have or have not been placed in accordance with the CEGB's proposals, they are a matter primarily for the board. I have no knowledge of any decisions of that sort.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): Since, in my humble judgment, it will be perceived within the decade on both sides of the House that the future of the country depends on its success, may I first wish the new nuclear company and John Collier every success? May I welcome the Government's decision to maintain the nuclear option, as all evidence reaching us about the greenhouse effect suggests that there is no other realistic option?

Will the price be essentially determined by fossil fuel generators, even when their prices rise, as they are bound to do, when vast additional costs are imposed on fossil fuel stations to meet clean air conditions? Finally, does the revision of decommissioning costs—which were elaborately discussed in Lord Marshall's paper on 6 December, and

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

which amount to between £8 billion and £12 billion—lie at the heart of my right hon. Friend's decision to revise the plan?

Mr. Wakeham: The position is considerably more complicated than can be dealt with in a short parliamentary answer. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support for the nuclear industry and his deep interest in it. We have not yet determined the level of the fossil fuel levy, but all these decisions will tend to make it lower rather than higher, certainly in the short term. Decommissioning will be dealt with in the state-owned nuclear company, and therefore will not present the difficulties we have had previously in trying to negotiate arrangements between the private and the public sectors.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Is the Secretary of State aware that, if the Government had not refused to listen to the advice of the Energy Select Committee, he would not be at the Dispatch Box making this statement today? Having taken such a major decision, he must surely be in a position to tell the House what will be the cost to the public purse of generating 20 per cent. of electricity by nuclear power. If he cannot tell the House that cost, does that mean that, like everyone else, he does not know and has been scratching in the dark, and that, for purely dogmatic reasons, he is pushing forward with nuclear power whatever the cost?

Mr. Wakeham: No. Had the hon. Gentleman listened, he would have heard me tell the House that the state-owned nuclear power company's successor for the nuclear element of the CEGB will be a cash-positive company and will earn profits, not make losses. As both sides of the House must recognise, we have made a substantial investment in nuclear power. It is producing returns, and it should finance the cost of the Sizewell B project, with which we wish to continue because we believe it to be an essential part of maintaining the nuclear option.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): Does my right hon. Friend accept that he has made the correct decision, given the emergence of hitherto concealed information about the true costs of nuclear power? Does he share my concern that, for many years, including those when the Labour Government were in office, figures came out of the electricity supply industry that did not bear a true relationship to the costs of nuclear power? Therefore, will he pay careful regard to any figures that the CEGB is now producing on future costs?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right. One of the difficulties with which we have had to deal has been that the costs of nuclear power remained hidden throughout nationalisation, and it was only the preparations for privatisation that brought them to light. I am not criticising anyone in particular for that, but it was only on 11 October that I finally managed to obtain the figures that I needed to make this decision, having pressed very hard for them from the moment that I took up office.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I welcome the decision to establish a new national nuclear corporation, and I join the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) in wishing it success. Nevertheless, has not the right hon. Gentleman, with a number of decisions, placed a huge question mark over the future of the industry, which I have always supported—first, by running down the fast breeder reactor programme and secondly, by in effect curtailing the development of new nuclear stations, which some Labour Members want to be constructed? What is the future of the nuclear industry under this Government?

Mr. Wakeham: The future of Britain's nuclear industry will be decided finally in 1994. I hope that by that time it will be possible to produce nuclear energy economically.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Having listened to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State enumerate many of the arguments that I put forward in Committee and on Report, is it not a great pity that the Government did not accept my amendments? But having said that, and looking further into the future, when the price of coal rights itself and the price of oil goes up in about five or six years, will not nuclear energy come into its own and blossom forth in the economy?

Mr. Wakeham: I know my hon. Friend's point of view, and I do not deny him his moment of self-congratulation, particularly after his recent stunning victory in the country. He is entitled to be proud of himself. I hope that the future will be what we would wish it to be—that after we review these matters in 1994 we will be able and will want to develop our nuclear industry to produce economic nuclear power.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Leader of the House aware that, when the Bill was introduced by the previous Secretary of State for Energy, it included many items that will not now be acted upon? Is it not arguable that the Act is now full of hybridity in the sense that the nuclear element has now been taken out of it? Should not that matter be examined, since Parliament has been cheated? Will the right hon. Gentleman also take into account the fact that, now that we have reached a watershed in nuclear power and other forms of energy, it would make a lot of sense to stop the pit closure programme, to say that the CEGB's coal allocation should be increased from 60 million tonnes to 75 million tonnes, that coal imports should be stopped and that the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill should be dropped?

Mr. Wakeham: I am glad that, as Leader of the House, I made such an impression on the hon. Gentleman that he does not realise that I have given up that job. Nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman is wrong. The steps that we are taking conform completely with the Electricity Act 1989, so no further legislation is required.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Is not the most important and painful lesson to be learned from my right hon. Friend's sensible and realistic decision the fact that nuclear electricity is uneconomic and produced at a high cost only in Britain, not in those many other countries that have done the job sensibly, and mostly in the private sector?

Mr. Wakeham: Absolutely; my hon. Friend is right. There are many examples of the economic production of nuclear power in many other countries.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Can the Secretary of State clarify one matter for the House? Since the Government will not now underwrite the cost of the nuclear sector into the future, will the PWR stations at

Hinkley, Wylfa and Sizewell C go ahead, and does his announcement on the extension of the life of the Magnox stations have an implication for Wylfa A? It is important for my constituents and the House to know the answer.

Mr. Wakeham: We are looking at all the Magnox stations with the experts concerned and the nuclear installations inspectorate, and decisions will be made as soon as possible.

The hon. Gentleman's other question is extremely important, and I hope that he will understand the answer. Under the law as it stands, I have a quasi-judicial role in determining any matters put to me by the inspector at any of the inquiries. It is for the CEGB to make an application, and for inspectors to recommend. I should be doing the hon. Gentleman's constituents a disservice if I expressed any opinions whatever.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members welcome his decision? It is the right decision, and always was.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the new nuclear company will be a centre of nuclear excellence, providing the public with confidence in the nuclear industry and ensuring that the industry has a future? Does he also agree that, without the rigours of privatisation, the true cost of nuclear electricity might never have come to light?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right. He is also right to pay tribute to the dedicated staff who have been involved in the nuclear power industry in this country. We are very fortunate that Mr. Collier has agreed to take over the job of chairman of the new company, and I believe that it has a very good future.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. When we debate this matter subsequently, I shall seek to give priority to hon. Members whom I have not been able to call today.

Electricity Privatisation (Scotland)

4.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the future of the electricity supply industry in Scotland.

The House heard earlier today a statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, describing the continuing uncertainties over the costs and longer-term liabilities associated with nuclear power. Those uncertainties are also relevant to the Government's proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in Scotland. I have therefore reassessed my plans for the restructuring and privatisation of the Scottish industry, and wish to inform the House of my conclusions.

Hon. Members will be aware of the important role that nuclear power plays in the Scottish system. The AGR stations at Torness and Hunterston B represent 25 per cent. of the generating capacity held by the Scottish boards. Hunterston A Magnox station is now approaching the end of its useful life, and is scheduled for closure in the near future. The SSEB's nuclear stations have an excellent record of safe performance, and I commend the management and staff of the board for their achievement in constructing and operating them.

Despite that successful operational performance, the Government have had to examine carefully the future cost uncertainties associated with the nuclear operations in Scotland, as elsewhere in the United Kingdom. After close consultation with the industry and our financial advisers, we have concluded that the full flotation could not be successfully achieved without wide-ranging and unequivocal indemnity from Government for future cost escalations. We do not consider that it would be in the public interest to confer such indemnity, and have therefore decided that the nuclear enterprise in Scotland should remain in the public sector.

We had already proposed that the nuclear assets should be held by a separate company, Scottish Nuclear Ltd. That company will now remain publicly owned, and will be responsible for the continued safe operation of the stations. The staff now engaged in nuclear matters will be employed by the new company, thus ensuring the retention of the essential expertise required to maintain safe and efficient operation of the stations for the continuing benefit of Scottish consumers. The company will enter into contracts for the sale of its output with the Scottish supply companies, Scottish Power and Hydro Electric. It is certainly our intention that Scottish consumers should continue to benefit from the large investment in nuclear capacity.

The industry north and south of the border has been investigating the economic case for upgrading the capacity of the interconnector between Scotland and England. There is a further opportunity, which we must now explore, to export Scottish output to England and Wales, thus contributing to the diversity of supplies there, and maximising the overall economic use of these major assets to the benefit of all concerned.

The greater proportion of the Scottish industry will be privatised.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): The showrooms. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time is very short this afternoon.

Mr. Rifkind: This will consist of two highly successful transmission, distribution and supply businesses with strong local identities and a modern and diverse portfolio of generating stations. They will own around 75 per cent. of generating capacity and employ 14,000 of the total 16,000 staff in the Scottish electricity industry. It is our intention to prepare these companies for privatisation within the current Parliament, and my Department is assessing with our professional advisers and in consultation with the industry the detailed implications of the Government's decision to withhold the nuclear assets from the sale.

There will need to be detailed discussions with regard to the proper relationship of the nuclear company with the other parts of the industry. These will be made easier by our previous decision to place all of the nuclear assets in a separate company. I shall wish to ensure that the revised arrangements have no adverse effects on the economy and efficiency of operation of the industry in Scotland and that there will be no adverse implications for tariffs as a result of these changes.

It will be central to our plans to safeguard the position of the existing staff engaged in the nuclear company, and in particular their pension rights will be protected. The Government will also ensure that these staff will be able to benefit from the flotation of the other parts of the industry. We shall be discussing the detailed implementation of these proposals with the management and the trade unions. The Scottish nuclear company can look forward to a successful and productive future working in close co-operation with the other electricity companies in Scotland.

I believe that a proper and carefully balanced mixture of private and public ownership—*[Laughter.]*—will achieve our objectives and be of real benefit to electricity consumers. The nuclear enterprise will continue to play an important role in delivering a safe, reliable and competitively priced supply of electricity to the people of Scotland for many years to come. The two private sector companies, Scottish Power and Hydro Electric, will flourish in the private sector and deliver an improved service to their customers in the new environment.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): This must be one of the most humiliating statements that the House has heard from a Scottish Office Minister for a very long time. The Secretary of State was extremely wise to try to turn it into something of a joke. The Government's central strategy for the electricity industry lies in ruins. The Secretary of State's attempt to present this shambles as a minor policy adjustment is as pathetic as it is unconvincing. In fairness to him, he seemed to be enjoying the joke when he argued that the AGRs represent only 25 per cent. of generating capacity. Is he afraid to face the fact that 60 per cent. of all electricity sold in Scotland comes from nuclear capacity and that for the South of Scotland electricity board it represents, in its latest available balance sheet, at £2·048 billion, some 80 per cent. of assets? What we have now is a rickety structure cobbled together in panic in a futile attempt to save face. Is not the truth that the nuclear arithmetic has gone horribly wrong and that the heart has been ripped out of the whole scheme?

How can the Minister have the brass neck to claim that he believes in

> "a proper and carefully balanced mixture of private and public ownership"

when he has spent the last year denying in the strongest possible terms that there is any place for the nuclear industry in the public sector? Does he remember writing to me less than a year ago to say that

> "There are no grounds for suggesting that the successful privatisation of the industry will be jeopardised by risks associated with the nuclear operating costs"?

Does he remember that in this House last April his Minister of State, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), expressed his unshakable confidence

> "that the Scottish industry, including its substantial nuclear assets, can look forward to a bright commercial future."—[*Official Report*, 5 April 1989; Vol. 150, c. 236.]

I can only say to him that what he has announced today is neither proper nor balanced. It is a mixture, which many people would describe as a dog's breakfast.

Why has the Minister remained in such a state of ignorance, despite the persistent and wholly justified attack by the Opposition on these matters and the specific warning from the chairman of the South of Scotland electricity board in December 1988 that under the then current arrangements his company would be unsaleable? Why has it taken so long to discover—or, even more damaging, to admit—the painful truth? It is a tale of incompetence and dither.

How will Scottish Nuclear price the power that it produces? Is that possible at all if it is impossible to put a figure on the ever-escalating costs of decommissioning and reprocessing? The Secretary of State for Energy talked about the price being consistent with earning a return appropriate to public sector bodies. How does the Secretary of State intend to build into that pricing structure the end costs of decommissioning? Does the Secretary of State now agree with the Department of Energy that, if that is done, the true cost of nuclear power is at least twice that of conventionally produced power?

Is it not true that the whole exercise is designed so that the taxpayer will be left with the liabilities and the investors with the profits? Is the Secretary of State confident that Scottish Power and Hydro Electric can stand on their own? Will they survive as independent entities without the nuclear generating capacity, which the chairman of the SSEB recently described as the mainstay of his board's finances?

What has happened to the Minister's proud boast that the strength of his specially tailored Scottish solution was the merging of generation and distribution? Are not those claims now a joke? Does not today's statement show the folly of Ministers meddling in a complex industry that they clearly do not understand? If the so-called sale excludes the core of the industry, would it not be more honest, and more in the public interest, for the Secretary of State to admit his error and to abandon the whole misconceived exercise?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman seems not to have studied the industry terribly carefully. At the moment, approximately 16,000 people are employed in the Scottish electricity industry. Only 1,800 of them—about 10 per cent.—are employed in the nuclear industry. Some 90 per cent. of employees and 75 per cent. of the industry's capacity will go into the private sector. All the hon. Gentleman can take refuge in is the fact that the historic book value shows—not surprisingly, as Torness has only recently been completed—that a high proportion of assets on a historic book basis are of the kind to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about people and the capacity to generate power, I should have thought that he would attach more importance to the fact that 75 per cent. of capacity and 90 per cent. of the employees will go into the privatised industry. Frankly, that accounts for more than the core of the industry.

The hon. Gentleman asks why that has come about, and why the Government did not have this view some months ago. One of the consequences of privatisation, whether in the electricity industry or in any other industry, is that it is only when one is contemplating privatisation that the industry and the public address themselves to the costs incurred by nationalised industries. Electricity privatisation revealed the true cost of many of the hidden subsidies and unknown factors that had always been there.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the views of the SSEB and the Scottish electricity industry. I remind him that the SSEB and the Hydro Board were fully behind the Government's proposals to privatise the whole industry. In the light of the information that is now available, they have said that they believe that the Government are right to go ahead in the way in which we are now proposing.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked me about the way in which pricing would be determined. I said in my statement that today's announcement would have no adverse consequences for tariffs. The Government are committed to the principle of tariff continuity. *[Interruption.]* When the contracts between Scottish Nuclear and the two private sector companies are entered into, the pricing which will be agreed will enable the tariff consequences to be the same as they were under our original proposals.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall allow questions on the statement to run until 5 o'clock and then I shall call the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) to move his motion. I intend to give precedence to hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies because this statement refers to Scotland.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Whereas the Secretary of State for Energy has the excuse that he has been dropped into this midden, the Secretary of State for Scotland has no such alibi. He has been responsible for this tacky business right through from beginning to end.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that his announcement today means that the two power stations in my constituency, Cockenzie and Torness, will be under totally separate ownership and management? One will be in the public sector, the other in the private sector. I give a guarded welcome to the fact that the climbdown means that Torness will be kept under public control.

Will the Secretary of State tell us what he will do to restore coal production capacity to meet future needs in Scotland? Will he comment on the report that failure to recommission refuelling machinery at Torness may lead to the two reactors there being shut down throughout most of this winter?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct. It was always intended that Torness would be under Scottish Nuclear Ltd. and Cockenzie under Scottish Power. I am happy to confirm that.

In my statement, I gave details of the latest situation and its implications for coal. It has long been understood that the best prospects for coal depend on the opportunities that the Scottish industry finds to export surplus capacity. I said that the cumulative effect of what has been announced by the Government underlines the need to upgrade the interconnector, the purpose of which is to maximise the export of surplus Scottish electricity. Today's announcement is helpful to the Scottish coal industry's prospects.

In view of the enormously complex arrangements necessary for the safe handling of fuel in nuclear power stations, it is essential to ensure that every aspect of its operation is fully tested during the commissioning process at Torness. I understand that full commissioning of the fuel route is expected to take place in time to allow refuelling to occur in January, subject to all the necessary steps being completed to allow safe, reliable operation of the plant.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): For clarification's sake, would my right hon. and learned Friend say what will be the status of Chapelcross nuclear power station, which is in my constituency? It is owned by British Nuclear Fuels, but it has to sell power to Scotland or to England. Is my right hon. and learned Friend certain that that condition will be retained, in the interests of the 650 employees there? Subject to inspection by the Health and Safety Executive, will Chapelcross have a life of at least 10 more years?

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that today's announcement has no implications for Chapelcross. I recall that it has successfully agreed a contract which enables it to export some electricity south of the border.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): The Minister should have ended his statement by saying, "Three cheers for the mixed economy." Does he agree that everything he has said this afternoon has vindicated our repeated assertions that privatisation of the electricity industry is unworkable in Scotland, and that the Government's pretence of cheap nuclear power is in tatters? Can he say who will pay for the upgrading of the interconnector between Scotland and England? If those boards are to be privatised, when will flotation take place?

Does the Secretary of State agree that this is another shambles created by the Government and that the whole idea should be scrapped forthwith?

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to confirm that the flotation will still take place in this Parliament. We have no reason to review its timing. It has always been intended that the upgrading of the interconnector would be the responsibility of the relevant companies north and south of the border. It is a commercial arrangement whereby they will sell surplus capacity to distribution companies in England, so the financing arrangements will not be affected by today's announcement.

Mr Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. and learned Friend is to be congratulated on reaching what must have been a tricky and difficult decision. Does he agree that his statement clearly reveals how much England and Scotland are interrelated in energy matters and that one cannot consider them in isolation? The interconnector is a vital and important part of the entire operation, enabling Scotland to continue to sell its produce to

[Mr Bill Walker]

consumers in England. One of the most important factors in my right hon. and learned Friend's statement is that a substantial part of the Scottish electricity generating industry is being taken out of the public sector borrowing requirement. Those of us in the hydro areas will welcome that because the hydro company will be very viable and profitable.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right about the hydro company and Scottish Power being extremely profitable and viable companies. As for the interconnector, my right hon. Friend's announcement about the future of the PWR programme south of the border enhances the prospects for successful exports of surplus electricity from the Scottish electricity industry, and we shall need to address that.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): May I remind the Minister that, although the Government intend to privatise the water industry in England and Wales, they are not doing the same in Scotland? Given his announcement today that more than 60 per cent. of the sales of electricity in Scotland will be from plants remaining within the public sector, is it not time that the Secretary of State for Scotland spoke up for Scotland and stated that a public SSEB should remain and should compete on favourable terms with a private industry in England and Wales?

Mr. Rifkind: I am afraid—no, I am not afraid, I am delighted—that the hon. Gentleman's views are not the views of the Scottish electricity industry. The SSEB is looking forward to privatisation and has been encouraging the Government to bring it forward as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Secretary of State accept that many of us never cease to be amazed by his chameleon-like qualities as he moves from one policy change to another? In that context, can he advise us what has happened since his statement to the Select Committee that he regarded nuclear energy as likely to be much cheaper than any fossil-fuel-generated energy and dismissed any questions about the high costs of decommissioning and reprocessing? What has happened in the intervening months to make him change his mind? In regard to the interconnector, can he tell us exactly what proportion of the investment will be paid for by Scottish consumers?

Mr. Rifkind: On the last point, I cannot inform the hon. Lady as that will be a matter to be discussed between the various companies north and south of the border. As for the hon. Lady's earlier remarks, the question does not concern the precise level of costs, but the uncertainty of not knowing what the costs of decommissioning will be, given that decommissioning may not take place for many years to come, although clearly an investor in the industry would need to take that into account. That is why the industry sought a total indemnity on these matters and the Government took the view that that would not be responsible or in the interests of the taxpayer.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that his announcement and the announcement by the Secretary of State for Energy today spell disaster for Dounreay and the jobs there? Is it not correct that now that we appear to have decided not to proceed with pressurised water reactors and we have already decided to cut back on the fast breeder programme there will be no research work available at Dounreay, Winfrith in my constituency or Harwell? Will he give an assurance that those matters had been considered before today's statements were made?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not accept that there will be consequences at Dounreay to which my hon. Friend refers. The research in which the staff at Dounreay are involved relates to matters other than the PWR programme south of the border or the public or private ownership of the electricity industry. Of course, Dounreay has particular problems and difficulties which are known to the House, but I do not believe that they have been increased as a result of today's announcements.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Is it not misleading for the Secretary of State to continue to insist that the South of Scotland electricity board favours privatisation when he knows that at least 90 per cent. of the work force and the management are totally opposed to it? Given that it must throw current plans into total disarray, is it not irresponsible to insist on suggesting that the industry should be privatised before the next election?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not accept for a moment the hon. Gentleman's premise. When the Government originally announced that Hunterston A, the Magnox station, would not be privatised, the staff were anxious to be assured that they would have the same opportunities to take part in the flotation as staff elsewhere in the industry. That flies in the face of the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As an admirer of the technical achievements of the SSEB, referring to paragraph 4 of the statement, may I ask what figure the financial advisers have given to the Secretary of State's wide-ranging and unequivocal indemnity? People who talk about a wide-ranging indemnity must have a figure in their brief or it is meaningless.

Mr. Rifkind: On the contrary, it is precisely because that figure could not be identified—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] We are talking about potential decommissioning costs which may not be incurred for 100 years. Precisely because such a figure could not be identified a total indemnity was requested from Government irrespective of what the figure might turn out to be. Neither the financial advisers nor anyone else has sought to put a figure on that sum. Precisely because of that uncertainty an unqualified indemnity was requested and for the same reason it would be improper to give one.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Secretary of State will be aware that the reorganisation of the hydro-electric board has reached a very advanced stage in the proposed merger between the Dundee and South Caledonian divisions. That reorganisation is being carried out on the assumption that the hydro-electricty will have a nuclear component. Can the Secretary of State make any assessment of the likely impact of his announcement this afternoon on that reorganisation and the level of employment within Hydro Electric?

Mr. Rifkind: I have had one discussion with the chairman of the Hydro-Electric Board who does not appear to believe that any significant problems will arise as a result of today's announcement. That is a matter of some reassurance. Obviously we will keep an eye on that matter to see whether it needs to be revised, but that was the view expressed at this stage.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I wish to ask about the spent fuel from the advanced gas-cooled reactors. My constituents will welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's emphasis on the fact that health and safety will be paramount in AGRs. Will he assure me that the same safety criteria will be borne in mind when storing the used fuel from AGRs, and will encourage storage at each individual AGR site rather than allowing it to be brought to Heysham for storage?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend refers to wider issues, but I can assure her that the Government will continue to give maximum priority to ensuring that safety requirements are complied with fully in any decisions that are reached on these matters.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Does the Secretary of State accept that the part of the country that he and I represent, the Firth of Forth is heavily contaminated by radioactivity? That has been confirmed by the river purification board, whose comments are important to me, to the Secretary of State and to the people who use the Firth of Forth. It is so bad sometimes that even the fish swim around in lead-lined bikinis. That speaks volumes and shows that Torness is not so clean as you suggest. Does the Secretary of State accept that you should close down not just Torness but all the nuclear stations in Scotland——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Brown: You should open up the entire industry, which is environmentally friendly in comparison—*[Interruption.]* Let us face it——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has put his question.

Mr. Brown: That would be preferable, and, if the Secretary of State understands Scotland, he knows that.

Mr. Rifkind: I do not accept that the river Forth is polluted in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests. The fact that I have caught and consumed fish from the river Forth and survived to tell the tale is an adequate response to the hon. Gentleman. All the evidence suggests that Torness has a superb safety record. The hon. Gentleman and his constituents can be reassured on that point.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Is not the true ideological motivation of electricity privatisation revealed if jobs and the social interest are to be sold off —the SSEB vans and Hydro Board dams—in spite of the fact that the substance of the industry is unsaleable? Will the Secretary of State assure the House that flotation, if that is not too strong a word, in Scotland will not be forced to the head of the queue to prevent the embarrassment of the Department of Energy? Has the Secretary of State's sterling defence of the mixed economy been cleared today with his loyal junior Minister, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)? In the light of this latest fiasco and the undermining of his credibility, should not the Secretary of State consider resignation?

Mr. Rifkind: I am always cheered up when the hon. Gentleman speaks from the Dispatch Box. As to whether the substance of the industry is being floated, I remind the hon. Gentleman that total generating capacity in Scotland is 11,000 MW, of which only 2,800 MW is derived from nuclear power. On that basis, I am entitled to say that three quarters of the capacity will be privately floated. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman should welcome these matters, as will those who work in the industry.

Mr. Speaker: I now call the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)——

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order arises from Prime Minister's Question Time. You, Mr. Speaker, may recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) asked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister whether she had received any complaints from London Weekend Television staff about the difficulty of getting the Leader of the Opposition to appear on its programme——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House knows the rules. The Prime Minister must be asked questions on subjects for which she is responsible. The House could hear that that was not a matter for which she had responsibility.

Mr. King: With respect, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was asked whether she had been approached in that way. Surely she is entitled——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can only offer hon. Members an opportunity to put a question to the Prime Minister. It is up to them to get their question in order, but that question was not in order.

Ambulance Dispute

5.2 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move, That this House do now adjourn.

Leave having been given on Wednesday 8 November under Standing Order No. 20 to discuss:

The current state of the ambulance dispute.

Mr. Cook: Every hon. Member in the Chamber must be aware of the gravity of the situation against which we debate the ambulance dispute. The dispute has continued for eight weeks, during which time it has affected every community in Britain. In London, it has arrived at a crisis as a result of the suspension of ambulance crews. I learned on my way to the Chamber that, in the course of today, throughout other parts of the country management have issued warnings of similar suspensions. The position in London today may be the position elsewhere in Britain by the end of the week.

In London, since yesterday, emergency cover is being provided by 50 Army vehicles and 53 police vehicles. I have no doubt that those who man those vehicles will give of their best. It is clear from their comments that they are in no doubt that their best will not be good enough to avoid the risk of tragedy. No hon. Member can have watched last night's television bulletins without concern when they saw shots of attempts to resuscitate a dying man with cardiac arrest in the back seat of a police car as it sped through central London, or of a woman with a spinal injury being manhandled in and out of the rear doors of a police car. The penalty for error in lifting a person with a spinal injury incorrectly can be paralysis for life.

The first question that the Secretary of State must answer when he responds to the debate is, why has he chosen to rely on these makeshift arrangements for emergency cover when there are trained ambulance staff at every ambulance station in London ready and eager to take emergency calls? Indeed, throughout last night they responded to emergency calls, because they continued to receive them from the Army, which called ambulance staff for the cases that they could not handle, from the fire brigade, which asked them to attend emergency incidents, and from hospitals, which asked them to attend for patients who needed to move urgently.

That was the situation throughout the night, but this morning there was a fresh development. The central control room of the London ambulance service started putting through selected emergency calls to ambulance stations and to the very staff suspended by the London ambulance service, who are not being paid by it but who on every occasion responded to them.

Those calls show how thinly stretched the temporary cover for emergencies is in London, and the response of ambulance staff exposes how unfair the Secretary of State was on Tuesday when he accused them of pretending and posturing in waiting for emergency calls.

The Secretary of State has justified suspending those staff on the basis of the 14 points of the work to rule. I have been through the 14 points and can advise the House that most of them have nothing to do with the emergency service. Some include matters such as a ban on paperwork.

The debate on whether it is possible to maintain emergency cover has focused on the point in the work to rule relating to the use of radiophones. There is no ban in the 14 points on radiophones for emergency use. The point at dispute is of such technicality that I find it breathtaking that grown men should have used it as the issue on which to suspend ambulance cover in London. Management are insisting that crews should press a button on radiophones to inform not the controller but the computer of their position so that control can select the ambulance to attend the emergency.

The staff side is offering to listen to every emergency case announced on open call, which would enable all ambulances to hear the emergency call and therefore enable the nearest one to radio in and respond to it. Mr. Spry, who is manager of one of the London regions, yesterday described this as a Mickey-Mouse service. That service is exactly the system that operated in London until eight months ago. That service, which Mr. Spry described as a Mickey-Mouse service, is precisely the system still used in almost every other ambulance service in Britain. Why, if that system is good enough for Manchester, Newcastle or Liverpool in normal times, would management rather call in the Army than see the system used in London?

There is a further dimension that makes it even more baffling and difficult to find a rational answer to that question. London ambulance staff have been suspended over a dispute aboout how they use their radiophones. They have been replaced by Army vehicles that cannot use their radiophones because they are on the wrong frequency for police control. There is no rational justification for suspending ambulance staff for using their radios in a manner that is the normal working method throughout the rest of Britain and replacing them with a system that has no radiophones.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I shall give way in a second.

The only possible explanation why management have taken that decision must be that they chose to escalate the dispute.

The second question that the Secretary of State must answer when he responds to the debate is, was that their decision, or was it his decision, to take this gamble with emergency cover in London?

Mr. Sayeed: On Tuesday's 6 o'clock news on television, Mr. Roger Poole said:

"Our members are prepared to operate 999 services with no qualification whatsoever."

On the same programme yesterday, ambulanceman Chris Cosham admitted that London ambulance staff were not operating existing agreed radio procedures and informing the ambulance controllers when they completed an accident or emergency task.

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Sayeed: No. That point was defended by Mr. Poole——

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) seems to be making a very long intervention.

Mr. Sayeed: If I am allowed to complete it, I shall not be much longer, Mr. Speaker. Will the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) ask Mr. Roger Poole to keep to the commitment that he made on Tuesday night, or does the hon. Gentleman condone the attempt by the National Union of Public Employees to undermine and deceive the British public?

Mr. Cook: The House is in some difficulty, in that it has some two hours in which to crush a three-hour debate. If that is to be the length of intervention by Conservative Members, it will not be possible to give way again. There is no contradiction——

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Shut up.

Mr. Robin Cook: If the Secretary of State will allow me, I cannot respond to—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is the Secretary of State——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to settle down. Interventions of that kind do not help us.

Mr. Cook: There is no contradiction between the two statements produced by the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed). The ambulance staff are prepared to respond to every 999 call in precisely the way they responded up until eight months ago and in precisely the way that every other ambulance service in Britain responds to them.

This morning, the Secretary of State and I had a dummy run for this debate on radio. The right hon. and learned Gentleman justified the suspensions in London on the basis that the ambulance staff were now not moving non-emergency cases. The one example which he shared with the nation of such non-emergency cases was that of cancer patients going for radiotherapy. I have with me the union instructions on the restrictions on non-emergency cases. They list 12 separate exemptions from the ban. Exemption No. 7 is "all cancer-related patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Cook: It is explicit. All cancer-related patients are exempted. The Secretary of State has 10 minutes before he gets up to respond to the debate. He has all his officials in the Box. I challenge him when he gets up to name one ambulance station in London that has refused to move patients needing radiotherapy.

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Jeremy Hayes (Harlow) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I am content to wait until the Secretary of State gets up to respond to the debate. That will give him 10 minutes to find the answer.

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Cook: No, I shall not give way again. I am anxious to proceed. The hon. Member for Bristol, East took up the time of three interventions.

I have no doubt that, when the Secretary of State gets up, he will wish to accuse me of taking my brief from the unions. He has done that in every previous debate, and it would be extraordinary if he put that gibe aside in this debate. I am not ashamed to inform the House that, over the past eight weeks, I have regularly met union officials. I am not ashamed to say also that I have listened to what they said to me about the dispute. I would have more respect for the way in which the Secretary of State has discharged his duties if in those eight weeks he had met the staff side just once. I ask the Secretary of State this third question: will he now meet the staff side? Is he prepared to sit down with the staff side to see whether they can find a solution to this crisis?

As well as meeting those union officials, I have met many serving ambulance men and women and ambulance officers. I have been struck by the commitment that those staff show to their job. Those people are perhaps sadly out of place in the brave new enterprise society that Conservative Members want to create. Overwhelmingly, they are people with intelligence and qualifications that would enable them to get better paid jobs, if that was what they were interested in. They have chosen the ambulance service because it gives them satisfaction and a reward for which money alone cannot be a substitute.

There have been plenty of occasions during the past three years when the nation has had the opportunity to observe the commitment of our ambulance staff and the risks that they take in pursuing that commitment. On Tuesday, the House received the report of the Clapham accident. Paragraph 5.19 states:

> "The Court heard many tributes to the courage, dedication and professionalism of all the emergency services. Having heard the evidence and seen videos of their work at the scene, I wish to endorse the deep sense of appreciation which ran throughout the evidence of passengers on the trains for the outstanding work of the men and women who did so much to ensure a safe, swift and successful operation."

When the Harrods bomb went off, ambulance crews were the only people to remain in the street tending to the wounded and dying when police closed the street because they expected a second bomb. When the aircraft crashed on the motorway, it was the ambulance crews who went into the fuselage at a time when aviation fuel poured from every fractured pipe.

Mr. Brian Murray, one of the ambulance men whom I have met recently and who attended the Brighton bombing in 1985, is observing this debate from a place that I cannot draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker. The question that he will want answered is, why is he now offered an increase of 6·5 per cent., which the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) today managed to describe as nearly 10 per cent.? There is no London weighting for Mr. Murray—he lives in Sussex. He has been offered less than the rate of inflation. He is being asked to take a cut in real pay. In truth, Mr. Murray is not seeking a rise just in line with inflation, and I would not pretend that he is. Mr. Murray wants an increase in line with earnings.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall certainly give way to the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Currie: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy. Many Conservative Members share his belief that the ambulance service is a very good service and all of us owe it a great deal. Nevertheless, does the hon. Gentleman agree that this dispute is not about whether the ambulance service gives us a good service but about who runs the service, the management or the unions, and whether employees who are prepared to take industrial action which will damage patients should get paid more than those employees who will not?

Mr. Cook: This is a dispute about what is the proper rate of pay for the service that we demand of our ambulance staff. That is why it is proper to remind the House of the service and dedication that we require of them.

Since this dispute started, there has not been a major pay settlement as low as 6·5 per cent. In the week in which it started, the Treasury sanctioned a pay award to Inland Revenue staff that gave Inland Revenue typists 10 per cent. and inspectors 14·5 per cent. Since then, British Telecom has settled at 9 per cent. We are told that postmen may be offered 11 per cent. Firemen have settled at 8·6 per cent. The Secretary of State is much given to saying that National Health Service staff settled at 6·5 per cent.— doctors settled at 8 per cent., dentists at 8 per cent., professionals allied to medicine at 7·7 per cent. and administrators, managers and clerical staff for a deal worth 9·5 per cent.

Members of Parliament are to be awarded 10·7 per cent., and hon. Members will know that we are to receive that figure because it has already been granted to middle management in the Civil Service. I do not believe that Members of Parliament need to apologise for parity with the principal grade in the Civil Service, but I do not understand how hon. Members who benefited from that linkage could vote to deny linkage to ambulance staff. The ambulance staff seek linkage with the other two emergency services—the firemen and policemen. They work together daily with them, they share risks with them and they provide medical cover when the other services take those risks.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: That is why the fire brigade and the Police Federation fully support the demand of ambulance staff for linkage.

Once upon a time, the demand for linkage had the full support of the Conservative party. In 1978, the present Prime Minister wrote to two ambulance men saying of the emergency services:

> "All three deserve to have their pay negotiation put outside the arena of industrial dispute by being given firm and automatic linkage".

That letter was written to Terry Wilton and Philip Rowe, two Conservative ambulance men in Somerset who were inspired by the letter to become founder members of the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel, an association which is pledged not to take industrial action. Terry Wilton and Philip Rowe are now so incensed by the short memories of those in the Conservative party that they are supporting the industrial action by the ambulance service this month.

Mr. Hayes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No, I will not.

The irony of the present dispute is that, in the confrontation between Ministers and unions, Ministers are trying to beat down staff who are clear that they want a formula that will take their pay out of the realm of annual disputes, so that the ambulance service will never again need to be disrupted.

We now come to the central mystery of the dispute. Every attempt that the Secretary of State makes to explain the mystery leaves it more baffling than before. When he responds to the debate, he must say why, if he is so confident in his case and if he is so convinced that 6·5 per cent. is the just, fair and final offer to ambulance staff, he is so frightened of putting it to arbitration.

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Cook: The whole country knows that the dispute would stop tonight if the Secretary of State only had the courage to go to arbitration. He does not demonstrate strength by sending in the Army; he demonstrates weakness by running away from arbitration.

Mr. Hayes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I cannot resist the hon. Gentleman tonight.

Mr. Hayes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has a unique opportunity today to behave in a statesmanlike manner. He has the opportunity because people who are frail, elderly and vulnerable, who may die tonight as a result of this dispute, would like to hear those who have influence with the trade union movement say that no wage dispute is worth the death of an old lady or a child. He has the opportunity to say, "Go back to the negotiating table and talk about structure." The hon. Gentleman is a decent, honourable and caring man. Why does he not go to the National Union of Public Employees and say, "You have peered over the abyss; don't let the inevitable happen."

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman began with the perfectly fair point that lives are at risk and that this is an extremely grave situation. That is why we pressed for a debate today. If the hon. Gentleman believes that the situation is so grave and important that the House should consider it in a statesmanlike manner, I find it a pity that neither he nor any other Conservative Member supported our application for an emergency debate yesterday. The reason is simple: they know that their case cannot readily be defended.

Every time the Secretary of State is asked why he does not go to arbitration, he replies that he cannot because he decides how much money goes into the National Health Service and he is responsible for how that mony is carved up, so he cannot hand over decisions on that to an outside, independent body.

There is one obvious problem with that logic. Half the staff in the NHS already have access to an independent pay review body. Why should ambulance staff be so different that it is a point of principle that they cannot have access to an independent review? The real problem for the Secretary of State is that, every time he gives that answer to the question about arbitration into the microphone, every listener to the radio set knows that what he means is that he dare not go to arbitration because he knows that any form of arbitration will give the ambulance staff more money. The Secretary of State does not believe that he can convince any independent adjudicator that he is right. If he believes that his case cannot convince anyone else, he cannot really believe it himself.

Over the past three weeks, the Secretary of State has talked himself into a corner from which he cannot escape into arbitration. The House has the opportunity tonight to help him to make that escape. The House can decide tonight whether to prolong the dispute by calling in the Army, or whether to resolve it by calling in the arbitrators. I do not ask only my hon. Friends to join me in the Lobby for arbitration. I ask every hon. Member who wants to see full ambulance cover restored to his constituency to join us in the Lobby tonight.

5.26 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With the industrial action that we are facing now, especially in London, and with the seriousness of the issues involved, I should have thought that the whole House should be united by bonds of common humanity and concern for the plight of innocent members of the public who are being put at risk by industrial action in a key service. I shall begin by assuming that we are united in that. We should also be united by an overriding concern for the well-being of the National Health Service and all its staff, including those taking industrial action at present, and also for its patients, who look to us especially to guarantee the vital emergency parts of the service.

We all profess to agree on those points, but the massed ranks of Opposition Members are here for a debate about industrial action, which they always find especially attractive. Their attitude to the dispute, judged from what various hon. Members have said from a sedentary position and, by implication, from what the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, is that if we and the people of London want the ambulance service back fully, we should give the ambulance men the money or whatever they want. That is an unattractive position.

We should consider the claim made by the Whitley council trade unions which are conducting the present dispute. They do not include the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel, to which the hon. Member for Livingston referred. That is a moderate trade union which disapproves of industrial action. It represents about 20 per cent. of ambulance men, but because of its moderate stance the staff side has never admitted it to the Whitley council. Although some of the trade unions organising sanctions have fewer members, they monopolise the seats of the Whitley council and its negotiations.

The Whitley council trade unions have a claim for a pay increase of 11·1 per cent., with the establishment of a formula for determining future increases as well. The London men are seeking some London weighting above the over 11 per cent. claim that they are presently pursuing and I assume that they are looking for about 12 per cent. or 13 per cent. They have other claims, such as the reintroduction of premium rates for overtime—which they agreed to forgo in 1986—an increase in the standby allowances to bring them into line with those paid to ambulance officers, which management is minded to concede, an increase in annual leave and long service holidays, a reduction in the working week and the introduction of long service pay after five, 10 and 15 years of service. Those claims have not been withdrawn and they add up to more than 20 per cent. although it is the cash claim of more than 11 per cent. that is being pursued at the moment.

The unions are determined to get that claim or something like it by pursuing industrial action. Anyone who believes that in such a difficult situation it is easy for the management of the Health Service to get the service back by giving them a little bit more must reflect on the fact that I am quite confident, as is the management from its contacts with the trade union side, that they are not taking the action against the people of London to get a little bit more—they are looking for rather a lot more money.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I will not give way. This is a short debate. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) gave way only a couple of times. When I get on to the radiotelephones, people will want me to give way and there will be no Back-Bench debate if I give way too soon.

The fact that the ambulance men are pursuing their claim through industrial action of such an extreme nature is surprising when we recall that the trade unions were recommending the management's offer some months ago, and that offer was arrived at as a result of negotiation in the Whitley council. A few months ago the union leaders who now say that the offer of 6·5 per cent. is disgraceful, recommended their members to accept such an offer. No Labour Members referred to the inadequacy of a 6·5 per cent. offer then. No Labour Member said then that those vital men should be paid more.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: The reason for this noisy demonstration of support from Opposition Members now is that the ambulance men have taken industrial action having rejected the offer on a ballot. However, the trade union leaders who are now organising this action had recommended the 6·5 per cent.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: No.

Since the trade union leaders recommended 6·5 per cent., the offer has been improved. The men are being offered more money than their leaders recommended them to accept. The recommendation was not too surprising, nor was the fact that it emerged from the Whitely council. We are talking about a settlement which dates back to April this year.

The 6·5 per cent. offer must be set beside the 6·8 per cent. awards to the nurses and the Army. Most of the soldiers taking over ambulance men's duties today are less well paid than the ambulance men. Hon. Members accepted 6·7 per cent. and 160,000 National Health Service staff, including the ancillary workers represented by the same trade unions, also settled for 6·5 per cent. as a result of sensible negotiations.

After the 6·5 per cent. was rejected, the offer was improved—in particular, in London. The offer now, which has been rejected by the unions, is at least 9·3 per cent. for qualified personnel in London. At the moment the whole service in London is closed down because the ambulance men want more than 9·3 per cent. and they are taking industrial action to achieve that.

Mr. Skinner: Give way on that point.

Mr. Clarke: No.

The offer as it stands is worth about £13 a week for qualified staff outside London and about £20 a week for London staff. Back pay is accruing because the offer dates back to April 1989. Therefore, the ambulance men in London have at least £600 back pay waiting for them and the men outside have at least £400.

[Mr. Clarke]

Labour Members say that that is not enough and that we should give them the money. However, they have not specified how much. They have not commented on the size of the claim—*[Interruption.]* We know why all these Opposition Members are in the Chamber now. Even the Leader of the Opposition is here. They are lured by the scent of a good strike—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was heard in comparative silence. Throughout this debate there has been a background of commentary from a sedentary position. Hon. Members should listen to the Minister's speech.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): The Secretary of State for Health mentioned me specifically. If the case that he is making convinces him so absolutely, why is he not willing to let the issue go to arbitration? The Labour party and the ambulance men and women have asked for nothing more.

Mr. Clarke: In the Health Service it is necessary to settle the pay of more than 1 million staff at a level which allows management to strike the right balance between staff pay and the growth of patient services. It is necessary to be fair to all staff in every grade because most of them do vital work in a dedicated way. It is also necessary to have an overall view of how much money will be allowed for pay because some money must be left for the expansion of patient services. It would be an abdication of management's responsibility for it to say that if a group of staff strikes or takes industrial action, it will hand over its responsibility, because of that action, to an outside body to decide how much more staff should get and how far patient services should expand.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: If any Government tried to run the National Health Service on the basis that a group which took industrial action against the patients would receive arbitration, they would reproduce the chaos that was produced in 1979 in the Health Service by giving way to every member of staff—*[Interruption.]* This is a noisy display by Labour Members because they have been drawn here by a strike. I have not seen the Labour Benches so crowded for a health debate for years—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members have not been drawn here by the National Health Service; they have been drawn here to back the National Union of Public Employees in its industrial action.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the cumbersome suggestion of arbitration is very much the second option in comparison with the direct offer of immediate negotiations to be resumed right away?

Mr. Clarke: Exactly.

So far I have described the claim with which the Leader of the Opposition did not quite have the nerve to associate himself.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State for Health to use the fact that, as always, the Labour Benches are crowded to divert attention from the fact that, as always, the Tory Benches are empty?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me and it is taking up time.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State, who has now twice mentioned the word strike, to mislead the House when no strike is taking place?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows what this debate is about.

Mr. Clarke: In London absolutely no ambulance men are working at the moment, which by my definition is a strike.

I have covered the claim and the offer. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) has just referred to the efforts of the management to move on given that the original offer was rejected by the men in a ballot. As we can all see, the improved offer in London has not brought an end to the action in London.

Duncan Nichol, the chief executive of the National Health Service, has been making repeated efforts for several weeks to resume proper talks between his Whitley council negotiators and the trade unions. He has publicly offered to contemplate a two-year deal including bringing some money forward from the second year into the first year. He has offered a review of the overtime arrangements because the unions are not satisfied with the way in which their 1986 agreement is working on overtime. He has referred to the possibility of local flexibility to meet particular recruitment and retention shortages and the possibility of looking in particular at the paramedical staff and the emergency side of the service.

Mr. Skinner: How much does he earn?

Mr. Clarke: That was a public statement in advance of a resumption in negotiations. I see no way in which the chief executive of the NHS can possibly go any further in trying to get people back to work and sort the problem out where it should sensibly be sorted out—in the NHS negotiating machinery. He, I and the House have a duty to all the other staff in the service. Ninety-five per cent. of National Health Service staff have settled within the ordinary agreed procedures. They are all dedicated people as well. They have claims, some of which have been met in negotiations. The management has given over 10 per cent. to some of the low-paid staff whose jobs in the past have not been appreciated.

Any group of those staff could take industrial action and do great damage to the service if they thought that that was the way to get more than the others. I cannot help thinking that there are some in the trade union movement who have every intention that some of the others should do that if the ambulance men can establish that this sort of industrial action—if one is prepared to take it—gets more money.

Having set out the claim, the offer originally recommended by the trade unions and what has been done to try to get negotiations going again, let me consider the nature of the action now being taken and organised by the trade unions against an offer that they were once minded to accept and recommend.

Mr. Skinner: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I will not give way.

First, we should look at the non-emergency work of the National Health Service. About nine out of 10 patients driven by ambulances are for non-emergency work such as taking patients to clinics. That is extremely important to patients especially when, as has already been described, it involves taking cancer patients to their radiotherapy sessions. That is not being provided, and in London it has stopped completely.

The Trades Union Congress has drawn up guidelines on non-emergency patients and said which categories, in the opinion of the trade unions, need to travel as non-emergency patients. In London they were offering to do about 2 per cent. of the ordinary patient journeys described as non-emergency work. The management has said that it will not pay ambulance men in full for doing about 2 per cent. of the work when many vehicles are travelling with no patients at all during the day. The reaction of the trade unions was to withdraw all that non-emergency work. They will not accept docking of pay while they are offering to do about 2 per cent. of the work. That is what brought things to a head earlier this week. The men doing little or no work were told that they would not be paid unless they did about half the work and that their pay would be docked unless they did full work. The response to that approach to non-emergency work was that the unions immediately moved to shut down the accident and emergency service in London again. They reverted to the 14 points.

We have heard much about the 14 points and the most extraordinary quotations are being made. Yesterday, when applying for this debate, the hon. Member for Livingston quoted something to do with the radio-telephones, but I still cannot find the document from which he took it. I did not recognise it as any part of the 14 points or discussions upon them. However, he may help us later.

I have a copy of the "London Ambulance Convenors News" upon which the badges of the trade unions are proudly displayed. It sets out the 14 points with which staff were to comply from Monday 23 October. That is the day on which the accident and emergency service first vanished from the streets of London. I readily accept that some of those points are far more important than others and some have nothing to do with the accident and emergency service. We are all getting bogged down with radio-telephones. Point three of the 14 points under the heading

> "A ban on the use of the radio telephone"

states:

> "Day crews to report at nearest hospital or ambulance station. A and E crews to assist with open-call system and to comply with blue calls, urgent assists and queries on calls."

That was a deliberate decision to stop using the new semi-automatic call and recall system which was introduced because of the inadequacy, about which Labour Members have long complained, of the old system in London. We were not complying in London with the——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I promise that I will give way on the radiotelephone, but then we must move on.

That was the point put into practice when the accident and emergency service first vanished about two weeks ago. The management has expertise, and it does not wish to use the police and the Army in London. However, it rapidly came to the conclusion that it could not guarantee an accident and emergency service on those terms. The open-call system had long been inadequate in London. All that it requires—as could happen—is for one microphone to be left open accidentally, or accidentally on purpose, and the whole system is aborted. It also means that one loses control of the vehicle because the crew does not report back when it has finished work. It works in the rest of the country because it has not yet been computerised, but it was known not to work in London and it was abandoned because of its inadequacy. It was reintroduced by the trade unions because of that inadequacy and because they knew the management would lose control of the whereabouts of the vehicles.

The House must ask itself, what was the motive in introducing a rule which states:

> "A ban on the use of the radio telephone"?

The motive for setting out the 14 points was to ensure that the service did not work properly. That is what was achieved.

Mr. Robin Cook: The Secretary of State will acknowledge that the point explicitly said:

> "A and E crews to assist with 'open-call system'".

That means that they will respond to every 999 call over the open-call system. If that system is considered so appalling and unreliable that it was necessary to suspend the service and bring in the police and the Army, why was it that for 20 years until eight months ago that was the service covering London?

Mr. Clarke: It was becoming increasingly inadequate, and Labour Members were in the forefront of those complaining about its inadequacy. It cannot cope with the volume of traffic in London and certainly not when there is an industrial dispute, when microphones are being left open, nobody knows where vehicles are and they are not reporting back——

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Let me move on.

That was accepted by the trade unions. The House will recall that the police, St. John Ambulance and the Red Cross were used for only about 36 hours before normal service was resumed. The management said that it could not maintain an accident and emergency service in London without the police, Red Cross and St. John Ambulance. That was worrying and the trade unions sat down with the management and discussed what to do. On 24 October the 14 points were revised and an agreement was reached.

The media and half the House are suddenly becoming experts on radiotelephones, although that is not the only issue. Point five of the 24 October agreement states:

> "All operational staff, including the frontline crews, will use the radiotelephone, in accordance with London Ambulance Service radio-telephone procedures".

That is working normally and, as we all recall, the result was that the police left the streets of London and returned to their policing duties, the Red Cross and St. John Ambulance were stood down and we had a safe and reliable accident and emergency service again. That was the agreement between the trade unions and the management. The events of 48 hours ago occurred because of the rows over the non-emergency staff and because the management would not pay the men in full for offering to do 2 per cent. of the work. The trade unions broke their agreement and told their men to go back to the 14 points knowing perfectly well that they were bringing back on to

[Mr. Clarke]

the streets the police, the Red Cross, St. John Ambulance and—as I told the House in my statement a fortnight ago—the Army to provide a service that they were refusing to maintain.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Secretary of State aware of the letter sent by the five unions this morning to the London ambulance service, which says in its final sentence:

> "Finally, the representatives of the trade unions in London will meet you to discuss any matters the moment you restore an accident and emergency service in London?"

Will he confirm that the accident and emergency service in London to which they are referring is the system that worked in London up to eight months ago? Is that not the truth? If it is, why will not the right hon. and learned Gentleman arrange for someone to meet them?

Mr. Clarke: On 24 October the trade unions agreed to restore accident and emergency services——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it true?

Mr. Clarke: It is not true.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is this the truth? The trade unions are offering to meet if the right hon. and learned Gentleman arranges for the restoration of the service in London to what it was eight months ago.

Mr. Clarke: It was an inadequate service. It proved inadequate on 23 October and the unions—*[Interruption.]* On 24 October the trade unions accepted that they had gone too far with their 14 points. They agreed with the management that they would use the radiotelephones in accordance with London ambulance procedures. They broke that agreement to make an industrial point.

The management side offered to meet the trade unions again. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) was right to remind the House of my meeting with Roger Poole on television when he continued to assert that the men were prepared to operate normally. The London ambulance service management, which is desperate to get an ordinary service back, immediately contacted Chris Humphreys, the trade union leader in London, to see whether Roger Poole was confirming that the trade unions would comply with their agreement to use the radiotelephones in the ordinary way. Those London trade union leaders were pulled out of a meeting by their national leaders to avoid going back and confirming what Roger Poole had said. They are still refusing to honour the agreement that they reached on 24 October. That is the background to the dispute.

From my point of view—I believe that it should also be the view of the House—we require an effective accident and emergency service in London that can be guaranteed. People must decide who they believe can make the judgment on that service—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Clarke: The management of the London ambulance service has expertise, judgment and is not directly party to the dispute—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Clarke: In the past, the management has discovered, through experience forced upon it, that one cannot guarantee an effective service with the 14 points.

The Labour party prefers the judgment of the National Union of Public Employees on how to operate the accident and emergency service in London. The Opposition have asked me to overrule the local management because NUPE has gone back on its word by breaking the agreement of 24 October. NUPE wants to operate a system that it knows will not work.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: No.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) invited the hon. Member for Livingston to take a statesmanlike view. The speech of the shadow Secretary of State for Health was worthy of a shop steward in the middle of an industrial dispute—*[Interruption.]* He went over the point about the radiotelephones with all the accuracy of a barrack room lawyer trying to defend the difficult position created for him by a trade union—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Clarke: Let us address ourselves to what the shadow Secretary of State for Health said should be done as it gives us an idea of what a Labour Government would do faced with the present situation.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I am sorry, but I will not give way, even to the hon. Gentleman, or there will be no time for debate.

The hon. Member for Livingston has suggested that I should push the management out of the way and intervene as Secretary of State. He thinks that I should get in the trade unions, ask them what they want and make some arrangements to ensure that they get it. I did not appoint one of the best general managers in the National Health Service, Mr. Duncan Nichol, to treat him in that way. I do not believe that that is a sensible way in which to run the service.

The suggestions of the hon. Member for Livingston show the type of approach that the Labour party adopts to the management of great public services such as the NHS. The Opposition's idea is that if the unions demand something one should overrule and undermine the management, get the trade unions in and do a political deal which is acceptable to their trade union masters. That is exactly what they did in the late 1970s. All this is familiar to every hon. Member who was a Member during the Callaghan Government. The then Minister for Health—the post now held by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley)—was NUPE-sponsored. The Opposition gave so many concessions to everyone who took strike action that, by the winter of 1979, they had everyone in the services on strike. The only ones who suffered when Labour was in power were those, especially NHS employees, who would not take industrial action.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way to the same hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must sit down.

Mr. Clarke: In the six years of the previous Labour Government the real-terms pay of nurses sank every year for six years. During that time, doctors' pay was below inflation——

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not continually rise.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Let us get back to parity.

Mr. Clarke: The BMA does not take the kind of industrial action that brings Opposition Members flocking to the Floor of the House to say that Ministers should intervene to give them the money to get the service back working.

This debate is not the way in which to resolve this dispute. The dispute will be resolved by common sense and by the responsible action of those outside. Meanwhile, everyone should discharge their duty to the NHS.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way.

It is the duty of the London ambulance service management to make its best judgment about whether it can guarantee an effective service to the public and to seek to get its trade unions to honour the agreement that the unions made with it on 24 October. It is the duty of Duncan Nichol and his colleagues on the NHS management executive to continue to make valiant efforts ——

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Turner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Clarke: It is Duncan Nichol's duty to continue with his efforts to get the unions back to the negotiating table.

It is the Government's responsibility to look after the interests of innocent people whose welfare, when injured or seriously ill, is put at risk by the irresponsible action taken by the unions in parts of the ambulance service, in particular, in the capital.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: What we are hearing from the Labour party is a din. What we should be hearing from it is an appeal for common sense and an appeal for negotiations to be resumed.

I believe that the trade unions should show some compassion and concern for the people of London. They should honour their commitment to maintain the accident and emergency service. The Labour party and NUPE should tell the trade unions to get back to the negotiating table and to follow the procedures of the NHS. In that way, the dispute could be settled for those staff as it was for 95 per cent. of NHS staff.

Hon. Members: Resign!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It must be the right of every hon. Member to be able to listen to debates. I was sitting near my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, but, because of the barracking from the Labour Benches, it was almost impossible to hear what he said. Will you please remind——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman was here and he saw me rise on numerous occasions.

I must tell the House that a great many hon. Members want to participate——

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. So that as many hon. Members as possible can be called I ask for brief speeches—speeches of five minutes even, if that can be achieved.

5.59 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I have listened carefully to the Secretary of State, and find it difficult to express my anger and contempt in adequate terms. I have sat in this House for 22 years. Today, I speak freely as someone who has been closely involved with the work of the London ambulance service for the past 14 years. I hold the view which I shall express today because a member of my family who has been closely involved in the issue has been driven out of the ambulance service to which he gave total commitment by the appalling pay and conditions.

When I listen to the Secretary of State, I find it impossible to believe that any serious politician can come to the House and make such scurrilous and totally unacceptable attacks on the London ambulance service or any other service. We are talking about a pay dispute which has been forced upon men and women who, day after day, give a commitment to the people of London of whom the Secretary of State spoke. Day after day, shift after shift, those men and women face increasing personal violence and great risk from increasingly hazardous diseases. They are constantly prepared to do so for wages which the Secretary of State would not accept for someone who devilled for him.

In this dispute, the Government have deliberately sought to provoke the ambulance men and women. Since cash limiting has taken over in the Health Service, the Government have deliberately sought to split those who work in what the Secretary of State constantly refers to as the emergency services from other men and women. His suggestion, somehow or other——

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down!

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Secretary of State's suggestion is that this is a service in which less than 10 per cent. of the calls involve emergency work and for the rest of the time the staff do no more than taxi drivers. That was the implication of everything that the Secretary of State said.

The service is so stretched and ambulance workers are so tired because they are constantly working—some of them seven days a week. They include people who one day drive old ladies to hospital on coaches and the next day kneel into a battered car to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to save someone's life. The Secretary of State's constant assertion that these people are not ordinary ambulance men and women is not only despicable but unworthy of comment.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down!

Mrs. Dunwoody: I have watched the deterioration of the service, the inability of managers to manage and the imposition of management services which do not operate.

The Secretary of State talked about the open-call system. Why is it so essential? It is essential because, when all the other systems do not work, the ambulance workers can hear one another and respond. I have known children with steel bolts in their heads saved because the open-call system was used to relay urgent messages from one ambulance to another. Time and again I have seen men and women take risks that the Secretary of State would never take. He talks about bandages and blankets. He would not care to see his family wrapped in dirty blankets, yet he dares to suggest that the ambulance men and women are wrong to refuse to co-operate without properly equipped and cleaned ambulances. What he is doing is beneath contempt.

The Secretary of State is removing the dignity and the right to a decent standard of living from the men and women who provide a vital service which saves lives every day and night—not just when it suits him. I cannot tell him how much I despise that action from someone who is paid a reasonable wage and, supposedly, comes to this House as a responsible Secretary of State. He is becoming the Erich Honecker of the Government, riding his Wartburg round and round the M25, looking for a way out. Let him do the decent thing and resign with grace.

6.5 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): The speech of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was rather odd in some particulars. He finished with a throb in his throat and begged the House to vote for his motion to bring back full cover for the people of this country. The odd thing was that he had spent a considerable amount of time earlier in his speech telling us that people were receiving full ambulance cover and all the 999 calls were being answered. I was listening extremely carefully, and the fact is that we were told that 999 calls were being answered and then told to vote for the motion so that all 999 calls would be answered.

I am getting a little sick of the parrot cry for arbitration, arbitration, arbitration. I wonder why Opposition Members do not bother to find out the facts and recall history. The NHS pay and conditions have never ever been settled by arbitration. Pay and terms of service for ambulance staff and others in the NHS have always—this was so when the Labour party was in government—been settled by the Whitley council. Therefore, to suppose that this is a magic formula which the Labour party never used when it was in office is quite extraordinary.

Many misapprehensions are going round this House tonight. One is that hon. Members from one side of the House have bleeding hearts and the others have stony ones. That is completely untrue. No hon. Member has anything but admiration for the way that the ambulance personnel normally respond to emergency and more run-of-the-mill calls. Between 80 per cent. and 90 per cent. of the duties which ambulance personnel carry out are not actually emergency calls, but important calls to take people to treatment.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The same people carry them out.

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Lady must not pretend to have the only bleeding heart in the House, because she is totally inaccurate. We all want the ambulance staff to get a fairer wage.

Mr. Nellist: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Jill Knight: No, I am trying to be quick.

The second misapprehension is that what is on offer is so unreasonable that it calls for an industrial dispute. Virtually all other staff in the NHS have settled pay claims—some of which have not produced a settlement as favourable as the one on offer. As we know, the London ambulance men are being offered 9·3 per cent. Many settlements have been made that are far below that figure. An increase of 20 per cent. in overtime pay has been offered, which does not seem unreasonable.

I believe that, during the past three years, ambulance men have been given a 28 per cent. increase. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will correct me if I am wrong but I believe that during those three years the retail price index has risen by considerably less—I think that the figure is 9·4 per cent. Therefore, it is hardly the case that the offer is so unreasonable and—with all the discussions that can take place in the Whitley council—it seems incredible that the ambulance staff feel that they must continue with this dispute.

The fourth misapprehension is that ambulance staff should be linked with firefighters—fifth-year firefighters at that. What about first, second or third-year firefighters?

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): They are not paid so much.

Dame Jill Knight: My hon. Friend is correct. I sometimes think that Opposition Members will never be satisfied with any decision of a court or other body outside this House unless the decision goes their way.

Professor Clegg looked at this very point of comparability between ambulance men and firefighters. I refer hon. Members to Command Paper 7641—the standing commission on pay comparability—a most thorough document. Hon. Members may be interested to know the yardsticks examined by the professor and his commission. He looked at the degree to which the job is made disagreeable and/or difficult by dust, fumes, wet, noise, extremes of temperature, lack of freedom of movement, lighting or unpleasant movement—and at the degree of physical endurance involved. He also considered work performed under unfavourable environmental conditions such as those that I have already mentioned——

Mrs. Dunwoody: When was that study done?

Dame Jill Knight: In 1978. The hon. Lady would do well to have a look at what Professor Clegg had to say. He considered the danger of falling from height and of incurring cuts and burns. Things have not changed—*[Interruption.]* Why does not the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who makes a fetish of involving himself in every debate from a sedentary position, not have the guts to stand up and make his own speech instead of trying to spoil someone else's?

Mr. Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I think that the hon. Lady is indicating that she is not giving way.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has not been called and he is wasting valuable time.

Dame Jill Knight: I should like to draw attention to a statement made by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) when he was Home Secretary:

> "People talk about special cases. But the point is that a number of people in industry in general can also put forward a special case. I must make it clear . . . that we cannot move outside our guidelines".

If that was a fair comment to make when the Opposition were in power, it is fair comment to make today.

My right hon. and learned Friend has two clear overriding duties to this country. First, he cannot allow the message to go out that failing to care for emergency patients or for those who have met with accidents or heart attacks will put extra money into people's pockets. It would be monstrous if one had only to threaten to withhold medical care to obtain an increase in salary. That is what my right hon. and learned Friend would be saying if he allowed himself to be blackmailed into meeting the Opposition's demands.

The second duty——

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford) *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight: I am anxious to be quick.

Mr. Lofthouse *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has made it clear that she will not give way.

Mr. Cryer: I should be quite happy to make my own speech——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has made it very clear that she is not giving way.

Dame Jill Knight: I have never known the hon. Member for Bradford, South to need the pity of the rest of the House.

The second duty on my right hon. and learned Friend's shoulders——

Mr. Lofthouse *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not persist once the hon. Lady has said that she will not give way.

Dame Jill Knight: Many hon. Members want to speak, as I know you are aware, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The second duty that lies heavy on the shoulders of my right hon. and learned Friend is that of ensuring that all emergency calls are met. If the only way to do that is to call in the Army and the police, so be it. I do not believe that ambulance staff generally are militant people. Most of them must detest putting sick people in jeopardy. I hope that in future we can arrive at a no-strike agreement so that never again will our people have to face the trauma, worry and fear that are now in their hearts.

6.17 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The placing of troops on the streets of the capital by the Health Department is a reflection of the gravity of the situation, but some of the Secretary of State's characteristic comments on it did not measure up to that gravity. There have been reports during the afternoon of some staff being suspended without pay in Manchester, Surrey and Essex, so the problem is unequivocally a national one. The dispute should never have been allowed to reach this stage. The Secretary of State could have used his office long ago to prevent that.

I want to offer one reflection on the post-Griffiths NHS management which has become visible through this sad dispute. At the time of the Griffiths report and the debates in the House on the new management structure that was envisaged—I believe that the Secretary of State was then a Minister of State at the Department of Health—we were offered an assurance of the Minister's continuing political accountability to Parliament for the NHS. Yet in this dispute the Secretary of State appears to be willing to regard the NHS from his office as a spectator sport.

This contrasts dramatically with the position that the right hon. and learned Gentleman adopted in the House only two weeks ago on GPs' contracts. He did not spectate on that occasion: he dictated. As a result of the belligerence that he has shown in this dispute and in other matters he has inflamed an already vexed problem.

The Secretary of State defended Mr. Duncan Nichol. In what *The Guardian* yesterday described as a frank interview, Mr. Nichol

> "acknowledged that he and his colleagues were failing to convince NHS staff, let alone the wider public, of the merits of the Government's health shake-up. There was, he said, a long way to go."

I suspect that the Secretary of State's comments this afternoon have not got him much further down the road towards displaying concern or sensitivity about the attitudes expressed in the dispute.

Elsewhere we are told that advisers advise and Ministers decide. In the Department of Health it appears that managers decide and Ministers do little more than provoke. The Secretary of State should face up to his responsibility for that.

What of the remuneration of the ambulance men and their comparability with other emergency services? The Secretary of State has made it clear on several occasions, and confirmed this afternoon, that he sets the parameters within which pay bargaining is conducted at Whitley council level, but he and the Prime Minister earlier today were disingenuous to suggest that progress can be achieved at Whitley council level, given that he has made it categorically clear that more resources will not be available. That knocks on the head any room for meaningful manoeuvre or further negotiations to try to resolve the dispute.

As the Secretary of State will not speak to them directly, it is worth letting the ambulance men speak for themselves. A constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), a Mr. Black, who has almost 12 years of service with the Northumbria ambulance service, wrote to my hon. Friend as follows:

> "Over recent years we have in this service put up with a great deal of changes, cutbacks, and streamlining, but nevertheless 'weathered the storm' and picked ourselves up again . . . Mr. Duncan Nichol makes a statement that we do not compare with the Police and Fire services. It is totally

[Mr. Charles Kennedy]

demoralising and upsetting. As you well know we have the notorious A.1 road running through our area, and often get calls to accidents on it. On some occasions the fire service are in attendance with the police and ourselves, and sometimes there is only Police and ambulance. After Mr. Nichol's comments I feel that whenever in future I am involved with other emergency services I am going to feel inferior to them. It is ridiculous to think that we work for a service that is not classed as an emergency service."

I quote his letter in full as he gives a clear representation of how the ambulance men feel. He continued:

> "Whenever we leave an incident, we leave behind us the traffic police trying to take statements, and speak with witnesses, the Fire service hosing the road, and sweeping up broken glass, and the main responsibility for the major part of the incident is left with us, which is the lives of the injured who are in our hands only, until we reach the hospital. I am not decrying another service because one service can not work without the other, but it certainly makes me think that I am part of the 'Cinderella Service' . . . I have been proud to be an ambulance man and thoroughly enjoy my work, but since Mr. Nichol's remarks I have felt demoralised and sickened . . . The opinion I am portraying is my own, but I feel that this will be the same throughout the ambulance service nationally."

When, as he must, the Secretary of State defends Mr. Nichol, will he bear in mind that that is the effect of Mr. Nichol's attitude in this dispute?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Northumberland ambulance service is one of the best in the country. It has gone through considerable reorganisation and it almost solely performs accident and emergency work. It does hardly any non-emergency work. A high proportion of its staff are trained as paramedical staff. Duncan Nichol openly talked about looking particularly at paramedical staff, people with high qualifications and those who concentrate on accident and emergency services. Unfortunately, that view is rejected by the trade unions, the Labour party, and the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). They do not believe in distinguishing between the tenth of the mileage for emergency work and the other nine tenths for the rest. Duncan Nichol has freely spoken about the need to consider high-quality paramedically trained staff of the kind now concentrated in Northumberland.

Mr. Kennedy: I can only state the hallowed phrase that is used when things go badly for the Government—the message somehow does not seem to be getting across to the ambulance men.

I now quote another ambulance man in my constituency, Mr. Moore. He lives in Wester Ross, a typical profoundly rural area. He writes with a sense of frustration about the conditions in which he and his colleagues find themselves. He says:

> "In addition to the 40 hours which I am on duty I also do 'on call' duty which amounts to a further 40 hours each week. For this I receive in the region of 50p per hour. Due to economic factors many rural areas are run on a wing and a prayer. Some are still served by contractors . . . where untrained staff are paid per mile for driving an ambulance. Fortunately, the 'prayer' seems to work, so far. The current dispute is a call for fair treatment—not to get rich but to stop getting poorer."

As many hon. Members will know from their constituency work, many ambulance men are in receipt of housing benefit and family credit. That shows the inadequacy of their pay, particularly for those with young families. It cannot be good for much of their income to be derived from the state benefit system. Surely the Secretary of State can recognise the inadequacies. More skill training and more paramedics are needed, but resources and political will are at the heart of the dispute. The Secretary of State's speech lacked conviction.

I now refer to the longer-term implications. There should be an independent pay review board for this sector to avoid leap-frogging between the Whitley arrangement and the independent pay review bodies for certain sectors. It should take into account public and private sector comparisons, market factors and conditions in local labour markets. If we have an independent arbitration service, it, too, should consider no-strike agreements and pendulum arbitration as a way of resolving future disputes.

Clearly, the existing management structure has failed by letting the dispute reach this stage. The remuneration on offer is unfair and the denial of comparability is equally unjust. As Lord McCarthy, when he looked at the Whitley set-up, said, it consisted of

> "employers who do not pay and paymasters who do not employ."

The dispute is presided over by a Minister who does not seem sufficiently to care. The Army should be put back into barracks and ambulance crews should be put back on our streets.

6.25 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): There has been more than a whiff of hypocrisy in the debate. It is well to remember the tactics that have been employed by the ambulance men in London this week. They were to maximise public inconvenience and minimise the cost to their own pay packets. Those are the tactics of the blackmailer and the bully-boy in the 1980s. *[Interruption.]* They are quite disgraceful tactics, and I thank the Opposition for their support. Faced with those tactics, any responsible Government would have done the same as the present Government have done. After all, the Labour Government put the green goddesses on to the streets in 1978-79.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): On that occasion, the fire service was shut down completely. Obviously, in that situation, any Government had to save lives. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that this is on all fours with the firemen's dispute, he is looking back 10 years to when he was not a Member of Parliament.

Mr. Marshall: As a former Home Secretary, the right hon. Gentleman knows that 90 per cent. of cases in London are not emergency cases, and those are the cases with which the ambulance men are not dealing. Surely, when 90 per cent. of cases are not being dealt with, it is the Government's duty to take some action. Labour Members' lectures on Health Service staff wages are like Satan rebuking sin. The last Labour Government were responsible for a massive decline in the living standards of nurses and others in the Health Service.

This afternoon, we heard the Labour party's first commandment—"Thou shalt not annoy thy union paymasters." The House has heard from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that he had been meeting ambulance workers for the past eight weeks. He did not say that he condemned their action or that he asked them to go back to their normal work. Labour party leaders will never condemn union action that creates hardship for others or is responsible for job losses.

Some people say that the Government should pay whatever is necessary to end the dispute, but they do not consider the consequences. If people are paid a certain sum to stop an irresponsible strike, the result will be a rash of irresponsible public sector strikes. If the Government pay huge sums for every irresponsible strike, the result will be rip-roaring inflation. Opposition Members know all about that, because they were responsible for it before. Those who suffer most from rip-roaring inflation are those for whom the Labour party claims to stand—the elderly, the sick, and the poorest paid. The weakest members of the community suffer from rip-roaring inflation. That is why the Government are right to stand firm rather than to pay up and give in to blackmail, which is what they are being asked to do.

6.29 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): The ambulance workers of Lancashire are as keen as the ambulance workers in the rest of the country to achieve a proper wage structure. They are just as determined in their action, but there is a significant difference between the position of the people of Lancashire and that of the people of London and other parts of the country: the people of Lancashire have their emergency ambulance service secured, because the chief ambulance officer has decided that he will not have the Army, the police or any other organisation running ambulances in Lancashire. He talked to the trade unions and, as could be the position everywhere else, there is in Lancashire an emergency service covering 999 calls, maternity calls, the terminally ill, renal dialysis calls, radiotherapy and special categories of people at risk. There has been an agreement with the trade unions, the organisations that Conservative Members are castigating and slandering this evening.

The ambulance workers of Lancashire have shown determination to win their proper pay. In common with their colleagues throughout the country, they have also shown their devotion to the service. All ambulance workers would gladly sign the sort of agreement which was signed in Lancashire this morning.

Mr. Dykes: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Wise: As the hon. Gentleman has already intervened in the debate and as there is a little time available to us, my answer is no.

I recommend that the Secretary of State consults the chief ambulance officer of Lancashire and follows his example. As it is supposed to be the trade unions alone who are making certain claims, I recommend that the right hon. and learned Gentleman reads yesterday's editorial comment in the Lancashire *Evening Post,* which states:

> "It is a sad fact of life that too many people take too much for granted and that applies particularly to the three emergency services.
>
> The only time we really take note of ambulancemen and women is either when we need the service personally or when its personnel are involved in saving life during the aftermath of a national disaster."

The article continues:

> "Backed by public support and sympathy, the ambulancemen's case is a sound one."

That is right.

The Government are making a tremendous error in thinking that they can distinguish between patient care and the work of the ambulance service. That is their excuse for refusing arbitration. In the terms of the Government's reply to the Select Committee on Social Services, they are afraid that money will be "diverted from patient care", but the ambulance service and ambulance workers are patient care. There is no patient care unless these workers do their job as they want to do. The population is behind them, as the Secretary of State will learn to his cost. Come to Lancashire, Secretary of State, and learn from those who have saved the emergency service in the county without the ambulance workers having to lose pay——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Does the hon. Lady appreciate that the management in London entered into an agreement with the unions on 24 October which put ambulances back on the street? Earlier this week, with the approval of her party, the unions cynically broke that agreement and returned to the old operation of their 14-point plan.

Mrs. Wise: Like the Secretary of State, I have had the privilege of listening to my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). Consequently, I am fully seized of the situation in London. The London ambulance workers are willing to run an ambulance service which would be entirely adequate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has said, that service may even have advantages. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's argument will not wash.

The ambulance and emergency services for Lancashire have been saved. If the Secretary of State would give way and cease his provocation, the emergency service for the rest of the country could be saved as well.

6.35 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): We all know the story about the man who asked the yokel where he was and the route that he should take, whereupon the yokel told him that he had come from the wrong place. Where are we in this dispute? We are in a mess. In fact, we are in a hell of a mess. Why are we in it? I suggest that there are many historical reasons, which have not all surfaced today.

The first roots of the dispute were established in 1978, and they were part and parcel of what led to the Clegg report of 1979. If ayone wants to dispute that, let me make it clear that I have the report with me and can quote from it if necessary.

I am a practising personnel man who has been involved in industrial relations for over 20 years, but I could not find my way around, or understand, what is going on. There are far too many negotiators. There are far too many people who have their fingers in the pie. There is the Whitley council. What is that body and where is it? How are the members of the council appointed and where are they appointed? There are unions with leaders who clearly do not have the trust of their members; if they did, they would be able to strike a deal and adhere to it. Management is not negotiating because it does not have control of the finances. A financial limit is imposed upon it. No self-respecting management that is in that position can enter negotiations and strike a deal.

What is the role of the Secretary of State? He is player No. 5 in this game. No one knows what his role is, but we all have suspicions. Finally, there is the Treasury, which is player No. 6. We are still not sure about the nature of the Treasury's role.

Much is said about comparability and the Clegg report. Hon. Members talk about the report as if it came down from the mountains. They suggest that it is inviolate and

[Mr. Richard Holt]

right for all time, and never could have been wrong in the first place. We must recall the days when the Clegg commission was established. What was the climate of that time? How many people were in dispute at that time? When we read the Clegg report and everything that is related to it, we find that it is one, two or three, and then the ambulance men. The report states that it had to make assumptions when it came to determining comparability because it did not have time to discover the facts. The Clegg commission was given too great a brief and too little time. As a result, the ambulance men's case came last. The commission did not do its job properly. If there were a re-examination now of the ambulance men alone, we might come to different conclusions.

Who can put his hand on his heart and say that in his opinion ambulance men are dealing with emergency cases all the time? The figure of 10 per cent. refers to time and not to cases. How many firemen are dealing with emergencies for more than 10 per cent. of their working day? I would back the firemen's snooker, darts and other teams in my area against the teams formed by the ambulance men in the area, even though the firemen do not have quite so much free and down time as the ambulance men. However, we are told that the ambulance men must have more. The Clegg commission made a mistake and did not do its job properly. It considered the issues in hindsight and as a consequence the argument that is advanced on the basis of the Clegg report is unsound.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Does the hon. Gentleman realise that firemen are always ready to respond to calls? The only way in which we could oblige the hon. Gentleman would be to set fire to our cities so that the firemen could work 24 hours a day. Is that not ridiculous?

Mr Holt: A great deal of what we are discussing is ridiculous. The ambulance men's dispute should never have reached its present stage. That is ridiculous. To some extent, it is ridiculous to talk about the events of 10 years ago. To talk about 6·5 per cent. when everyone else, including ourselves, is getting more is also ridiculous. We are told that there is a man who has the freedom to negotiate when he has not, and he is saying silly things about the ambulance men having £600 to come, for example, when that is their money, money which has been withheld for the past few months. It is said that they can have some of next year's money, but that is not the way for anyone to negotiate this year's agreement. That is entirely the wrong approach.

The Clegg report states:

> "We have no direct information relating to comparable conditions of service, but ambulancemen's conditions of service are broadly the same as for NHS ancillaries."

That is how out of touch Clegg was in his report. He actually equated ambulance men, who deal with emergencies, with cooks and porters in hospitals.

I am a little closer to this issue than some of my colleagues because I am one of the few Conservative Members who have actually met Roger Poole and the others concerned with the dispute. Far too many unions are involved—we are trying to deal with five unions, and we should be trying to do something about that. Roger Poole, in a letter to me, states that the unions are looking for a pay formula that would ensure that never again would ambulance staff have to take industrial action over a national wage claim.

One of the comments in the Clegg report is that these people do not feel that society gives them the status that they should be given. It suggests that they should be monthly salaried—but 10 years on, no one has actually thought about it. That is something that the Government could be doing now. The pay review body should be thinking about the status of ambulance staff, and we should be considering no-strike agreements similar to those with the police and others in the public sector. The Government Front Bench are snared, but they can get themselves off the hook if they listren to their friends on the Conservative Benches.

6.41 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) has properly pinpointed some of the anomalies as they are perceived by a Conservative Member. There is a powerful case for those anomalies to be referred to the Arbitration, Conciliation and Advisory Service. I hope that he agrees with that, and that he will condemn the disgraceful speech of the Secretary of State. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech demeaned the occasion and, indeed, demeaned him.

I do not enter this debate with a National Union of Public Employees briefing or with a briefing from any union. My interest lies in the death of Mrs. Margaret Lander, a constituent of mine, and the suffering of a Mr. Lambert, both of Canning Town. More than a fortnight ago, they waited an hour for an ambulance when, only five minutes away at the Plaistow ambulance station, ambulance crews were willing and waiting to take them to hospital. Last Tuesday, the Secretary of State had the effrontery to say that ambulance people were only pretending to be available. I can tell him that since 9 am yesterday, more than 100 calls to the London ambulance service have been answered by ambulance personnel, most in voluntary time and through the radiotelephone system.

The Secretary of State's conduct has been very bad, and I criticise him on two main grounds. However, before doing so I want to comment on the points made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), who referred to pay. If she believes in market forces, as do most Conservative Members, she should pay attention to the haemorrhage in the personnel of the London ambulance service. Of the 2,700 staff, 680 left during the two years to June and of those, 380 left before normal retirement age and 200 because they were unfit.

Dame Jill Knight *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: I am sorry, but I cannot give way. I am responding to points made by the hon. Lady. She knows, as do all those who referred to the 10 per cent. time factor, that it is misleading because those who deal with non-emergency cases are still dealing with sick people who are in distress. Those who care for those who are in distress are necessarily under stress themselves. All ambulance crews are under stress all the time.

The Secretary of State says that Mr. Nichol is concerned with the highly skilled. He may not realise, and neither may Mr. Spry—who is not the administrator of the ambulance service, but the general manager of South-West

Thames regional health authority—that before one can become skilled at dealing with accidents on the A1 one must do an apprenticeship in dealing with the less difficult cases. I challenge the Secretary of State to say that he and the South-West Thames regional health authority are not putting out feelers for privatising the non-emergency services—for hiving off the so-called non-emergency service. Are they not in contact with such organisations as Securicor, London Regional Transport and even borough transport authorities? I have asked the right hon. and learned Gentleman about that, but he appears not to know the answer. As Secretary of State, he should know the answer. Will he get up and tell me whether that is the case?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Currently, the non-emergency staff in London are offering to do about 2 per cent. of their work, but want to be paid in full. The management will not accept that. That led to the trade unions breaking their agreement on the accident and emergency services and coming out in sympathy. The money that was previously being spent on non-emergency crews is, of course, now required to pay for the hospital car service, the taxis and the other vehicles that are being used to carry non-emergency patients. There are already parts of the country where the non-emergency service has been adequately replaced by other forms of transport. The strike is accelerating that day throughout the country.

Mr. Spearing: The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not deny my main charge. He has destabilised public service after public service—in which Conservative Members appear to have no interest—by threatening the integrity of those services and calling them into question. I challenge him to say that he is not doing that, but he has already confirmed my fears in his intervention. How can we extend the hospital ambulance service by expenditure on a minicab or a black taxi to take an elderly lady to hospital? That is what the Government are doing, and it undermines the morale and the cohesion of the ambulance service. The dispute is not simply about the immediate matter of pay.

On 31 October 1986, I had a debate with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I am sorry that she is not in her place today. She said:

> "About 10,500 fewer walking patients were being transported—a reduction of 44 per cent. I am more than happy at that development."—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1986; Vol. 103, c. 666.]

It was absolute sauce and a scandal for the hon. Lady to say that. She is no longer a Minister, but the Secretary of State and his colleagues are responsible for that policy. They are responsible for capping the funds of the ambulance service in London, when, in fact, it should be demand-led.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned the radio service. That service was introduced a few months ago, but it is an electronic computer system that does not always work properly. It sometimes jams. The Poplar ambulance station sent a detailed memorandum to the so-called administrators of the London ambulance service asking them to put it right. They have not even received a reply—*[Interruption.]* I ask the Secretary of State to pay attention to what I am saying. I hope that he will stop talking to his right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and attend to the detail of the shocking maladministration of the ambulance service in London. That is the background to the dispute.

My constituents in Canning Town were waiting for an ambulance from the local ambulance station. The administrators of the London ambulance service decreed that they should not receive their ambulance calls, and the Secretary of State must take responsibility for that decision because it was made by one man, whom I will not name, with the Secretary of State's connivance. It is he and he alone who is responsible.

6.49 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): The Secretary of State commented on how many Labour Members were in the House when he spoke tonight. They are here because they had hoped to hear something from him tonight which showed that we could look forward to the resolution of the dispute. We have heard nothing of that tonight. Those Labour Members who are present tonight are reflecting the high level of public concern in their constituencies that there should be an urgent resolution to the dispute.

The situation is serious. The Army and police vehicles and the voluntary ambulances cannot cope adequately with accidents and emergencies. To expect them to do so is unfair on ambulance crews who want to work and who have been prevented from doing so, and it is unfair on the police and the Army, who are put in the front line of a situation which is not of their making and with which they know that they cannot cope.

The Government have been right in the past to praise the ambulance service, particularly when ambulance officers and crews have risked their lives to save others. But when it comes to a pay award, they are offered less than the rate of inflation. They are offered a pay award that would let them see their standard of living slide, and that is wrong; that would see a widening gap between their pay and the pay of the other emergency services—the police and the fire service—with whom they have to work as a team.

The dispute need never have happened. It should never have happened. Having created the dispute, the Government are now making things worse every day and every hour.

The Secretary of State has insulted the ambulance crews that have been praised in the past by accusing them of posturing and pretending. He has twisted the facts, saying that the unions first accepted the pay offer when it is clear that the pay offer was twice refused on a ballot of all the membership. He said again and again in the House tonight that the union is on strike. The ambulance crews are not on strike; they have been suspended. Is he so out of touch with what is happening outside the House that he has not seen today the London ambulance service vehicles taking ambulance calls with signs on the side saying, "Suspended but still working"? Those ambulance crews want to work, but they are being prevented from doing so. The ambulance crews are rightly concerned about the pay offer, not just as a matter of justice for themselves, but because they rightly have long-term fears for the future of the service.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, ambulance crews are voting with their feet and leaving the ambulance service. The fact that the London ambulance service, like other ambulance services, is understaffed contributes to the fact that only half our ambulance services meet the Government guidelines for getting to accidents and emergencies on time. The Surrey

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ambulance service, which serves the constituency of the Minister for Health, does not meet the Government target for getting to accidents and emergencies on time.

The Secretary of State talked of bonds of common humanity. I hope that he will listen to the case of Mavis Thomas, whose sister came to see me in my surgery. Mavis Thomas, aged 17, had an asthma attack and an ambulance was called. The London ambulance service told me that no vehicles were available at the nearest three ambulance stations. It took half an hour for the nearest ambulance to arrive, and by the time Mavis Thomas reached hospital it was too late to resuscitate her and she died. Understaffing has contributed to the situation where the service cannot provide the ambulance service that we all want to see.

If the Secretary of State had talked to ambulance crews, he would know, as we do, that they do not want to be prevented from working. He would know, as we do, that they do not want to be in an industrial dispute. They do not want to be in political controversy. They want to do their job, and it is that job that the public want them to do. The Government are gambling with people's lives, both currently and in the future. They must agree to arbitration.

The Secretary of State has offered no hope of a solution tonight. The House must vote for arbitration to replace confrontation. If we do, the dispute could be ended tonight.

6.54 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): All of us in the House feel strongly about the important contribution made by the skilled and dedicated service of ambulance staff. None of us wants to underestimate the important part that they play in caring for the sick and the injured, often in stressful and difficult circumstances.

I want to pay a special tribute to the chief ambulance officers and all their staff who are struggling to maintain services to the public. Many have refused to turn their backs on their responsibilities. Members of the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel have declared themselves unwilling to countenance action that would hurt patients.

But having said that, I want to make it clear that today we have seen the Opposition in their true colours. It sends a shudder down one's back to think that, were the country ever so unfortunate as to have the Labour party in power again, once again it would be beer and sandwiches and, "Let's sort this out. Let's pay up. Who cares?" The frail and the vulnerable cannot speak. They do not have the strong arm of the trade unions. What they need is the long arm of the Government.

It is an interesting contrast that a week ago, when we were discussing the fundamental element of our primary health care proposals, the contract for the general practitioners, the Opposition Benches were almost empty. But today, with the whiff of industrial action, they come out of their lairs. With the prospect of a picket line, they stir from their lethargy.

Once again, we are reminded of the winter of discontent. Health care is to be decided not by those with the skills to decide on how best to meet patients' needs, not by medical and other practitioners, but by trade union guidelines, by the COHSE and NUPE convenors, who take it upon themselves to decide whether a case is urgent or needy.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: When we see the Opposition Benches crowded in this way, all of us know full well what the Opposition are really considering.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that it is a point of order and not a point of argument.

Mr. Corbyn: It is a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Secretary of State and the Minister of State have, throughout their speeches, vilified the National Union of Public Employees, which is my union, and at no stage have they been prepared——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It must be a point of order for me.

Mr. Corbyn: It would be common courtesy to allow a representative of that union to respond on behalf of its members. In those circumstances, is it in order for the Minister to refuse to give way?

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry that it has not been possible to call the hon. Gentleman and many other hon. Members, but unless the Minister gives way, I cannot do anything about it.

Mrs. Bottomley: Much has also been said about those who are not involved in emergency work. All of us agree that the nine out of 10 miles that the ambulance crews ride looking after those who are not accident or emergency cases are equally important. They are vulnerable and frail people who need the services that the ambulance crews should properly and rightly provide. Nor will the people of London think much of the argument that ambulance crews who are not carrying out a full day's work should receive their full pay.

The facts speak for themselves. This year the Government have provided the largest ever increase in NHS funds, far in excess of anything that the Labour party would ever have been able to provide. Within those generous resources, it must be right that the NHS management should decide how the resources are to be allocated, which are the cases that should be dealt with and how the rewards should be paid to those who work.

If patients are to experience the high standards of health care that we are determined to provide, Health Service employees must know that we shall protect them from the reckless and excessive claims of trade unions. Patients—the frail and the vulnerable; those who cannot speak, and who have not the strong arm of the unions behind them—must know that they can have confidence in our running of the National Health Service.

We want a speedy resolution of the dispute. We want to see service personnel return to their barracks, and not to be forced to man the ambulance service. And, of course, we want the unions to return to the Whitley council so that we can discuss in detail many of the aspects that have already been raised.

In London, where the thrust of this appalling action is taking place, this year's settlement would ensure that the pay of ambulance staff was well ahead of inflation. I ask the House to reject the outrageous claims of the Opposition, and to reject the motion. The Government believe in the National Health Service; we believe in those who work for it; and, above all, we believe in the patients. We do not believe that the National Health Service should be run by the excessive claims of irresponsible trade unionists.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 204, Noes 297.

Division No. [illegible]] [7 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark

Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John

Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter

Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair

Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey

Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*

Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*

Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard

Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During the debate that has just ended, the Minister—due either to shortage of time or lack of inclination—was unable to give the House any idea of what is now going to happen in the ambulance dispute, or of whether the intention is to withdraw the troops and negotiate properly with the unions who wish to undertake the emergency services. Is the Minister able to say when the House will be able to return to this important matter so that representatives of the unions concerned—the National Union of Public Employees, the Transport and General Workers Union, the Confederation of Health Service Employees and the General, Municipal, and Allied Trades Boilermakers Union—will be able to put their concerns directly to Ministers?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot advise hon. Members on tactics, but there may be opportunities next week, no doubt, to do that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It was a short debate. Those hon. Members who were called spoke very briefly. Nevertheless, I am sorry that more hon. Members could not be called.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I withdrew my name from the list of those who wished to speak in the debate because time was short. However, to elaborate on the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), people could die tonight on the streets of London. The Secretary of State has said nothing whatever about what is going to happen——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but we cannot continue the debate now.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The International Westminster Bank Bill is to be considered during private business at 7 o'clock and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suggest that the hon. Member ought to raise that point when we reach private business.

International Westminster Bank Bill

(By Order)

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair.*]

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.

7.15 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will no doubt have seen the report in tonight's *Evening Standard* that several leading persons in the City have been arrested and that one of the companies involved in the conspiracy to contravene section 13 of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 was the National Westminster bank. Two people, who were respectively chairman and chief executive of County NatWest at the time of the Blue Arrow deal, have also been arrested.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is bearing in mind the sub judice rule.

Mr. Cryer: That is the very point that I wish to raise with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In addition, the current finance director of County NatWest has been charged with conspiracy to defraud. You have raised the very point that I wish to draw to your attention—that as these cases are pending we might come into conflict with the sub judice rule if we were now to consider the International Westminster Bank Bill. In those circumstances, might it not be better to withdraw it? I am also wondering whether the promoters of the Bill have informed you about the newspaper report. As you rightly said, the sub judice rule influences our ability to debate certain parts of the Bill. I should therefore be grateful for your ruling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have received no representations, nor am I aware of the matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I do not think that they need impede our consideration of what are, after all, very narrow Lords amendments.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A number of the amendments relate to the bank's directors. Presumably it will be possible for hon. Members to vote against amendments that relate directly to those directors. It is possible that a number of hon. Members on both sides would like to divide the House.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I went into the Noes Lobby just before the Division and I could find no order of selection of amendments. Do you intend to take together all the amendments to the International Westminster Bank Bill and to have a separate vote on each of them, or do you intend to take each amendment separately and to have a vote after consideration of each amendment?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that I can deal with both of the points that have been raised by the hon. Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh). Our usual practice is to take Lords amendments en bloc, but if hon. Members wish to deal with them separately, the Chair will have to take account

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

of that wish. I would be willing to hear argument as to why particular amendments should be taken separately instead of taking them all en bloc.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was a member of the Committee which considered the Bill. No objections were raised at that time, but subsequently I put my name to the blocking motion. That was because certain matters came to light. The sub judice rule means that it would be extremely difficult to say anything that did not conflict with what the police are saying. As that action has been taken today, would it not be more acceptable if you were to withdraw the Bill and allowed it to be considered on another occasion when the Director of Public Prosecutions might be in a position to bring charges?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman and the House know that the Lords amendments before us are narrow and do not seem directly connected with the matters alluded to in these points of order. It might make sense to see how we get on. I remind hon. Members that, although the sub judice law does not apply when the House is considering legislation, the debate has to be confined to the narrow terms of the amendments before us.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I agree with the suggestion that we should debate the amendments together, but may we have the opportunity to vote on them separately if that is wished?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair will certainly be willing to give a sympathetic response to that, subject to the qualification that, when I consider the amendments carefully, some may be linked or hinge on each other and therefore it may not be appropriate to have a separate decision on every one. If it is appropriate and right hon. and hon. Members wish to have a separate Division, they will not find the Chair unresponsive.

Mr. Redmond: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it possible to obtain a copy of the Lords amendments? I have only received the broad brush version from the parliamentary agents and unfortunately I do not have the amendments. I have been to the Vote Office several times. I am a relatively new Member of the House. Could you tell me whether it is possible to obtain a copy?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's feigned naivety shocks the Chair. I understand that copies of the amendments should be available and are available in the Vote Office. I hope that the hon Gentleman will be able to get a copy.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We ought to re-examine the County NatWest affair and the arrests that have been made more thoroughly. There are hon. Members in the House who have clear connections with that bank.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I urge the hon. Gentleman to follow the example of the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and obtain a copy of the amendments from the Vote Office. When he looks at them, he will realise that it is hard to see any link between the point which he is trying to raise and the Lords amendments.

Mr. Skinner: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My point is not about the amendments that have come from the other place, but about the Bill. I am saying that there are so many Tory Members who have direct or indirect interests in the National Westminster bank and County Natwest, including the hon. Member for——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that hon. Members have an obligation to declare their interests. If a question of direct interest arises, doubtless the hon. Members concerned will make their interests known. That does not arise in the Lords amendments before us.

Mr. Skinner: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not just talking about National Westminster bank. What about Blue Arrow? For example, the right hon. Member for Chingford——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not know what Blue Arrow has to do with the debate——

Mr. Skinner: I will tell you what it has to do with it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to allow the hon. Gentleman to give a long explanation of how he thinks Blue Arrow may be connected with it. The motion before the House is that we consider the Lords amendments. I beg the hon. Gentleman to obtain a copy of these amendments, then he will understand that it is difficult to link the matter he is trying to raise with the issue before the House.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Bill is faulty. Today the fraud squad is getting involved with people connected with the higher echelons of that bank, and the Bill was brought to the House by those same people. In view of that fact, I say that the Bill should be abandoned. Let us get rid of it, and bring it back when all this has been settled. Surely that is the point—we are to debate the bank when its top people are up to their necks in it. They have been making money hand over fist with leveraged buy-outs and Conservative Members are involved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: These are not matters which are admissible in the debate on the Lords amendments. Doubtless right hon. and hon. Members will bear them in mind, but they are not relevant to the debate, or to the decisions which have to be made.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The promoters of the Bill have sent us a letter to explain that the amendments are necessary because Speaker's Counsel and others have suggested that there are errors in the way in which the Bill was originally drafted. To clear up those problems it has had to be drafted again. It seems odd that a respected bank, with experienced legal representatives, should have received advice and presented a Bill to the House which turns out to have been badly drafted. Do you not feel, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it calls into question the quality of all the advice that the bank has received on a wide range of issues? Therefore, I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was entitled to raise the issue of——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The quality of the advice which the bank has received is not a matter for me, or for our debate. I suggest that we get on with the debate. The hon. Gentleman correctly identified the matter before the House when he said that the Lords amendments are drafting amendments to correct errors in the Bill. That is the substance of what they amount to.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your advice. We have to consider 10 amendments to a Bill concerned with vesting in National Westminster Bank plc. Until the debate is pursued, I shall not be able to understand the significance of the 10 amendments. However, is it your ruling that, when we debate the amendments, we cannot debate the wider principles involved in the Bill? May it not emerge from the debate on specific amendments that we are concerned with the general nature of the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has put the matter correctly—these are essentially drafting amendments to correct part of the Bill. The House will certainly be given the opportunity to discuss and consider each amendment. We had better see how the debate progresses, then perhaps we shall see if the other issues alluded to in the various points of order are relevant.

Mr. Barnes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If we discover that the 10 amendments have greater import or significance for the general nature of the Bill, will that affect procedure at a later stage? Is that possible?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We should see how we proceed. Let us get on.

Motion made—[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means]—and Question put, That the Lords amendments be now considered:—

The House divided: Ayes 160, Noes 49.

Division No. 387] **[7.28 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger King and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boyes, Roland
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Janner, Greville
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendments considered.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendments.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In the light of the foregoing points of order, it might be sensible if the House were to discuss the amendments collectively; if hon. Members wish to have separate Divisions on all or some of the amendments, perhaps they would indicate that to the Chair and sympathetic consideration will be given to any such request.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you explain what procedures the House is adopting? A private Bill is normally steered through the House by an hon. Member, who gives reasons for the amendments. The amendments were moved by the Second Deputy Chairman without any explanation. Will an hon. Member be called to put forward the proposals on behalf of the promoters of the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is open to any hon. Member in charge of a private Bill, should he so wish in the circumstances before the House, to volunteer an explanation of the Lords amendments. The House must bear in mind that any hon. Member is entitled to speak only once, other than with the express consent of the House, on any Lords amendment. Therefore, an hon. Member in charge of a Bill may prefer to respond to points made rather than to volunteer a statement at the outset. The Chair will recognise any hon. Member wishing to respond to points raised in the debate. I ask the House to bear in mind that even an hon. Member in charge of a Bill is allowed to speak only once on a Lords amendment.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is early in the evening, but later I may be asked to act as a Teller. What would be the procedure if there were a scuffle in the exit of the lobby? Would I have to leave, protect myself or seek your guidance?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is purely hypothetical. We shall deal with problems when they arise.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There will be a short debate on the amendments. Is an hon. Member present on behalf of the promoters to respond to comments made in the debate? If so, will he be prepared to do so?

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I should be happy to answer any questions put in the debate.

7.45 pm

Mr. Michael Welsh: I should like to speak to a number of the amendments. The first amendment is to clause 4, page 3, line 12. Its purpose is to leave out "having regard to" and to insert "by reason of". I cannot see the reason for the amendment.

Parliamentary agents cost much money. It is their duty to present correct Bills on behalf of the organisations which pay them much money for their work. I cannot foresee any reason for the amendment, unless there is an ulterior motive. If there is, I should like to know. If it is better English, we should like to know; if it is better grammar, we should like to know; and if it is better parliamentary wording, we should like to know. I am sure that the people who are financing the Bill would like to know why they must again pay parliamentary agents. I do not want to press that to a vote.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are several undercurrents to the debate, one of which is how private business has been conducted in the House? Is it appropriate for hon. Members to have to spend much time on Second Reading and further time in Committee and on Report when the Bill was not presented in its correct form? Is there not a strong argument for not proceeding with these private Bills in this way? A company such as a bank——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I must remind the House—the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) has the Floor—that we are considering Lords amendments that deal with comparatively narrow issues. The debate must be restricted to that.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It was not a point of order but an intervention. I have explained that the hon. Gentleman's intervention was out of order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Doncaster, North will not be tempted down that road. I call the hon. Member for Doncaster, North.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It was not a point of order. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) intervened, but I explained to the hon. Member for Doncaster, North that the points that he made would not be relevant in the debate.

Mr. Welsh: My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said that there is an undercurrent to the debate, but it is more like an overdraft.

The hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) is well versed in these matters, so I am sure that he will give a good and lengthy reply to the debate and explain the reason for the Lords amendments.

I should like to speak to the amendment to clause 4, page 3, line 14. This amendment is serious, especially in the light of certain things that happened in the City today. The amendment aims to insert the words

> "in the opinion of the directors of the Bank".

Without the amendment, the Bill reads,

> "in pursuance of a requirement made under subsection (2) above should be later than the appointed day".

Why insert

> "in the opinion of the directors of the Bank"

in the Bill? It is not necessary, as today's events show.

Mr. Cryer: Does not that amendment and the amendment to leave out "having regard to" and insert "by reason of" mean that the directors can set aside the law of any country or territory outside the United Kingdom with respect to vesting property? Would my hon. Friend care to reflect on today's circumstances and the extra powers that the amendments appear to confer on the directors by setting aside the law?

Mr. Welsh: I thank my hon. Friend for bringing that matter to my notice. We are told that the amendments are narrow, but sometimes they can be dangerous. I like to think that, in discussing such a Bill, we aim to protect everyone, especially those who invest. We are talking about pension funds and so on and I cannot understand how these measures can protect them in any way. I am not saying anything about the activities of the directors. That matter is sub judice and has nothing to do with me. However, everything is not right with the bank at present.

The Chairman of Ways and Means said that he would consider Members' wishes on any important issues on which heads should be counted.

Mr. Skinner: The first amendment is very wide. It would leave out "having regard to" the law of any country and insert "by reason of". Insertion of "by reason of" will mean that the law is binding. For example, a person who has money invested in the Cayman Islands, the Isle of Man or some other offshore outfit has to take account of the binding law. Suppose that that person had made enough money and shared it with Ken Dodd, or someone else, and decided to put some money in Poland because some idiot had said, "Poland is a decent place. It is changing." Suppose the business were subsidised to the hilt and someone said, "Put some of the NatWest money in Poland". I can imagine some Conservative Members saying, "Hold on. Can we be sure that our money will be sound with Jaruzelski and Lech Walesa and the Pope?" That person would have to say, "Just a minute. This is binding." Originally, it was a matter of "having regard to", so the directors could say that they were only "having regard to" the law of any dodgy country and its investments. If the amendment is carried and "by reason of" is inserted, they will be tied hand and foot. As has been said, this is a narrow amendment. That means that an investor can either forget such an idea or be tied to a country. Just imagine having money in the——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is enough for an intervention.

Mr. Skinner: We shall come to it later. It is a good seam of coal.

Mr. Welsh: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for helping in his usual shy and reserved way. It is good of him to come to the aid of an ordinary Back-Bencher who is not as involved as my hon. Friend in every aspect of the House——

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): And in banking.

Mr. Welsh: And in banking. I should declare that I have a bank account with NatWest. I do not understand why —I suppose that it is the same for everyone—but every time my bank manager writes to me, he writes in red ink. He is a Socialist.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Member was deflected from his speech by a remark from the Government Benches, but I am sure that he will restrict himself to the amendments.

Mr. Welsh: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Back-Benchers who are not satisfied with the answers that they get from the hon. Member for Honiton may request a vote.

Sir Peter Emery: In an intervention, not a speech, may I point out that the words "having regard to" could be taken to mean that the directors would not take account of all the laws of the countries in which accounts were held. The authorities in those countries might think that that was not fair. The bank wishes to abide by the laws of all the countries in which accounts are held, which is why "by reason of" is to be inserted. The provision

"in the opinion of the directors of the Bank"

is to be inserted so that the vesting day can be varied if certain of the countries in which the accounts are held wish to do so, for reasons of their own. That provision has been made in the Hambros legislation and in another Bill, so it is not that unusual. I hope that my comment helps the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Welsh: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for helping me.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) said that the amendment moves the bank closer to the law. In effect, the Bill provides for a fusion of two banks. One amendment makes it clear that the vesting—which is required by the law which the hon. Member for Honiton claims the bank wishes to recognise—can take place, in the opinion of the directors, on a date later than the vesting day required by law. One amendment says that the directors must abide by the law and another says that the director will have the discretion to avoid it.

Mr. Welsh: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The banks want to operate within the law, but I am worried about a different issue—whether the directors want to operate within the law. I have been told to limit my remarks to the amendments, which concern the directors. No one can say that directors keep within the law. If they did, there would not have been that raid this morning. Sometimes the banks need to be protected from their directors.

Sir Peter Emery: No directors of NatWest or the International Westminster bank have been affected in any way by today's events. Knowing the hon. Gentleman's desire to be fair, I think that he would not want the statement that he has just made to stand on the record.

Mr. Welsh: I am saying only that the fraud squad has called on some houses, as has happened in other undertakings in the City. I should like to think that all directors had clean hands, but they are raided every other day. If they were all as innocent as the men who drink in workings men's clubs, everything in the City would be lovely. As it is, the banks themselves—never mind the people—may have to be protected against their own directors.

8 pm

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend may recall that when Lloyds promoted a private Bill in 1981 which gave the accounts of Lloyds almost complete immunity from any legal process, we received assurance after assurance that those promoting the Bill were as white as the driven snow and completely without stain on their honour. Yet shortly after the Bill was passed, scandal after scandal piled up in Lloyds. Does my hon. Friend agree that we should look at assurances with a critical eye?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House once more that we are dealing with Lords amendments and that the debate must be restricted to them. It is not in order to broaden it into a wide debate on banking practice.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are right to say that we must find ways and means of sticking to this group of amendments. In this case, my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) is speaking primarily about the two amendments to clause 4. I am sure that you are aware of those important amendments.

The point of order on which I seek clarification is whether my hon. Friend is allowed to speak broadly on the issue. As the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) said, the amendments change the relationship of the directors to the country. They cannot just have "regard to" the laws of any country, but must stick to the laws of the country because the amendment seeks to insert "by reason of". The provision becomes binding and it is a wide amendment. My hon. Friend can properly say that the directors must bear in mind the law of the country totally and utterly, as the Prime Minister might say, on a regular basis instead of having a passive affinity with it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Doncaster, North is perfectly capable of looking after himself and keeping in order, as I am sure he will.

Mr. Welsh: I am now speaking to the amendment which says;
"in the opinion of the directors of the Bank."
The amendment was tabled as a second thought and it may be dangerous—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to carry on.

Mr. Welsh: The amendment is important with regard to the directors because it is about international deals, not about deals in this country. Every hon. Member has had complaints about an overseas investment that went wrong in Gibraltar, including the hon. Member for Honiton himself. The hon. Member for Honiton may think that I am wrong, but I do not think that we should allow the chance of such events happening again. When we move to a vote later, if you will allow it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want my head to be counted.

The International Westminster bank will deal with pension funds and it may even deal with miners' pension funds. Things may go wrong and the directors may get into trouble. I am sure that most of the directors are honest, straightforward chaps, but there are always some bad apples in the barrel. If things go wrong, nobody can say that the hon. Member for Doncaster, North did not vote against the amendments. It may not mean a great deal to most hon. Members, but it means a great deal in constituencies like mine, where people are predominantly working class and honest. They like to think that their Members of Parliament try their best to protect everyone. The only way to protect their interests in this House is by a count of heads in a vote.

Mr. Skinner: Before my hon. Friend leaves the amendment dealing with the power of directors, I want to point out that directors, as my hon. Friend knows only too well, have tremendous power. They have more power than trade union leaders, for example. They do not have to go on strike and they do not bother about ballots when they are asset-stripping or when they have a leveraged buy-out. I want my hon. Friend to turn his attention to the question of directors having that power, which is raised by this amendment rather than later ones, and whether the power should go to the people who work in the banks by means of a ballot. We hear much about ballots.

We should oppose this amendment. Perhaps my hon. Friend has a different view, but I believe that it should be opposed on the ground that it does not compel directors to concede a ballot to the people who work in the bank. If we developed that argument, we might be able to see a bit more light at the end of the National Westminster tunnel.

Mr. Welsh: My hon. Friend is right; he has made a vital point. However, as you drew to my attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must confine our remarks to the Bill and the amendments. There are many other matters that I should like to mention, and many other hon. Members would like to deal with shortcomings in undertakings outside the City, but we must stick to the amendments.

I have a question about another amendment that may be important and the hon. Member for Honiton may be able to explain how it will protect people. The amendment applies to clause 5 and seeks to leave out
"whether made before, on or after"
and insert "made before." Perhaps I should not be, but I am suspicious by nature and I cannot help it. I am suspicious when I see an amendment that means that if anyone signs something on that day or after that day, it is not covered by the Bill.

Mr. Skinner: Which amendment is that?

Mr. Welsh: The amendment applies to line 42 of clause 5. I suspect that it seeks to give the directors powers that they do not deserve to have. The clause was written by the parliamentary draftsmen and did not come off the top of someone's head. The draftsmen must have phrased the clause in that way for good reasons. It may have been to protect investors on the day of vestment or after. Perhaps the hon. Member for Honiton can explain why the promoters came to the conclusion that the clause should be amended. Will anybody suffer from that amendment, or are people being protected? My innocence in these matters can easily be seen. All I want is an explanation of the amendment so that we can study it in some depth.

I want to deal next with some other serious amendments that seek to remove words from the Bill. One amendment that applies to line 10 of clause 6 seeks to leave out "omitted" and insert "not to be done". There must be a good reason for that. An identical amendment applies to line 14. Perhaps the original words were not parliamentary language. If they were not parliamentary language, they should not have been included in the Bill in the first place because the parliamentary agents drew it up. If the amendments could cause damage or hurt people, we are obliged to vote on them. Perhaps the hon. Member for Honiton can give me a reasonable answer that might increase my knowledge of international banking.

I am also concerned about the amendment to clause 11:
'page 6, leave out from ("1963") in line 26 to ("as") in line 27.'
There must be a reason for this amendment. Why were those words included in the Bill originally, if they must be withdrawn now? The important point relates to the Stock Transfer Act 1963. The Bill refers to the Stock Exchange

(Completion of Bargains) Act 1976. That has been removed by the amendment. The words were included in good faith.

Another of the Lords amendments relates to clause 15, page 7——

Mr. Skinner: The amendment to clause 11 leaves out the words from "1963". That was a pretty good year. It was Profumo year. That was when Macmillan got prostate trouble. He had a diplomatic illness and a new Prime Minister was needed. I can see 1989 or 1990 being a replica of 1963. The Prime Minister will get a diplomatic illness and some grey-suited men will come along and say, "Enough's enough. You had better get off." The Prime Minister will be able to travel round the world and deposit her money in the International Westminster bank in all the countries to which the Bill refers——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Doncaster, North is perfectly in order. He is developing his arguments which are in order. The only thing that worries me is that every time he is interrupted, he is invited to go out of order.

Mr Welsh: Well, 1963 may have been a nice year, but it was not a very good year for me. I had an accident in a colliery after I returned from Ruskin college. I remember it very well.

Another of the Lords amendments amends clause 15. It states:

> 'Clause 15, page 8 leave out from ("(b)") in line 33 to ("and") in line 38 and insert ("the reference in subsection (3) of Section 11 (Evidence of Vesting) of this Act to the Stock Transfer Act 1963 shall include a reference to the Stock Transfer Act (Northern Ireland) 1963;")'

The Bill as it stands reads very differently. Why should the Stock Exchange (Completion of Bargains) Act 1976 be excluded? Will somebody tell me why?

Mr. Skinner: I will tell my hon. Friend why. The National Westminster bank is experiencing serious trouble at the moment and many of its leading lights have been caught by the fraud squad. Some of them have been handcuffed and put inside. However, very few are actually done. The law in this country is supposed to be straight and above board for everyone. Most of the people who get done here are those who get a couple of bob out of the Department of Social Security. The directors and the people in the City usually get away with it.

8.15 pm

Why is the reference to the Stock Exchange (Completion of Bargains) Act 1976 left out of the Bill? It is excluded because it refers to the amount of money being made by the people who run the bank. The last thing that they want people to know is that the Bill contains an opportunity for completion of bargains on the stock exchange. That does not apply to many people who invest in the National Westminster bank; it is all about the directors making a small fortune——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Doncaster, North will stick to the amendment, as he has been doing.

Mr. Welsh: The amendment to page 8 of clause 15 is narrow, but very important. I am speaking to the amendments, but I understand the feeling of many hon. Members on both sides of the House who may be involved in these matters. I am not used to dealing with finance. I still give my wife £25 a week and spoil her like most men spoil their wives. That is as far as I go in finance.

Perhaps the reason for the amendment is that the parliamentary agents are correcting an error. The boys in the City may think that the parliamentary agents are all right, but they are tying their hands.

Why must we drag Northern Ireland into this? The Bill refers to the Stock Exchange (Completion of Bargains) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977. That is removed from the Bill and substituted with the Stock Transfer Act (Northern Ireland) 1963. What is so sacrosanct about the 1963 Act? No one seems to want the other Acts. There must be an answer for this.

Mr. Skinner: There might be a clue here. Although I might never be in the position of introducing a Bill on behalf of a bank,—I am playing the devil's advocate here —I would want to consider what happened in Northern Ireland a few years ago. I would remember De Lorean, the money, corruption and fiddling. Two Governments allowed large sums of taxpayers' money to be salted away. We had better make sure——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Doncaster, North is being as good as gold. He is speaking to the amendments. Unfortunately, he continues to be corrupted by interventions that have nothing to do with the amendments. I hope that all hon. Members, particularly the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), will allow the hon. Member for Doncaster, North, who is perfectly in order, to develop his arguments.

Mr. Welsh: I will stick to the amendments because that is my job. However, I always support people who want more freedom. I will follow your wishes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Why is the 1963 Act sacrosanct? Why is nothing else allowed? Why has it been taken out? There may be good reasons for that, but as a layman I can see no good reason for its removal other than for ulterior motives. No other Act is entertained even though there may be other reasonable Acts.

Sir Peter Emery: It really is quite simple. The Stock Exchange (Completion of Bargains) Act 1976 is material only insofar as it amends the Stock Transfer Act 1963. Accordingly, it would be best to omit altogether the reference to that Act because the 1963 Act applies. The amendment to clause 15 is tabled for the same reason. It refers to the 1976 Act and, therefore, to the Stock Exchange (Completion of Bargains) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977. The words are to be omitted because they are unnecessary and for no other reason.

Mr. Welsh: I cannot say that the parliamentary agents are incompetent. I do not know any of those gentlemen, but I know that they are well-trained and reasonably efficient. Many of the amendments drafted by civil servants are foolish, but that is not the case with parliamentary agents. They are well paid and efficient. They may have included the amendments as a long-stop.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend seems to accept that parliamentary agents cannot do anything wrong. I cannot accept that. As my hon. Friend knows, people make mistakes. On the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill, which we are not discussing now, the parliamentary agents

[Mr. Skinner]

did a far from splendid job, and we tried to amend that Bill. I wonder whether my hon. Friend will rephrase what he said about parliamentary agents. They can do only what they are instructed to do and they were instructed by people whom the hon. Member for Honiton knows very well.

My hon. Friend should not think of the parliamentary agents as golden angels. He must think about the City of London asking how it can make more money. That is the principle behind this and it is why the amendments have been tabled. Somebody along the way has said, "We had better amend the Bill in the House of Lords where they are all dropping off to sleep. Do not do it in the House of Commons because somebody might spot it. If we do that we can make a bit on the side." Money is the reason. The parliamentary agents are not acting alone. Their mentors have said, "Get that changed and sharp".

Mr. Welsh: My hon. Friend may have a good point. That is a possibility, but we cannot say that it happens for sure. However, I have some sympathy with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover.

There is an amendment to an amendment—I thought that that was impossible. Therefore, no one is too sure about this. I do not know too much about finance but I have my suspicions.

Mr. Skinner: It is obvious that my hon. Friend is rightly concerned about the amendments. I have already suggested one possible reason for the amendments, but there is another. My hon. Friend says that he does not know about finance but he is not kidding me. He is the treasurer of the all-party group of non-profit-making clubs. Therefore, he is in charge of about threepence ha'penny a week.

Suppose that my first fear—that they are doing it because the bosses are telling them—is not correct. Let us suppose that the parliamentary agents are making money on commission and on the basis of work done in the same way as lawyers—which is really what they are. Somebody may say, "If we can slip in a dozen amendments in the Lords, it will increase our commission". This is the lesser of my two proposals. However, a Machiavellian parliamentary agent may have said, "The longer it goes, the more money I make." Therefore, they might not be too keen on the Bill receiving a speedy passage. My hon. Friend likes the parliamentary agents, but I wonder whether he would favour my second proposition.

Mr. Welsh: My hon. Friend may have a point. I do not know how parliamentary agents are paid, but their job is to work on private Bills. The sooner such Bills are abolished the better. Perhaps, as my hon. Friend said, they include things knowing they will have to amend them later. That happens with many legal people. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover may have a point, but we do not know.

On the removal of the references to the Stock Exchange (Completion of Bargains) Act 1976 and the Stock Exchange (Completion of Bargains) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 the parliamentary agents may be creating a loophole that we have not spotted. Those references should remain in the Bill.

Mr. Skinner: That is too Machiavellian. I do not believe that parliamentary agents would do that. They are into money, and there is also the second proposition that I have described. There is a third possible explanation but it is the least favoured of my ideas. A Left-wing parliamentary agent may have been listening to the debates on the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. He may think that he can help by trying to stop the Bill which will create a massive balance of payments problem for Britain because of the imported coal. He may say, "I will draft some esoteric amendments so that the Bill can be dragged out." That may be going too far, but it is more plausible than my hon. Friend's argument.

Mr. Welsh: My hon. Friend may have a valid point, but I am describing what has happened. We have been told by the sponsors of the Bill that the words to be omitted are not necessary and do not do anything. If that is the case, why did the parliamentary agents include them?

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: My hon. Friend must be careful. I do not think that the agents wanted to include the amendments. We have been given a document that tells us why the Bill's promoter wants us to continue with the Bill. If my hon. Friend looks at that, he will see that the recommendation for the change came about as a result of consultation with Counsel to the Chairman of Committees of the House of Lords and includes alterations agreed with Counsel to Mr. Speaker. I am puzzled. I understand the role that those two people perform in the House, but why were the recommendations suggested to the Counsel to Mr. Speaker not put forward in this place before the Bill went to the House of Lords?

Those individuals must have recommended alterations for good reasons. Can my hon. Friend explain what those reasons were and the implications of forcing them on the parliamentary agents who may not have wanted to take up more time by bringing the Bill back? They must be important because I am sure that officers of the House would not want to delay the Bill without good reason.

Mr. Welsh: If that is correct and the bank sponsors have no desire for the amendments, it is all the more reason why the Bill should be left as it is. If someone else wants the Bill amended, we should vote for the Bill as it is written. There might be good reason to leave the Bill as it is to protect people when others may not want them to be protected.

8.30 pm

Mr. Skinner: There may be a simple answer. We have a Bill that is not well written. It has been produced by lawyers who earn £100,000 a year. We know what it is like as they want 20 quid to write a letter for our constituents. The Bill is drafted and it is a bit cock-eyed, so someone comes along and says that it must be altered. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) asked why those alterations were not made in the House of Commons. As I said earlier, the answer is that they can slip such changes through in the House of Lords because no one can be bothered. People up there fall asleep and it is conceivable that that is why those changes were made in the House of Lords late on. I have put forward all sorts of propositions to my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North, but perhaps it is just a simple matter of neglect. The i's must be dotted and the t's crossed somewhere, so the Bill is taken to the House of Lords.

Mr. Welsh: My hon. Friend may have a point. If that has happened, it is all the more reason why we should vote against the amendments. It means that someone has been conniving, for want of a better word. We are not here to do such things. We are here to be honest and to protect people, even investors.

I do not believe that the amendments should be accepted by the House. The hon. Member for Honiton may say that they have the same purpose. If that is true, why cannot we have two Acts? There would be nothing wrong with double protection.

I have spoken on some of the amendments which I consider important. When the time comes, I should like to think that we could vote separately on the amendment relating to clause 4, page 3, line 14,

"in the opinion of the directors of the Bank"

I would also like to think that votes on amendments to clause 11, page 6, and clause 15, page 8, could be taken together.

Sir Peter Emery: I congratulate the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) on speaking for nearly an hour about fairly precise amendments. I shall try to answer his questions clearly in the hope that that will assist the House to obtain answers about the amendments, which are fairly narrow.

The purpose of the amendments is to improve the clarity of the Bill. The hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members have suggested that something is wrong because parliamentary agents could not get the Bill 100 per cent. right when it was produced for First Reading and Committee. Few Bills produced by Governments of either party do not require some amendment or correction. There are few parliamentary agents who get everything right the first time. I believe that it is correct—I have spent some time in the Procedure Committee to try to ensure this—that we should spend the right amount of time to make legislation as clear and as simple as humanly possible.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I refer the hon. Gentleman to page 1 of the Bill, which says:

"And whereas the objects of this Act cannot be attained without the authority of Parliament"..

The first amendment refers to things that go on in other countries. Why do we have to have the authority of this House to do something that affects other countries? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we have had many problems with private legislation? I believe that there is a strong case to take such legislation away from the House. I wonder whether the International Westminster Bank Bill should be considered at all. Why is it absolutely essential—the preamble to the Bill says that it is—for the little section that relates to having regard to the laws of other countries to be included in the Bill?

Sir Peter Emery: The amendment, which leaves out "having regard to" and inserts "by reason of", ensures that the laws of any other country are abided by absolutely.

Mr. Cryer: Because of the shoddy directors at NatWest.

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) does himself no credit by making remarks of that kind.

The Bill amalgamates, for the convenience of the bank and of this country in its financial dealings, the International Westminster bank, which is operating outside this country, and the National Westminster bank, which operates in this country. The purpose is to bring the two organisations together. The laws of the overseas country in which the bank is operating will be abided by. There is no suggestion in the Bill that those laws should be overridden and there is no desire on the part of the National Westminster bank to do that.

Mr. Michael Welsh: Some countries are known as "bank havens" and there is little control, if any, over their financial transactions. If the International Westminster bank operated in such countries, it would have to be subject to our laws or investors might lose their money—as happened in Gibraltar. Has that been taken into account when discussing the operations of National Westminster and International Westminster?

Sir Peter Emery: The bank has taken that into consideration. Obviously, it wants the most stringent regulations to apply overseas as would apply here. That does not mean that the bank would seek to override the laws of another nation. It is to make that absolutely clear that the amendments have been tabled. The directors of the bank have sought the amendments to ensure that if, when dealing with its banking operations in another country, it was decided that the vesting date in that country should not be the same as for the whole of the Bill, it could be delayed. There is nothing new about that and I have already told the House that that happened with two previous banking Bills.

Questions have also been asked about the amendment relating to clause 5, page 3, line 34. The words in the brackets are unnecessary and slightly misleading. They highlight the probate of a will without referring to the alternative possibility of letters of administration. Such letters of administration may be annexed to a will or issued when the deceased has omitted to appoint any executors of his will. Therefore, those letters ensure that the matter is dealt with.

I come to clause 11, page 6, lines 26 and 27 and clause 15, page 8, lines 33 and 38. I have already said that the Stock Exchange (Completion of Bargains) Act 1976 is material only in that it amends the Stock Transfer Act 1963.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My attention has been drawn to the fact that the Serjeant at Arms is not in his place. I have never known this in my several years as a Member here and I wondered whether it was right for the House to continue when the Serjeant at Arms had been drawn away to some important matter. If any hon. Member were to become terribly unruly—not I, of course—there would be a problem and I thought that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, might like to consider this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate is proceeding in good order and I am sure that the Serjeant at Arms is within the precincts.

Sir Peter Emery: As the amendments to the 1963 Act become part of the Act there is no need for reference to be made to the 1976 Act and it would be misleading to include it. The hon. Member for Doncaster, North has already explained why it is unnecessary. Therefore, it has been deleted and that applies equally to the Stock Transfer (Northern Ireland) Act 1963.

The group of amendments attempts to clarify the Bill, make it more easily understood and allow the National Westminster bank to operate as efficiently as humanly

[Sir Peter Emery]

possible after the amalgamation of its two organisations. That will benefit the country. An extensive amount of work is carried out by this company internationally, and the Bill will help this nation's economy. I should have thought that the House would want to hasten the Bill through. Most organisations would not have to come to the House if they want to bring together their overseas and domestic sections. The Bill is necessary because we are dealing with a bank which is structured under the Banking Act 1987.

The House will divide if necessary, but I hope that it will give a fair wind to the National Westminster bank in trying to do what it can financially for this country's benefit.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 111, Noes 36.

Division No. [illegible]] **[8.42 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fineberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David

Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*

Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*

Waller, Gary
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Gordon, Mildred
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Lamond, James

Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. Michael Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It is customary to put all the Lords amendments together——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In view of that reaction, I think that the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) lays particular emphasis on the second amendment——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So be it; I shall put the Question on the first.

Lords amendment: In clause 4, page 3, line 12, leave out "having regard to" and insert "by reason of".

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 104, Noes 27.

Division No. [illegible]] **[8.53 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen

Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fineberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey

Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Herefprd)*
Sims, Roger
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger King and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Lamond, James
Litherland, Robert
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Pike, Peter L.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. Michael Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Have I the agreement of the House to put the remaining amendments——

Hon. Members: No.

Lords amendment: In clause 5, page 3, leave out from "capacity" in line 34 to "and" in line 35.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House proceeded to a Division:—

Mr. Harry Barnes *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems that we are voting on the third amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes. I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. I read out the wrong amendment. We should be voting on clause 4, page 3, line 14.

Mr. Barnes: On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A problem has arisen with the material that the promoters have supplied to us. Normally a set of amendments would be supplied with amendment numbers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's point of order after the Division.

Lords amendment: In clause 4, page 3, line 14, at end insert

"in the opinion of the directors of the Bank".

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 101, Noes 23.

Division No. 390] **[9.3 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger King and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boyes, Roland
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
O'Brien, William
Redmond, Martin
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the House agrees, I will now put the remaining Lords amendments.

Hon. Members: No.

Lords amendment: In clause 5, page 3, leave out from "capacity" in line 34 to "and" in line 35.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 85, Noes 22.

Division No. 381] **[9.15 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger King and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
O'Brien, William
Redmond, Martin
Skinner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put the Question on the remaining Lords amendments.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So be it.

Lords amendment: In clause 5, page 3, line 42, leave out "whether made before, on or after" and insert "made before".

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 100, Noes 21.

Division No. 382] **[9.27 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*

Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger King, and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*

Haynes, Frank
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Skinner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. Michael Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the House agrees——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Object.

Lords amendment: In clause 5, page 3, line 44, after "and" insert "any will made on or after the appointed day, being in either case a will".

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 92, Noes 29.

Division No. 383] **[9.39 pm**

AYES

Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Hind, Kenneth

Holt, Richard
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger King and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Cryer, Bob
Dicks, Terry

Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Haynes, Frank
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Janner, Greville

McFall, John
McKay, Allen (Barnsley West)
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. (Vale of Glam)
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. Michael Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With the agreement of the House I shall put——

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In that case, I will put the Question on the next amendment.

Lords amendment: In clause 6, page 4, line 10 leave out "omitted" and insert "not to be done".

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 98, Noes 22.

Division No. 304] **[9.50 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset N)
Baldry, Tony
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bruce, Ian (Dorset South)
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. (Rushcliffe)
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre F'rest)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Couchman, James
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Griffiths, Sir Eldon (Bury St E')
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth N)
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken (Hyndburn)
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Holt, Richard
Howarth, G. (Cannock & B'wd)
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger (B'ham N'thfield)
Knight, Greg (Derby North)
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allen (Eastwood)
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill (T'side North)
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Irvine and
Mr. Roger Knapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry (Derbyshire NE)
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. (D'nt'n & R'dish)
Boyes, Roland
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry (B'ham Hodge H'l)
Dixon, Don
Haynes, Frank
Hoey, Ms Kate (Vauxhall)
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John (Coventry NE)
McFall, John
McKay, Allen (Barnsley West)
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Nellist, Dave
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. (Vale of Glam)
Wall, Pat

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. Michael Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

It being after Ten o'clock, consideration of Lords amendments stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at this day's sitting, the Private Business set down by direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Prisons (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*, the Statute Law Repeals Bill *[Lords]* and the Opticians Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

The House divided: Ayes 118, Noes 25.

Division No. 305] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset N)
Batiste, Spencer
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Bruce, Ian (Dorset South)
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John, (Luton N)
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon K. (Rushcliffe)
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre F'rest)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Couchman, James
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Sir Eldon (Bury St E')
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth N)
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. (B'ham H'll Gr')
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. (Cannock & B'wd)
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger (B'ham N'thfield)
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby North)
Leigh, Edward (Gainsbor'gh)
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard

Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*

Thorne, Neil
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Boyes, Roland
Cryer, Bob
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Haynes, Frank
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan

Morgan, Rhodri
O'Brien, William
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

International Westminster Bank Bill

Lords amendments again considered.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With the leave of the House, I will put the remaining Lords amendments together.

Hon. Members: No.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Objection taken.

Lords amendment: In clause 6, page 4, line 14, leave out "omitted" and insert "not to be done".

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 104, Noes 24.

Division No. 386] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*

Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Irvine and
Mr. Robert Hayward.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin

Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boyes, Roland
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John

Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Haynes, Frank
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the remaining Lords amendments.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. There have now been about nine votes on amendments to this Bill, and another vote on the business of the House. If you look at the number of votes that have been cast from both sides of the House throughout the Divisions on the amendments, you will note that they have remained relatively consistent.

May I seek your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker? Have we not now reached a stage where it would be appropriate for Members to vote in their places, standing up and sitting down, as has been done previously? It is clear that a great deal of time is being wasted for reasons that have nothing to do with the business before us.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. Although he must not argue it, I can tell him and the House that I am not prepared to consider his suggestion.

Lords amendment: In clause 11, page 6, leave out from "1963" in line 26 to "as" in line 27.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 102, Noes 26.

Division No. 287] **[10.27 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McLoughlin, Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Michael
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ryder, Richard
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil
Trippier, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Irvine and
Mr. Robert Hayward.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boyes, Roland
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Foster, Derek
Haynes, Frank
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker: By leave of the House, I will put the Question on the remaining Lords amendments.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Objection taken.

Lords amendment: In clause 15, page 8, leave out line 7.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:-

The House divided: Ayes 109, Noes 27.

Division No. 288] **[10.40 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William

Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ryder, Richard
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil
Trippier, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Irvine and
Mr. Robert Hayward.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boyes, Roland
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Foster, Derek
Gordon, Mildred
Haynes, Frank
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
O'Brien, William
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment: in clause 15, page 8 leave out from "(b)" in line 33 to "and" in line 38 and insert

"the reference in subsection (3) of Section 11 (Evidence of Vesting) of this Act to the Stock Transfer Act 1963 shall include a reference to the Stock Transfer Act (Northern Ireland) 1963;".

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 110, Noes 27

Division No. 366] **[10.52 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Hayward and
Mr. Michael Irvine.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boyes, Roland
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Foster, Derek
Haynes, Frank
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. Michael Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Isle of Wight Bill

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that the events that have occurred in connection with the International Westminster Bank Bill will be referred to the Procedure Committee.

11.5 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): We are debating whether the Lords amendments should be now considered——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We will do that once I have had a chance to propose the question.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Lords amendments be now considered.

Mr. Cryer: We should examine the question whether the Lords amendments should be considered. There is no record of the reasons for the amendments, because they were dealt with in an Unopposed Private Bill Committee in another place. There is no record of that, so hon. Members in this place considering legislation that will be binding in law have no reasons for considering the amendments. That is extraordinary in a legislature which I thought prided itself on the degree of scrutiny and on the availability of the records when hon. Members debate issues.

I should have thought that on the night when the Berlin wall is being removed and the gates are open we should not tolerate taking amendments from a section of the legislature that is operating behind closed doors. Surely we need more open examination. On that basis we should not consider the amendments.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will my hon. Friend recapitulate for a moment? I understand that the record of the proceedings on this private Bill are not available and were dealt with behind closed doors. This is the so-called Mother of Parliaments which is supposed to spread its wings to the rest of the Commonwealth and the world. On the eve of televising Parliament, are we supposed to consider amendments that were dealt with in a hole-in-the-corner manner? The Prime Minister is supposed to be saving the world, but we are supposed to deal with the amendments in this cock-eyed fashion. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. Will he raise these issues with his Committee?

Mr. Cryer: I wish that I could——

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If that is the view of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), can you confirm whether the South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill will be treated in the same way when it comes before the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. One Bill at a time.

Mr. Cryer: I can assure all hon. Members that my speech extends far and wide. I should have thought that it was very important that this legislature should exercise its scrutiny. We do not do that often enough. Certain Acts that give people powers go through far too easily. We authorize huge sums of money on the nod. We must look at ourselves, and the procedures relating to Bills such as this deserve to be scrutinised.

The hon. Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) said on a point of order that the proceedings on the International Westminster Bank Bill should be sent to the Procedure Committee. I do not object to that proposal. We have a new Leader of the House who is fresh from travels abroad. I know that he will take that suggestion into account when considering whether we can improve our procedures.

We are considering amendments from a non-elected body further down the Corridor and we should have a record of the arguments advanced. The other place is accountable to no one, but when it makes decisions on amendments we are not given its reasons for so doing.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): This Bill deals with important civil rights issues—the rights of people to assemble freely for whatever purpose, and the rights of others not to be caused a nuisance by those assembled. It is a difficult matter and it should be dealt with not in a private Bill, but in national legislation. We should consider how to guarantee the right of the individual to enjoy himself without at the same time upsetting other people. We must get the balance right. The way in which the Bill has been changed in the Lords alters the subtle balance between the rights of the individual and ——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is getting on to the substance of the amendment which we have not yet reached.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), as I want to discuss national legislation and whether we should deal with the assembly of people in a private Bill.

I do not dissent from the efforts of a local authority to try to obtain powers, but my hon. Friend is correct that what may be a problem for one authority may well be a problem for many other authorities. Surely that problem should be the subject of national legislation rather than private legislation, especially as we cannot obtain a copy of the reasons put forward by the Lords for the amendments. The Bill concerns civil liberties and that is why it is important that we should have those reasons.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I thought that my hon. Friend would have said something about what the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) said. He threatened the Opposition about the South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill. I resent such threats. The Government have been threatening us for the past fortnight. We are doing the job right, but they do not like that.

Mr. Cryer: I was appalled by the implication behind the comments of the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field). I thought, however, that he meant that he intended to defy the Tory Whips in future and to ignore them when they tell him to keep his mouth shut hour after hour because that is convenient for the Government. I thought that the hon. Gentleman meant that he would make a judgment when the Whips tell him that he must stay here so that there are 100 hon. Members to shuffle through the Lobby to vote for a closure.

I thought that the hon. Gentleman intended to exercise this scrutiny and to use his mind as he is entitled to do as a Member of Parliament. I did not realise that he was attempting to blackmail other hon. Members. If that was his intention, it would imply a serious potential breach of privilege. I would be unable to raise that attempted breach of privilege on the Floor. I would have to write to Mr. Speaker and it would have to be taken up by the Committee of Privileges.

I would hesitate to take such action in the ordinary interchange of debate. If the attempt at intimidation was real, however, and if it was an attempt to prevent me from speaking, that would be an attack on one of the important rules of Parliament—that hon. Members cannot be intimidated by threats to prevent them from speaking in this Chamber. That is an important protection for our constituents so that local authorities——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman can be assured that I shall protect him should the need arise. We should return to the motion.

Mr. Cryer: I am most grateful Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you have assured me that such an implied threat will not get anywhere in the Chamber so long as people like you are in the Chair.

Mr. Haynes: It took my hon. Friend's comments to draw the Chair. Does he not agree that the occupant of the Chair should have charged the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) when the intimidation occurred.

11.15 pm

Mr. Cryer: The intervention from the Chair was most appropriate and helpful. My remarks drew it out, and I am grateful for it. I take a charitable view of Conservative Members' comments. They sometimes contain hidden threats which Conservative Members sometimes try to apply, but I try to see them in as charitable a light as I can. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) for making it clear that a threat was made and to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for making it clear that no threats will be made here tonight, the Standing Orders of the House will be followed and the right of free speech will be upheld.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I fully accept the hon. Gentleman's right to scrutinise the Bill, but should such scrutiny prevent the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill from being debated, will the hon. Gentleman come to Greater Manchester to explain to the 3 million residents who desperately need that railway why he opposed the carry-over motion for that Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us stick to the Isle of Wight for the time being.

Mr. Cryer: I take your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want to breach your ruling, but I could certainly put forward some good arguments, if I were allowed to do so, about the way in which the Government have overloaded the parliamentary timetable and, as a result, prejudiced some items of legislation.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Would my hon. Friend remember that, if the Government are desperate for time to consider these carry-over motions, many Members with Birmingham constituencies would willingly surrender the time allocated for the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill?

Mr. Cryer: That is a pertinent comment and an example of the self-sacrifice that Birmingham Members are prepared to make to get rid of the cumbersome load known as the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill.

I shall turn to the second point that I wish to make about the amendments.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It is not just that in the House of Lords the debate and the arguments backing up the amendments are missing, but nowhere in the Lords *Hansard* are the amendments published. We have only this badly produced copy of amendments from the parliamentary agent, but there is nothing about the Bill on Report, when it came back from the Unopposed Bill Committee. This material is not listed in *Hansard*, as we would expect it to be in this House.

Mr. Cryer: Is my hon. Friend confirming that these amendments have been produced by an outside organisation—the promoters—and that they have not been produced by the internal printing organisation within the House of Commons and the House of Lords? If so, they have not been subject to the scrutiny and checking which is normally carried out by the efficient Clerks of the House. That is another reason for deferring consideration of these amendments: we should wait until the point is clarified.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: I shall finish this point and elaborate a little.

Verbatim records of Select Committees are taken by outside shorthand firms, but the transcripts are provided for members of the Committee so that they can be corrected and improved with the approval of the Committee. I am not sure whether these amendments have been subjected to the same sort of scrutiny——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the problems of not having had a chance to see the record is that we cannot tell what the Government's views of the amendments were? Usually a Committee on an unopposed Bill takes views from the relevant Government Departments—in this case, those of the Home Office, because of the civil liberties involved, and of the Department of the Environment. We do not know whether these amendments contain Government suggestions that they want incorporated in all local Bills, or whether they contain the views of the promoters. It would be helpful if a Minister could tell us whether these are the views of the Government or of the Isle of Wight county council.

Mr. Cryer: That is an important point. If the Minister wishes to intervene, I shall be happy to give way to him.

These amendments touch on civil liberties, the province of the Home Office, which is generally against them, and on the environment—the province of the DOE, which is responsible for local authorities.

Reform of private Bill procedure is certainly long overdue; this Bill is a good example of the reasons for that. One or two Conservative Members have asked whether we do not want to reach certain Bills further down the Order Paper, which goes to show that the Government put down all these Bills for consideration expecting and hoping them to go through on the nod.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the responsibility for setting down these Bills is mine, as Chairman of Ways and Means, not the Government's.

Mr. Cryer: You are quite right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, the number of private Bills can be swollen by the Government suggesting that certain bodies seek powers by means of the private Bill procedure. Inevitably, you have to choose what to put down. People like you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, put down legislation with the best will in the world and in good faith; Parliament then has to exercise its scrutiny, thereby showing up discrepancies and inadequacies in the procedure.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman implies that in some way we are being denied the chance of proper scrutiny of this measure. He is an experienced parliamentarian, but could you confirm that hon. Members could have attended the proceedings in which the measure was scrutinised, that they could have listened, taken notes and effectively taken part, and that they could have brought back to the House the information thus gathered?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have heard nothing out of order so far.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to you, Sir. I thought that what I have been saying was unexceptionable—that debating shows up areas in which improvements can be made. I am only echoing the words of the Leader of the House who said today that private Bill procedure needs examination and improvement. If the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) wishes to challenge his right hon. and learned Friend's views, he is entitled to do so. I merely thought that, since the right hon. and learned Gentleman has never made an unreasonable remark before, his point should be noted.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: One of the Procedure Committee's first recommendations was that we should not have county council Bills which affect people nationally rather than locally, but that such proposals should be implemented by Government legislation. Does my hon. Friend agree that scrutiny of Government legislation is far more effective than scrutiny of private Bills such as this? All civil liberties issues could have been dealt with in Government legislation, not just for the Isle of Wight but for every county. The report recommended that there should be a miscellaneous local government Bill to deal with such matters, rather than this hole-in-the-corner private legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I hope that the hon. Member for Bradford (Mr. Cryer) will not be tempted to discuss that wide, general topic. We are considering Lords amendments to a particular Bill, and hon. Members should address their remarks to that subject.

Mr. Cryer: I am most grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will confine my remarks to the amendments.

We should not consider the amendments, because the report of the Procedure Committee has not been considered seriously enough by the Government. I am pleased that the Leader of the House is suggesting that the Committee's comments should be taken seriously. Instead of having individual local authority Bills such as this, the amendments to which we are being asked to consider, we should have general Bills for national legislation.

That is why it would not be fruitful to consider these amendments now. It would be for better to defer consideration of the Bill. The House can certainly express an opinion to the Government. We have often heard that reforms and improvements are needed, yet they never come about. Select Committees such as the Procedure Committee make useful suggestions for improvement, but sometimes they are not even debated.

Therefore, by not dealing with the Bill, hon. Members will have an opportunity to say to the Government, "In the next Session of Parliament we will want to tackle this problem so that local authorities do not have to promote Bills, sometimes at considerable expense." We should have a Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill. We are dealing with this Bill because the Government have crowded the legislative programme. If the Government had such a local government Bill, the Isle of Wight would not have sought to promote this Bill, and the Chairman of Ways and Means would not have had his onerous task of placing it on the agenda tonight. We could have much more measured legislation, with a far superior method of scrutiny and examination.

Mr. Barry Field: From the Vote Office, the hon. Gentleman could have obtained a copy of the House of Lords *Hansard* of 29 June. At column 845, he would have seen that the Isle of Wight Bill was read a Second time and committed to an Unopposed Bill Committee. He could have obtained that information for himself. I do not know how the hon. Gentleman can justify his comments when the Bill is supported by the Isle of Wight Labour party, which has expressed considerable concern that the Bill might be objected to.

Mr. Cryer: Outside bodies, including the Labour party and other political parties, are quite entitled to make comments about this Bill. My guess is that the Isle of Wight Labour party would welcome legislation on a much wider basis to cover a great many local authorities. The Isle of Wight Labour party would certainly welcome the introduction and development of procedural means recommended by the Procedure Committee, which would avoid local authorities having to seek this sort of legislation in such an expensive way. If Conservative Members will support the Opposition's view that we should not deal with the amendments, and thus not deal with the Bill tonight, the Isle of Wight Labour party and other organisations would welcome that, provided that it was recognised that it is a message to the Government that a legislative programme is needed but that it should apply much more widely. That is a reasonable condition.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) stated that the Isle of Wight Labour party supports the measure. I do not know whether that is true. However, one thing is certain, and that is that, whenever we have considered a private Member's Bill in the past, Labour parties in different parts of the country have written to us. I remember, for example, the Eastbourne Harbour Bill which dealt with the marina. The Eastbourne Labour party wrote to us about the measure. I am not sure that what the hon. Member for Isle of Wight said is up to date.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) should not spend too much time whittling his head about that. *Unless the Isle of Wight Labour party*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I agree with the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). We should not spend our time whittling about what Labour parties outside this place think about the consideration of Lords amendments to private Bills. That is not the issue that we are considering this evening. Let us return to the Question that is before the House.

11.30 pm

Mr. Skinner: I was about to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that as Members of this place we have to scrutinise private Bills. If there is something wrong with Bills of this sort, as the Leader of the House said today, it is important that we should draw the attention of all hon. Members to the defect. If there is to be reform of private Bill procedure, that can be effected only by close scrutiny of the sort we are bringing to bear on the Isle of Wight Bill. If we engage in that scrutiny, we are likely to draw attention to the need for change much quicker.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Of course, he is right.

Mr. Terry Davis: I do not agree with some of my hon. Friend's remarks, for reasons that I shall seek to explain later if I am successful in catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend is right, however, to bring to the attention of the House the fact that a record is not available to us of the arguments that were advanced in favour of the amendments. I ask my hon. Friend to confirm what I understood him to say, that there is no record of the reasons for the amendments that are sought to be made to the Bill by another place. There is television in another place; is he saying that the amendments were tabled and agreed to in camera?

Mr. Cryer: I must congratulate my hon. Friend on his neat turn of phrase. The question that he has raised illustrates the problem. The main debating Chamber of the other place has predated this Chamber by more than 12 months in having its proceedings televised, but they have antique procedures, which are not open to the public, for dealing with Unopposed Private Bill Committees. I agree with the hon. Member for Isle of Wight that there was a Second Reading on 29 June, but Members of this place should not be required to go to listen to the proceedings of a Committee in another place. We have tasks to perform in this place. It should not be necessary for us to grovel to a non-elected Chamber to obtain information. That Chamber should provide information. Why not? If it provided information, we probably would not be having this debate. If the information were before us, we might be satisfied with the reasons for submitting the amendments. We could have prepared ourselves by reading that information to ascertain whether the validity of the amendments could be justified.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): The case has been made for examining the private Bill procedure and making some major alterations to it. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) referred to the Isle of Wight Labour party. The Opposition have never regarded the private Bill procedure as one that should include party political involvement, or one that should be usurped by it. I suspect that some of the private Bills proceeding through the House are regarded by the Government as political Bills, and have been supported on that basis.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right. Those on the Government Benches have a somewhat shabby record in this instance. I recall the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill and the champagne party that was laid on. I am not suggesting for a moment that that approach has been adopted to the amendments that we are being asked to consider this evening. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight has referred to the comments of a political party, and there is no doubt that the passage of some private Bills has seen the Government working vigorously to promote them. They have whipped them through this place.

It is a strange irony that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight should mention the Labour party, which has been trying its best to treat private Bills in the way in which the House should deal with them instead of using them as a form of Government legislation and, therefore, promoting them. There is no allocation of responsibility to you in this matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You carry out your job properly and thoroughly. Inevitably, the Government have a great deal of power in this place and, to a considerable extent, they determine the amount of legislation, and they can choose to include the private Bill procedure.

Our argument is that these amendments might be better deferred so that we can study the private Bill procedure. We are near the end of this Session. According to the business statement earlier today, we finish on Thursday morning and start a new Session the following Tuesday. A new Minister is sitting on the Treasury Bench, and between votes he has been practising standing at the Dispatch Box. He could make a statement accepting deferment and offering to introduce a new Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill in the next Session. We do not ask for a guarantee, only that he agrees to consider doing that. That would be helpful to the House. As he has been here for so long, with his gleaming eye on the Dispatch Box, wanting desperately to stand there and utter a few words, it would be handy if he were given that opportunity. We want to encourage him to make a statement. He should have courage and be determined and start laying down policy early in his career. It might bring it to a tumbling end, but at least he could have a few memorable moments and a little press tomorrow.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The big advantage of the Minister introducing local government legislation to cover this matter is that we would then have it for the whole country, rather than having many local authorities wanting to promote private Bills. It would take a great deal of time in the House, but each local authority that is granted powers to regulate these events puts pressure on neighbouring local authorities that do not have those powers. That is unfair.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right, and there is great merit in what he has said. That is why I ask that we think carefully about whether we should consider the Lords amendments.

The House of Lords is a revising Chamber. Frankly, some of us think that a Committee of this House could do all the work that it does much better and more effectively, and this debate is an example in point. What revising

[Mr. Cryer]

Committee in this House would not have a record of the debates and discussions before producing amendments to a Bill? The argument has always been that the place down the Corridor is somewhere that the Government can introduce routine technical amendments to public Bills and where private Bills can be dealt with in either opposed or unopposed private Bill Committees, with minor and relatively unimportant amendments being made. Yet now, what is in effect a revising committee is not providing us —the basic, important and superior legislature—with proper and adequate information.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is right to say that the textbook idea of the House of Lords is of a revising committee. I wonder where the decisions were taken. As my hon. Friend is the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, can he say whether there is any specific rule about where such hole-in-the-corner decisions are made? Is it in the House of Lords? If not, where do the discussions take place? We should know. Something to remember on private Bills is that if we talk about the issues we might learn a little about how the process is developed. I am not sure about where the discussions took place.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right. It has been suggested that those who are interested in discovering the background to the amendments should have asked the appropriate Clerk in the other place for the date on which the Committee sat and then searched out the Room.

However, the position of Members of the House of Commons attending a Committee in the other place is not clear. I can well remember attending a Joint Committee of the two Houses on defence matters at which Caspar Weinberger was present. Because I had criticised him mildly, warmonger that he was and is, their Lordships threatened to throw me out—those pinstriped hooligans in the other place. If we had gone to the other place to investigate the background which the other place will not provide——

Mr. Skinner: Bovver boys in ermine.

Mr. Cryer: That is right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is a standing convention of the House that we do not engage in criticism of the other place. It is not for the House to decide on or to discuss the procedures of their Lordships' House. They reach decisions by their own means. It is for us to bring our judgment to bear on the validity or acceptability of those decisions, and that is what we are about this evening.

Mr. Cryer: That is right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, we are discussing the absence of any explanation from the other place. I was saying that my journey into a joint Committee in the other place finished up with quite an argument. It would be unfortunate if such a position developed while following a routine procedure to obtain information. That might inhibit hon. Members from obtaining information. The solution would be for the other place to provide their reasons for the amendments in the first place.

It is patently absurd that the Committee's proceedings were not reported verbatim. If *Hansard* has difficulty keeping abreast of all the legislation in the House—if *Hansard* is flooded with work because of the huge volume of legislation—the other place could have hired an outside body on a daily basis to provide a verbatim record. The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments does that. That is a joint Committee with the other place and the record is provided for both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Has my hon. Friend considered the amendments? There appear to be 17 amendments, but it is difficult to be sure. The previous Bill had 10 amendments and the start of each was underlined so that we could follow them. However, these amendments are not numbered or underlined——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Barnes: If we handle the amendments as my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) did, we shall be in a right pickle when it comes to following what it taking place.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend makes a good point. He has anticipated my next point.

The amendments are difficult to follow. They are not couched in the way that we would put them in the House of Commons. Commons amendments are difficult enough to follow: we have to work very hard to place them in the exact context of a Bill.

Moreover, the Lords amendments give the Isle of Wight council certain powers about which I should like to know more. The proposed new subsection (1B) states:

> "The Council may, in any case in which they think fit to do so, accept a notice given less than four months before the holding of the assembly as valid for the purpose of subsection (1) of this section".

I do not object to the council's being given extra powers; I am not one of those who seek to take powers from local authorities, as the Tories have. It would be interesting and useful, however, to know the reasons for such a wordy and complicated amendment.

Mr. Barnes: That illustrates the point that I was making. I find it difficult to discover in these pages the "section" just referred to. Is there any system whereby we can learn what hon. Members are talking about? Many hon. Members, after all, may wish to debate it.

11.45 pm

Mr. Cryer: I implied that in my comments; I quoted from a new subsection which it is difficult to place in the context of the Bill. But I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has an illuminating point to make.

Mr. Skinner: I have just been to see the Clerk of the House, who has been very helpful. I thought that the amendments were a jumbled-up mess, and my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) have rightly pointed out that we cannot be too sure exactly where they begin and end. Although it is difficult to distinguish one from another, however, the Clerk has said that there are not 17 but 19. We may have to go through them stage by stage and one by one, as they are all different in character and they all confer different powers. The Clerk, however, is going to help us, and, of course, he will help Mr. Deputy Speaker as well; so I think that we shall be able to sort out the amendments as we reach them—if we reach them.

Mr. Cryer: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. That, I think, shows the nature of the difficulty. If we had had a verbatim record, the amendments would have appeared at the end of the discussion. It would have been helpful to know whether there had been a vote on some of them, although we do not have to know; a vote would have indicated controversy. Even if there had been unanimous agreement on all of them, however, at least what had been agreed would be spelt out in the record. Instead, we have two and a half pages of what appears to be an unclassified, uncategorised and unclear jumble.

Mr. Terry Davis: Running through my hon. Friend's speech has been an undercurrent—I put it no higher than that—of criticism of the other place for its failure to provide a record of the reasons, or arguments, for the amendments. Surely, however, a greater responsibility to provide a record lies with the Bill's promoters.

Mr. Cryer: That is an important point. I think that it would probably involve a change in procedure: the promoters would have to pay for the verbatim record. That brings us to the question of objectivity, to which I alluded earlier.

Mr. Davis: I am sorry, but my hon. Friend has missed the point. I was not suggesting that the Bill's promoters should pay for a verbatim record of the arguments in the other place; I was suggesting that they might provide us with the arguments, which need not involve a verbatim record. It need only be a summary of the reasons why they consider that the amendments are justified, and would improve the Bill.

Mr. Cryer: I have not missed the point. I was about to suggest that if we rely on the promoters' explanation of such an intricate part of the legislation—as opposed to a verbatim record—the problem is that the promoters have a vested interest. They are paid to promote the Bill. If they gain a reputation for getting a Bill through exceptionally smoothly, they will gain more business. It could thus be argued that any explanation might not present an objective, impartial picture. On the contrary, it might present a highly partial and unbalanced picture, so the House would still not have an adequate explanation.

Mr. Davis: I am impressed by the speed with which my hon. Friend has advanced that argument, but there is another alternative. Perhaps we could agree on a compromise with the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field). If he were to give his reasons, we might be able to accept his objectivity.

Mr. Cryer: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. All that we have had so far from the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) are a few points in which he has tried to score off me and a few other hon. Members who are exercising their perfectly proper right, under the careful scrutiny of the Chairman of Ways and Means and Mr. Deputy Speaker. He did not say, "The hon. Member has raised some points. I have a great deal of information and I wish to answer them." I very much regret that that has not happened.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Is my hon. Friend making the point that promoters advise and legislators decide?

Mr. Cryer: That seems to me to be an excellent aphorism, on which I cannot improve. That is something that we must bear in mind whenever we consider legislation. If legislation leaves this place with defects and faults, they stand.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend should give way to the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field).

Mr. Cryer: I shall certainly give way to him in a moment, because I referred to him.

One of the problems is that there is a literal interpretation of legislation. The courts are not allowed to take into account the mind of the legislator. However much we might elaborate on it in this place, it is the words on paper—in this case, the amendments—that we shall provide for the Isle of Wight, so we must be careful to ensure that those words are as tightly drafted as possible and can be amply justified in this Chamber before they receive Royal Assent.

Mr. Barry Field: I listened with particular care to what the hon. Member said about the Liberals' judgment. He may agree with me that, since we are considering a Bill that was promoted by the only county council in the country that is controlled by the Liberal Democrats, it is extraordinary that not a single member of that party is here to help the Bill on its way, despite the fact that the Bill enjoys all-party support on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman makes an extremely valid point. My comments about elucidating the reasons for the amendments and whether we should consider them should be heard by somebody who supports the political complexion of the council. I am shocked that no Liberal, or Social Democrat—by whatever conundrum of complexity they call themselves—is here to make what might have been a very helpful contribution.

Consideration of the amendments should be deferred. The debate has been extremely useful so far, but I shall give way now to several of my hon. Friends who want to make a contribution to the debate and develop an argument which, for the first time that I can recall under the private Bill procedure, has revealed serious defects. That is not a criticism of the House of Lords. I would shut it down tomorrow, if I could, but that is a separate issue and I do not intend to pursue it.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend cannot do that. My hon. Friend can criticise the other place but not individual members of the House of Lords.

Mr. Cryer: Exposure of those serious defects suggests that there is a need for drastic reform to ensure that such a slipshod attitude is not revealed again. Hon. Members are elected and accountable.

Mr. Skinner: That is the difference.

Mr. Cryer: This is the senior body. They are only the revisers. They are put there by patronage and birth—the worst possible basis for selection. As of right, therefore, we are able to demand a proper approach.

Mr. Skinner: When the hon. Member for Isle of Wight got up, I took it for granted that he would explain one or two things, as he represents the area. I know that he is not a Liberal or a member of the SDP, but I think that he is in favour of the Bill. It is most unhelpful not to have an explanation. In the earlier debate on NatWest, various hon. Members spoke and the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), who is helping the promoters of that Bill,

[Mr. Skinner]

sat there for about one hour and then suddenly popped up and tried to explain it. We managed to glean something from what he said. It would be helpful if someone from the Isle of Wight, or the Government, would explain the Bill. We managed to get some valuable information in the earlier debate, although it came a bit too late, which is why we had to vote at the end of it.

Mr. Cryer: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. He confirms my view. This debate has been of great use as it has brought to the attention of hon. Members the difficulties with private Bills.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have had a difficult task sorting out and sifting through so many private Bills. It is regrettable that they are the result of the Government encouraging outside organisations to take this route, which was developed for the construction of railways in the 19th century. It is unsatisfactory to use the private Bill procedure for what is basically public legislation. This has been a useful debate, and we should scrutinise the Lords amendments carefully before accepting them.

Mr. Terry Davis: I disagree with the main thrust of the argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), although I share his concern about the lack of reasons for the Lords amendments. I do not go all the way with his criticism of private Bills, especially those produced by democratically elected county councils as a means of experimenting, or providing opportunities to experiment.

My hon. Friend is suggesting that we should have a comprehensive, compendium, miscellaneous provisions Bill for local government once a year. I do not think that that is a good idea, as I shall try to explain when we discuss the carry-over motion for the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill. I think that there is a place for initiative and municipal enterprise and for private Bills to deal with particular local problems.

I disagree most strongly with my hon. Friend's suggestion that the Government are in cahoots with the Isle of Wight county council and others to introduce private Bills to achieve ends which the Government do not have time to introduce public Bills to achieve. That is not the experience of Birmingham Members of Parliament.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Bill deals with large assemblies and how people can organise them? Does he agree that, if the rules about organising large gatherings differ in various parts of the country, it is extremely difficult for the promoters to know what hurdles they have to clear in each local authority area? Surely it is better to have the same rules throughout the country.

Mr. Davis *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Before we go any further, I should remind the House that we are discussing not the merits of the Bill, which was given an unopposed Second Reading, but whether we should consider some narrow drafting amendments made by the other place. The merits of the Bill have been decided, without opposition.

Mr. Davis: You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have anticipated my second point. You allowed my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South to dwell at some length on his opposition to private Bills as a way of experimenting and dealing with local problems. I do not completely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett).

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend says that he is against further consideration of the Bill and against the alternatives suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). My hon. Friend is saying that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South is not right, and he threw out the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). My hon. Friend has a duty to explain his alternatives to the House. Even the Leader of the House has agreed that the private Bill procedure must be changed.

12 midnight

Mr. Davis: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) will resist the temptation to respond to that intervention. We are discussing not the procedure for private Bills but whether we should give further consideration to the Lords amendments.

Mr. Davis: I should dearly love to explain why I disagree with my hon. Friends the Members for Denton and Reddish and for Bradford, South. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover that I have a duty to explain my disagreement, but I fear that I shall have to do so not in the Chamber but in the Lobby. I should much prefer to discuss our disagreements in public, but I accept your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not to answer the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South. It is a little unfair that he was allowed to put his point at such length, yet other Labour Members are not allowed to disagree with him.

Like the hon. member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), I agree with the Bill, but that is not what we are debating. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South was unfair and unreasonable in suggesting that we are discussing the principle of the Bill. That is long gone; we are discussing the detailed Lords amendments. I should like to have heard an explanation of the amendments. Some of my hon. Friends may vote against the amendments, but they will not be voting against the Bill, and that must be said very firmly.

Mr. Skinner: The Clerk told me that there are 19 Lords amendments. It is pretty clear that those amendments are substantial, and they cover almost every aspect of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South was bound to talk in general terms about the amendments because they cover such wide territory—they almost rewrite the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill has a duty to explain, even in general terms, why he opposes further consideration of the Bill.

Mr. Davis: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South that we should allow time to consider the amendments. We must consider them carefully because we have not the advantage of a record in the other place or an explanation from the promoters of the Bill or from the hon. Member for Isle of Wight.

Like myself, my hon. Friends will have received letters from some Labour Members who support the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill and from some who oppose it. Quite properly, they have set out in letters the reasons for their opposition. When we debate that Bill next week, we shall be able to consider their arguments. I wish that we had had the advantage of a simple explanation of each of these 19 Lords amendments. I am quite happy for such an explanation to be given by the Isle of Wight county council or by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight who, as he said, is not a member of the controlling party on the Isle of Wight. It would have saved much time if we had had an explanation in writing beforehand, as I think all my hon. Friends agree.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I support the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and argue that it would be better not to consider the Lords amendments at this stage. Conservative Members may well argue why I should support the amendments. Members of the Isle of Wight Labour party wrote to me and spoke to me on the telephone, strongly putting forward their reasons why the legislation should be enacted. They were worried about the problems of controlling large assemblies in open spaces. I pointed out that we have a duty not only to consider their problems and but to safeguard the civil rights of individuals. I pointed out that many of us are concerned about the private Bill procedure, which we hope will be reformed quickly. I pointed out that, by dealing with local authorities piecemeal, the problem was simply moved from one place to another, and that if something was appropriate for the Isle of Wight, no doubt it would be appropriate for other places.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): That is not entirely true. There are matters that are germane to London that are not germane to other parts of the country. Some local autonomy and democracy is not outrageous, especially if it is supported by the Labour party.

Mr. Bennett: I accept that there are differences between different parts of the country. However, the problem of controlling large assemblies in open spaces occurs not only on the Isle of Wight but in a substantial number of places in the south-east of England and elsewhere.

The other side of the argument is the right of individuals to assemble in large groups to demonstrate and protest. Getting the balance right is a difficult civil rights issue. On the whole, it is better to have national provision than major local variations.

Mr. Skinner: It is interesting that my hon. Friend is going down the track of saying that local authorities generally should have such powers in Bills of this kind. Only yesterday at Question Time, the Secretary of State for the Environment said that he would introduce legislation or assist local authorities to control these assemblies at acid house parties. If the Government dealt with that general aspect, the whole country would be covered through the work of environmental health officers.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) has a point. He is a lawyer and studies these matters carefully. It looks as though the Government are going down that track.

Mr. Bennett: I understand that point. The flavour of the month is perhaps the acid house party. The legislation deals with the difficulties caused by pop festivals and similar events. I understand the difficulties faced by a person who finds that a pop festival is being organised close to his home, but we must achieve a balance between the right of the individual to take part in lawful activities and the right of people to live peacefully in their homes. It is difficult to achieve that balance.

I should like to consider our difficulties during the Bill's passage. It is impossible to make sense of the Bill without reading the earlier legislation. When it was to be considered by the other place, the sponsors helpfully included the schedule which referred to section 5 of the Isle of Wight County Council Act 1971, as amended by the Bill. Page 3 of the Bill said what the legislation was doing, which I am sure was very helpful. Unfortunately, the 19 amendments, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred, virtually change the original legislation. The problem now is that when we read the schedule, it is extremely difficult to work out whether it is the chief constable or other people who have to give the authority. It would have been reasonable for the promoters to ensure that, when the amendments came to this House, section 5 of the original legislation as amended by this Bill was reprinted in the schedule so that we could now read the balance of the legislation.

In addition, either the promoters should have given us a statement, or the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), who I presume is sponsoring the Bill, should have explained to us that the original Bill did not cover various points, so the changes were required to improve the balance. However, our difficulty is that we cannot read about the proceedings in the House of Lords, so we do not know what arguments were advanced there, and so far, no hon. Member has told us what the advantages of the changes are.

Mr. Skinner: I want to help my hon. Friend. I have been sitting on the Bench where the party that dare not speak its name usually sits. That party controls the Isle of Wight, so I should have thought that one of its representatives would have been able to explain the amendments.

What my hon. Friend has said is alarming. I told my hon. Friend earlier that the 19 amendments, which cover several pages, might rewrite the Bill. My hon. Friend, who has scrutinised the Bill carefully—as he does all such Bills, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—is saying exactly that. As the Liberals, who have some control of the Isle of Wight, are not explaining the amendments, the Government are not helping and the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) is not doing anything, it is incumbent on my hon. Friend to explain fully why he opposes further consideration of the amendments, which seem to rewrite the Bill. No one else will explain the Bill; I believe that my hon. Friend could.

Mr. Bennett: I was hoping, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you might advise me not to go down that path——

Mr. Skinner: It is germane.

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend tempts me a great deal, but I must make it clear that I am not a lawyer, so I find it extremely difficult to put the amendments into the existing schedule to find out precisely what is being suggested. However, I had the impression that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight was hoping to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He could carry out that task for us and I should listen to his explanation with great interest.

I am concerned about this matter. I know that you have already said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you do not want us to go into the whole question of the way in which private Bills proceed. However, if we are looking to the reform of the private Bill procedure, I hope that it will be suggested to promoters, first, that it would be better if the Bill were in the right form when it began its progress through the House, and secondly, that, if charges were to be made as a result of advice from the Home Office and the Government, they were made in Committee in the House of Commons, and not at a late stage in the House of Lords and then slipped back here without clear guidance about their intention.

Mr. Barry Field: I am obliged to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), because I have sat here for almost five hours listening to the arguments on the International Westminster Bank Bill and this Bill. The hon. Gentleman has come close to making two points with which I agree. The first is that the private Bill procedure of this House is clearly in considerable need of overhaul and modernisation: I align myself with his comments. The second is that he informed the House that he had received a letter from the Isle of Wight Labour party. I am obliged to him for that remark, because the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) rather gave the impression that, when I make a statement in the House, its veracity might be called into question.

As the hon. Member for Bolsover pointed out, no member of the Liberal party is present tonight, despite the fact that the Isle of Wight is the only county council that the Liberal party controls. It is remarkable that the Liberals are not here tonight to lend their weight and support to what is essentially a county council Bill.

The House passed the original Isle of Wight County Council Act in 1971. As the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said, the original Act is intended to control open-air events such as pop festivals. It could be said that the Isle of Wight had one of the first acid house parties in the early 1960s. We have sought our own private Act because of our difficulties in controlling such large-scale open-air events. We wanted to ensure that those events were properly regulated, with proper hygiene arrangements on site and proper controls. As a result of an amendment to the Act, a prosecution was brought last year, but it was found in the magistrates to be defective.

The Lords amendments to this Bill are entirely drafting amendments. They were intended to bring the Bill into line and hopefully ensure that, when it is enacted, it will be possible to prosecute those who do not comply with the Act's requirements.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

12.15 am

Mr. Field: I will give way when I have finished my point.

Since I was elected, I have witnessed many bizarre occasions. However, if someone had told me that I would stand here tonight and witness the Labour party supporting the actions of the National Front, I would have been staggered. The failed prosecution to which I have referred, came about as a result of events at the last scooter rally held by the National Front on the Isle of Wight. It is remarkable that the Labour party should support the National Front tonight.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the problem with defending civil liberties is that sometimes we have to defend them for people whom we find totally objectionable? It is very difficult to confer civil rights on people we detest. Will the hon. Gentleman explain how the 1971 Act got into a mess in the first place? The original Act passed through the private Bill procedure, but because that scrutiny was unsatisfactory, the prosecution to which the hon. Gentleman referred collapsed in the magistrates court. Would it not be better to have Government legislation on the issue, as that would be much more likely to stand up in a magistrates court?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the question before us is that the Lords amendments be now considered. We are discussing drafting amendments to a Bill that was given an unopposed Second Reading. It is not appropriate this evening to discuss the merits of the Bill. They have already been decided.

Mr. Field: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your very helpful comments.

We are discussing the Lords amendments, which are intended to guard the civil liberties of the people of the Isle of Wight against the actions of the National Front. It is extraordinary that the Labour party should be seeking to support the National Front tonight.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I have sat here for several hours. I also listened to the proceedings on the Isle of Wight Bill in Committee Upstairs. We listened to the arguments, and at no time did anyone mention that the Bill was intended to stop National Front gatherings on the Isle of Wight. If the Bill is intended to specifically stop the National Front, the Bill should say so. It does not. Tonight is the first time that I have heard it said that National Front members are the only people who organise large-scale gatherings on the Isle of Wight.

It is true that the Bill received an unopposed Second Reading. Tonight, however, I had expected the hon. Member for Isle of Wight to tell us why we should consider the amendments. There is no doubt that the amendments leave a lot to be desired.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not want to inhibit the hon. Gentleman from discussing the amendments, but I wonder whether this is the appropriate time to do so. We are discussing whether the Lords amendments should be considered. When we have resolved that matter, the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) and other hon. Members can discuss the substance or the merit of the amendments.

Mr. Redmond: I accept your guidance at all times in such matters—[HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down, then."] I certainly shall not sit down, until I have made the points I want to make. Perhaps you should inform one or two hon. Members, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, if they are unwell, they should go home.

In Committee, one listens to the barristers and to the petitioners as they make their points about the Bill. One also has the opportunity to ask questions, but, unfortunately, once one has spoken, one is not allowed a second chance to do so. Unfortunately, I was unable to ask the questions I wanted answered because the hon. Member for Isle of Wight did not get off his backside to tell us why the amendments had been made. As soon as he had spoken, however, someone moved the closure. If we are to consider amendments properly, they should be referred back to the Committee that originally considered them.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Will the hon. Gentleman be able to give exactly the same attention to all the Lords amendments to the South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill when we come to discuss it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: One Bill at a time. We can worry about that Bill when we come to it.

Mr. Redmond: I will not respond to threats. I consider that I am well paid to spend my time here, but many hon. Members might sooner be home in bed—I do not know whose.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) claimed that it was strange that we were opposing the Bill, given that it had the support of the Isle of Wight Labour party and the political connotations attached to it. No Opposition Member has spoken against the Bill. We are discussing whether the amendments should be considered and procedural matters. We are also discussing whether it is right to go ahead with the Bill in its present form without being given an explanation for its present state.

Mr. Redmond: My hon. Friend makes that point admirably.

I went along to the Vote Office to collect the private Bill and the amendments to it. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain them, and you will recollect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I raised a point of order about Lords amendments being unavailable. I went back to the Vote Office and managed to obtain a copy of the amendments that someone had managed to find somewhere. Originally, I asked to be given all the Lords amendments, so that I could consider them properly to ensure that they were technical, substantive and worthy of discussion. Fifteen minutes ago, we went back and managed to get hold of the Lords amendments to the Isle of Wight Bill.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has little alternative but to look at the 19 different amendments and go through them. We can try to help one another by starting at the beginning and seeing which ones are important, which are less important and which should be opposed. Perhaps they should all be opposed—who knows? In the absence of any, or very little, consideration being given to the matter by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) and the fact that the Liberals who control the council are not here to provide us with information, there is only one alternative left. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davies) touched on it: we must go through the amendments.

We do not have a verbatim report from the House of Lords so we shall have to start the process. There are about three pages, and we should quietly go through the amendments——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The rule of the House in these matters is that Members speak only once unless they have the unanimous consent of the House. Repeated interventions that are of the duration of speeches transgress that rule. The other convention of the House is that interventions should be brief.

Mr. Redmond: It is quite obvious that we cannot possibly give the amendments due consideration unless we have time to do so. It may be that they are all acceptable, but they may not be. Unless one is a lawyer—I am not, thank God—one needs more time to consider exactly what a particular amendment means. The Bill may have been there an hour or so later, but it certainly was not there this morning when I went to pick up all the Bills. Therefore, I could not spend a day or so giving due consideration to what, if anything, I should say.

It appears that Conservative Members are not interested in passing good legislation. I do not know what would happen if a bad private Bill left this House. Who would rectify it if it proved to be a bad piece of legislation? Would the Secretary of State for the Environment go charging into the courts to secure an amendment? I am not quite sure. Therefore, it is important to give due consideration to the Lords amendments to the Isle of Wight Bill to see whether we should debate them.

When we give them due consideration, the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) might say what the amendments would do.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Redmond: Let me make this point. It would certainly be helpful to me to be able to say that an amendment was correct.

It is untrue to say, as the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight did, that I support the National Front. Perhaps some Conservative Members have closer links with the National Front than I do, because I do not support it.

Mr. Hind: Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that, if we analyse the arguments of him and his hon. Friends this evening about the Isle of Wight Bill, the availability of the Lords' debates material, the unsatisfactory nature of those debates, the failure of schedules of details on the amendments, the fact that we should debate this in the context of a miscellaneous provisions Bill, they can be seen to be equally valid for every other Bill on the Order Paper? Those Bills include one in which I am sure the hon. Gentleman has an interest: the South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill. Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander? What he is arguing could equally be said of a Bill that he supports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us stick to whether we should or should not consider the Lords amendments.

12.30 am

Mr. Redmond: I accept your guidance, Sir. I hope that hon. Members will confine their remarks to these Lords amendments, and not hint at what might happen to future private Bills on the agenda.

[Mr. Redmond]

I agree that we need a different system, but we need one that is accountable. Many Bills going through the House should be considered by local councillors. In this case, the Lords have submitted amendments, and we cannot challenge the reasons for them. We cannot ask the Clerks to explain what the promoters or the parliamentary agents may or may not want. Parliamentary agents may have ulterior reasons for their suggestions. If we had been able to discuss them in a proper Committee, we might not have had to spend the night deciding whether to consider the Lords amendments. I will not allow the matter to pass without comment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) said that he was suspicious by nature. I am not—I like to trust people—but over the past two years my trust has been misplaced and taken advantage of. I come from Yorkshire, and I am a little naive about how the City sharks operate——

Mr. Barry Field *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 131, Noes 21.

Division No. 400] **[12.32 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fineberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Colvin and
Mr. Jacques Arnold.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barron, Kevin
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boyes, Roland
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Foster, Derek
Haynes, Frank
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Nellist, Dave
Prescott, John
Redmond, Martin
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Welsh and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put, accordingly, That the Lords amendments be now considered:—

The House proceeded to a Division;

12.45 am

Mr. Barry Field *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In view of the disparity of previous votes, would you allow us to rise in our places to take the vote?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): No.

The House having divided: Ayes 122, Noes 15.

Division No. 401] **[12.44 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fineberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*

Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil
Viggers, Peter
Wallace, James
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Colvin and
Mr. Jacques Arnold.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boyes, Roland
Cryer, Bob
Dixon, Don
Haynes, Frank
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Meale, Alan
Nellist, Dave
Prescott, John
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Welsh Michael *(Doncaster N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin Redmond and
Mr. John Cummings.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendments.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could you tell us how you intend to deal with this? Is there to be a debate on the first amendment, followed by our proceeding to a vote if we wish; or do you intend us to debate several amendments together, followed by votes on each?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It would be more convenient for the House and in accordance with our normal custom if we had a general debate on all the Lords amendments. We could consider later how to reach a decision on the amendments.

Mr. Bennett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I look at the amendments I have difficulty understanding whether all the amendments hang together and deal with one issue or whether they cover a wide range of issues. Can you give guidance on whether they all hang together? Unfortunately, I could not find a selection list in the Noes Lobby.

Mr. Deputy Speaker I think that it would be for the convenience of the House if we proceeded in the way that I have suggested rather than tried to split them up artificially.

1 am

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have the list of 19 amendments and it is more than a little difficult to find out where one ends and the other begins. I discussed the matter with the Clerk who was in the Chamber earlier. He had a list, and I suppose that he left it for the next Clerk. He marked the precise amendments. The amendments are different in terms of the part of the Bill to which they relate, so we should discuss them separately. The first amendment reads:

> "In the Preamble, page 1, line 4, at end insert—
>
> '(2) By the Isle of Wight Act 1980 it was provided that the said section 5 should continue to have effect notwithstanding the provisions of section 262 of the Local Government Act 1972:'"

The other amendments are completely different.

We managed to deal with two or three amendments at the same time when we considered the International Westminster Bank Bill. That was a comparatively minor Bill compared with this one, which covers a whole range of powers for the local authority. For the life of me, I do not see how we can have a general debate on the granting of powers relating to acid house parties, rallies and so on without hearing from the hon. Member for Isle of Wight. It is like considering together 15 schedules to a Government Bill. Each amendment should be considered separately.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is customary to debate the amendments together, and a number of them hang together. I am sure that with its usual ingenuity, the House will find no difficulty covering all the points that need to be covered. It would be better to debate the amendments that are now before us.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I agree with my hon. Friends the Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that it is difficult to decipher all these pages of amendments. My point of order is very practical. You will note that the first amendment says:

> "In the preamble, page 1, line 4, at end insert—"

and then it says:

> "Section 5 should continue to have effect notwithstanding the provisions of section 262 of the Local Government Act 1972:'"

I know that this is not a Committee stage, but were it the Committee stage of a normal Bill, it would be incumbent on the responsible Department to provide for hon. Members who intended to take part in the debate an explanatory memorandum so that we could understand what other legislation is being referred to.

Can you explain to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whose responsibility it is to provide us with sufficient copies—for the 150 or so hon. Members who obviously want to take part in the debate, or they would not be listening to me so patiently—of extracts from legislation such as section 262 of the Local Government Act 1972 as would enable us to see precisely how the Lords amendments affect existing legislation?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think it is quite clear that it is not for the Chair to explain what the hon. Gentleman

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

asks, but, if we get on with the debate, he might get answers to the questions that he is asking. We shall now continue with the debate on the Lords amendments.

Mr. Nellist: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not trying to be difficult. There are about 100 hon. Members in the Chamber, and I do not think that one has a copy of section 262 of the Local Government Act 1972. Those of us who want to take part in the debate want to know whose responsibility it is to supply copies of it. None is available in the Vote Office. I have been there, and the only thing I can get hold of is a copy of the Lords amendments. Whose responsibility is it to provide other bits of information so that we can get on with the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for hon. Members. If we get on with the debate, we may get answers to such questions.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had hoped that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) would have got up and explained the Lords amendments and how they affect the Bill that was discussed in Committee.

It emerged in Committee that the desire to control crowds and facilities for them was the main reason for the Bill. Since then, Conservative Members have said that that was not said. The Vote Office was unable to give me a copy of the Lords amendments until quite recently. If we had had copies this morning, when we asked for them, we could have examined the amendments and decided whether to support them. We have not had much time to consider the amendments, so I ask the hon. Member for Isle of Wight, once again, to give us the benefit of the knowledge that he should have gained as the Member of Parliament for the Isle of Wight.

The House should not pass any measure that would be detrimental to the people of the Isle of Wight. Hon. Members should consider the amendments more carefully.

Mr. Harry Barnes: My hon. Friend said that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) should explain the amendments. Some of the amendments appear to be technical and only alter words here and there. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight should take us through—I have had to number he amendments myself—amendments Nos. 10, 5 and 12, which make major changes.

Mr. Redmond: I accept what my hon. Friend says. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight had an opportunity briefly to explain the Bill on Second Reading. He failed to do so; it was moved formally and accepted. We cannot allow things to continue in that way.

I remember that the Local Government Act 1972 was huge. One needs it to hand to understand the implications of the first amendment. It is all very well for hon. Members to say that I should have checked it in the Library, but to have done so I would have needed the Lords amendments in my hand this morning. I have grave reservations about whether the amendments should be made because I am not sure of their implications. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight should explain the implication of the amendments.

Mr. Barnes: Section 262 of the Local Government Act 1972 is several pages long. The Bill amends provisions of the Isle of Wight County Council Act 1971. The Isle of Wight Act 1980 waived the provisions in section 262 of the Local Government Act 1972. It is beyond me to understand which part of those Acts is changed by the amendment. I believe that it is beyond hon. Members, because no one has sorted it out.

Mr. Redmond: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for explaining that.

Everything is as clear as mud, and fully to understand the Bill one should have the relevant documents. Given the substantial changes that the amendments would make, the Bill should return to Committee.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to continue speaking after he has clearly fallen asleep?

Mr. Redmond: I am sure that, just before I fall asleep, hon. Members will hear me cough. When they hear that, they will think, "He is heading for noddy land." Interruptions tend to disrupt the flow of one's speech.

Does the hon. Member for Isle of Wight intend to explain? If he will do his job efficiently and thoroughly, I am willing to sit down to let him explain. However, I am convinced that there will be silence from him.

1.15 am

Mr. Michael Welsh: The first Lords amendment deals with a point only four lines into the Bill, which is nearly unbelievable. I cannot get to the bottom of the matter. The local authorities want the power to control large overnight assemblies in the open. Does that mean that if there is a boy scouts' jamboree, they can control it, but if there is an acid house party, they may have no desire to control it? I should be grateful if my hon. Friend could explain the meaning of the first Lords amendment, which applies so early in the Bill.

Mr. Redmond: In the debate on the International Westminster Bank Bill, my hon. Friend questioned the judgment of the people who had produced the legislation. I should love to be able to say that everything is crystal clear so that the House can make a decision. Unfortunately, I cannot do that. I was not with their Lordships when they produced these amendments. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight should intervene to allay our fears. In wanting to control large assemblies, do the local authorities want to control acid house parties, Nazi or National Front gatherings—to which reference was made earlier—or boy scouts' jamborees? The latter are also large organised gatherings, and many lads and girl guides enjoy them.

I am not a suspicious man, but what has transpired over the past few months has turned my trusting nature into one of suspicion. I now question everything. People can put over things quite nicely. We know that everyone wants to say, "We had a good day," and go home to bed and have a good night's kip.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I draw your attention to "Erskine May", which states:

> "The Speaker has also stated that it is the custom for Members to wear jackets and ties."

I have raised this matter several times with Mr. Speaker. He has ruled that he will not call Members who are not properly attired for the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) is wearing a jacket and tie. Mr. Redmond.

Mr. Nellist: Can my hon. Friend assist——

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I clearly heard you call the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). It is the third time in the past half hour that you have called him. We are in danger of a precedent being set as not only is he not wearing a jacket when you have called him, but he has his shirt sleeves rolled up. Will you please ask him to withdraw from the Chamber until he is properly dressed, or not call him again?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I know that Mr. Speaker has dealt with this matter on a number of occasions. He has requested normal dress in the Chamber, but he has never said that it is an absolute condition for an hon. Member being called. He has merely deprecated abnormal dress. I call Mr. Nellist.

Mr. Nellist: Can my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) assist me? I am having difficulty with the first amendment. My hon. Friend will see that on his Amendment Paper it says that the amendment seeks to insert at the end of line 4 on page 1:

> "By the Isle of Wight Act 1980 it was provided that the said section 5 should continue to have effect notwithstanding the provisions of section 262 of the Local Government Act 1972."

The Bill says:

> "By the Isle of Wight Act 1980 it was provided that the said section 5 should continue to have effect notwithstanding the provisions of section 262 of the Local Government Act 1972."

I have read those words four times in the past two minutes and, to me, they are indentical. I cannot understand why we are being asked to discuss an amendment that is worded exactly the same as a provision of the Bill when it emerged from Committee. Can my hon. Friend explain that, or will he ask other hon. Members to explain it? If not, it is a waste of time.

Mr. Redmond: I shall do my best, but I am quite willing to give way to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight if he wants to explain what the Isle of Wight Act 1980 says. A lawyer would understand. Like most legal documents, one would need to be a Philadelphia lawyer to understand the amendments. Many Members are in the legal profession and will no doubt jump up to clarify the position.

As I understand it, when a Bill is presented to the Clerks' Office, they have a natter and a discussion. If everything is in order, the Bill is clarified, the proper procedures and notifications take place and the Bill then goes into Committee where those who support or oppose it can discuss it. They can listen to a barrister or a Queen's counsel—I am not sure which but, by God, they can talk. The Bill is then presented. After that, the Bill comes to this House and, if it is not amended, it goes to the other place. It then arrives back here duly amended.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend accept that I may have misled the House earlier when I complained that the Bill that we received from the Vote Office needed to have these amendments incorporated? The Bill should come from the Vote Office as it came out of Committee. Our problem is that we do not have the original Bill as it went into Committee. For my hon. Friend to see what has happened, we have to read the schedule, which sets out the provisions as amended. The difficulty is that we do not have before us the Bill in the form in which it went into Committee, which would have been helpful. However, it is not available at the Vote Office.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In all seriousness, will you consider having the Bill withdrawn from debate, by whatever technical means may be necessary? If the Vote Office cannot supply us with the necessary paper work for us to consider the Bill properly, it is an injustice to all concerned with the Bill for the debate to continue. Will you consider having the Bill withdrawn from debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not prepared to do that. If we get on with the debate, we may get the answers.

Mr Redmond: I am sure that the answers will not be forthcoming from the people who should give them. I am sorry, but——

Mr. Hind: The South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill is not looking very good now.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have had threats from Conservative Members. They are saying that if they do not make progress on this Bill, they will take it out on another Bill. That is not the way for the House to proceed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Matters are complicated enough. Let us deal with one Bill at a time.

Mr. Redmond: The more threats that are made, the more stubborn I become—sticks and stones.

I was elected to this place to try to do the best for the people of Don Valley. Rightly or wrongly, I will try to do that. It may displease Conservative Members if I want to represent my constituents; that may be a little foreign to their natures. However, I will represent them to the best of my ability, whether or not that pleases Tory Members.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that although he and I are here to represent our constituencies, we are not here to scupper whatever they want to do in the Isle of Wight? Can we not get on with the Isle of Wight business?

Mr. Redmond: I hope that we are not scuppering the Isle of Wight Bill. I hope that the residents of the Isle of Wight get their Bill. However, we hope that that Bill will be good and will be beneficial to the Isle of Wight and to the people who live there so that they can enjoy the benefits of the Bill for centuries—unless another private Bill is introduced. I am not against the Bill. I just want to ensure that the people of the Isle of Wight, their children and their children's children can enjoy the benefits of a good Bill.

I am not sure whether the Lords amendments will meet that end. That is why I want clarification from the hon. Member for Isle of Wight. However, it appears that he is more in the dark than I am.

Mr. Michael Welsh: I thought that we were discussing amendments to the Isle of Wight Bill. That is quite simple. However, we are not. We are discussing a Bill that has

[Mr. Michael Welsh]

been amended in Committee. We are not discussing Lords amendments to the Bill because no one has a copy of the Bill. We have only the amended version. The Bill is another piece of paper. Is this the procedure that we should follow? My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) is more knowledgeable than I on these issues and I hope that he can answer my points.

Mr. Redmond: Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North should sit in on these Committees and he would be able to say whether we should be discussing Lords amendments now. After the Bill has passed from the Private Bill Office and has been explained and discussed, my hon. Friend may understand what is happening. Unlike my hon. Friend, who is suspicious, I am trusting. Unfortunately, that trust has turned sour.

Whether hon. Members like it or not, I want to search for the information so that I can say whether an amendment is okay. It is different to reach such a decision because of the lack of information. Lawyers, and there are plenty of them in here, have stacks of books containing case history after case history to help them make decisions. If a private Bill is bad and we decide to kick it out, who rectifies that mistake? Is it left to the judicial procedure or is the approval of the House required to make the necessary amendments? The Bill and the Local Government Act 1972 are no mean documents, but reference is also made to other documents, and so it goes on.

1.30 am

If hon. Members want to intervene or make sedentary interventions I shall gladly give way, as I did a moment ago. I should be happy if they clarified the position about the amendments.

The amendment on page 2, line 6 talks about four months. I should have thought that it would have been in the interests of the Isle of Wight authorities to be flexible about the time scale. To organise an event properly may take two years, two months, two days, 24 hours or even an hour. The Government usually work to the shortest possible time scale when considering private Bills.

It is important that consideration is given to the Lords amendments. I will sit down happily if the hon. Member for Isle of Wight explains the amendments. I am not sure that he will do so. By my probing I hope to provoke some comment which will enlighten our proceedings. I shall not vote against the amendments if it is proved that they are good for the people of the Isle of Wight. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight has said that they are beneficial to those people, but he should get up and prove that. I will happily accept the Bill if people tell me what certain things mean, why it must be altered and why there is such a rush to get it through on the nod. I do not like to be criticised for trying to find out those answers.

I am opposed to acid house parties. That youngsters want to attend such parties is a terrible indictment of our nation. We should provide better means to keep those youngsters away from such parties. We are concerned, however, to ensure that we do not take steps to stop all large gatherings as that would would be an infringement of civil liberties.

We must consider the amendments carefully and I hope that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight will get up to explain them.

Mr. Barry Field *indicated assent.*

Mr. Redmond: I shall sit down in good faith and in the hope that the hon. Gentleman will explain away my fears.

Mr. Field: The original Bill was passed by the House in 1971 as a result of between 80,000 and 100,000 young people attending a pop festival on the Isle of Wight. My predecessor Mark Woodnutt sought the support of the House in endeavouring to obtain legislation to regulate and control such a large gathering on the island. That was partially effective, and the pop festivals have subsequently been replaced by scooter rallies in which 5,000, 6,000 or 7,000 individuals arrive on the island for a bank holiday weekend. They congregate on one particular site—usually a rented field.

As I have already said, the Bill's purpose is to ensure that proper notice is given by the organisers of such an event, to ensure that sanitation, fire engines, police and St. John Ambulance are present to ensure that the young people enjoy themselves in an orderly and safe way. After amendments had been passed in the House, an event took place which 6,500 young people attended on their scooters. There is some evidence to lead us to believe that the organiser pocketed a considerable amount of money. The beer tent charged a high price for a can of lager. Various elements on the site—which the local police have said were definitely National Front supporters—stoned the fire engines, burned down the beer tent and generally ran riot.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) will know that the Isle of Wight has the highest percentage of any county council in the country of over 75-year-olds who live independently in their homes. They were clearly terrified. The behaviour of the individuals was appalling. A small caucus of the youngsters, not the majority, came from the National Front to disrupt what would otherwise have been a perfectly reasonable weekend for the other young people.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Field: No, I shall not give way.

Unfortunately, when charges were brought against the organisers in the local magistrates courts, the magistrates had to conclude that they could not proceed with the charges because the original Act was defective. I hope that, tonight, the amendments will win the support of all hon. Members.

As the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has already mentioned, the local Labour party on the Isle of Wight supports the Bill, as does the Social and Liberal Democrat party despite the fact that its members are absent tonight. That is an appalling indictment of the party when we consider that that is the only county council in the country which it controls.

I hope that we may yet obtain the support of Opposition Members for these reasonable amendments, so that next time a charlatan organises an event on the Isle of Wight, overcharges young people and does not abide by the proper regulations which ensure that such events are reasonably organised so that young people can enjoy themselves in a proper way and undesirables are kept out, we shall be able to bring a prosecution. The fines would be quite substantial.

'HMSOSTANDARDNobody would say that this is an unreasonable piece of legislation. I am sad that Opposition Members, whom I have got to know quite well, seek to hold up this perfectly reasonable legislation. Therefore, I beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not prepared to accept that motion at the moment.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: For a long time, I have contended in the House that private legislation is not appropriate to deal with matters such as this. The point made by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) well illustrates that. The private Act was put on the statute book with every good intention of dealing with a problem that had arisen on the island, but its drafting turned out to be defective. It is clearly the responsibility of the House to ensure that we do not produce an Act this time which is equally defective. We do not want an organiser of one of these events to be able to drive a coach and horses through the measure.

It would be much more appropriate to bring forward a Government Bill which could be carefully scrutinised and amended. That would result in a better chance—although not a certainty—that the legislation could deal with the problem

I wonder whether the hon. Member for Isle of Wight would take us through some of the problems with these amendments. First, this Bill will apply only if the organiser believes that more than 5,000 people will turn up at an event. What would happen if two people organised two separate events in two separate fields in fairly close proximity? If 3,000 people turned up at each event——

Mr. Barry Field: That is exactly what happened when the Hell's Angels arrived on one site and the scooterists on another. The situation was fraught with danger, and we wanted to keep the two groups, apart for obvious reasons.

Mr. Bennett: How would this Bill keep them apart? Perhaps I have misread the Bill, but as long as each group can reasonably assume that not more than 5,000 people will show up, the Bill will not deal with the problem. I do not see how it will be possible to adjudicate——

Mr. Field: If the hon. Gentleman comes to the Isle of Wight, I shall be happy to show him how.

Mr. Bennett: The point of scrutinising the legislation in this House is to make sure that it will work. I would be happy to go to the Isle of Wight, but we must ensure that the problem does not arise again.

Back in 1971, a problem arose in the island, and all this time later it appears that the legislation of the time did not solve——

Mr. Field: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The original legislation helped with solving the problem, but subsequent amendments have since been shown to be defective when it came to prosecuting the organisers.

Mr. Bennett: That is the point. We need to be certain that we have got it right this time, so that the legislation catches someone who tries to get around the law next time——

Mr. Field: The hon. Gentleman is a perceptive Member and aware that trends in society change. We cannot freeze human nature or activities, so the Isle of Wight might have to come back for more legislation in future if confronted by acid house parties, for instance.

Mr. Bennett: I accept that, but we must be careful to make the legislation as nearly correct as possible——

Mr. Skinner: Page 5 of the Bill states:

"An assembly to which this section applies is an assembly in the county in the open air at which there are reasonable grounds for believing that there are more than 5,000 people present at any time not being an assembly held—".

It is an offence if the defence cannot show that the organisers have

"reasonable grounds for believing that there would be more than 5,000 people present".

Who is to decide? Someone may say, "I am sorry, judge, but I thought only about 4,000 people were going to turn up. I am sorry that there were 6,000 or 20,000." That is the effect of the Bill. I am certain that the Bill would need to come back to the House.

1.45 am

Mr. Bennett: I accept what my hon. Friend says. I am sure that he has also gone to meetings, hoping that a certain number of people will turn up. One is often a little disappointed. On other occasions, a much larger number of people turn up. That is one of the problems with this legislation. The figure of 5,000 obviously denotes a big event, but it creates some difficulties.

Mr. Michael Welsh: We sympathise with the Isle of Wight and the trouble it has had with big parties. However, no city or town should suffer such trouble. If trouble is stopped in only one area, it will be exported somewhere else unless we have a Bill which applies to the whole United Kingdom. Such a Bill would be debated fully and would put an end to all trouble throughout the United Kingdom. Is that not what we wish?

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend makes a point which I have made on several occasions. These issues should be covered by Government legislation. The sooner we get private business sorted out, the sooner we can avoid proceedings such as these.

Debate adjourned.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Debate to be resumed on Monday 13 November.

ST. GEORGE'S HILL, WEYBRIDGE, ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.

Hon. Members: Object.

Ordered,

That the Lords amendments be considered on Monday 13 November.

HYTHE MARINA VILLAGE (SOUTHAMPTON) WAVESCREEN BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.

Hon. Members: Object.

Ordered,

That the Lords amendments be considered on Monday 13 November.

NEW SOUTHGATE CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM LIMITED BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.

Hon. Members: Object.

Ordered,

That the Lords amendments be considered on Monday 13 November.

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.

Hon. Members: Object.

Ordered,

That the Lords amendments be considered on Monday 13 November.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Ordered,

That the Bill be considered on Monday 13 November.

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Ordered,

That the Bill be considered on Monday 13 November.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Ordered,

That the Bill be considered on Monday 13 November.

UNITED MEDICAL AND DENTAL SCHOOLS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Ordered,

That the Bill be considered on Monday 13 November.

Orders of the Day

PRISONS (SCOTLAND) BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Fallon.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

STATUTE LAW REPEALS BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Fallon.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

OPTICIANS BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Fallon.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION

That the draft Inter-American Development Bank (Seventh General Increase) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 17th October, be approved.*—[Mr. Fallon.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community Documents.)

ANIMAL WELFARE

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 7648/89 and 7654/89 relating to the protection of calves and pigs kept in intensive farming systems; and supports the Government's intention to negotiate satisfactory welfare safeguards which take account of the views of the Farm Animal Welfare Council.*—[Mr. Fallon.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 5) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1610), dated 1st September 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 6th September, be approved.*—[Mr. Fallon.]*

Question agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS (SERVICES)

Ordered,

That Mr. Frank Dobson be discharged from the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) and Dr. John Cunningham be added to the Committee.*—[Mr. Fallon.]*

SELECT COMMITTEE ON TELEVISING OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That Mr. Frank Dobson be discharged from the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House and Dr. John Cunningham be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

1.55 am

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I have proposed the Question. If the hon. Gentleman speaks he will take time out of the debate. Does he still want to raise a point or order?

Mr. Harris: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you inform the House of the position on the carry-over motions for various Bills? I have a constituency interest in the Penzance Albert Pier Extension Bill. To my knowledge, no reference was made to those Bills during the time for private business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand that the Chairman of Ways and Means will put them down again tomorrow.

1.56 am

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): At this late hour it would not be wholly accurate to say that I am delighted to be bringing before the House the important subject of the multi-fibre arrangement. It is important for the 480,000 people who are employed in the textiles and clothing industry in this country—it is the fifth largest industrial sector. It is important for consumers—every man, woman and child has textile products. It is crucial for the textile industry worldwide, which is worth about $160 billion, and it provides opportunities for development in the poorer countries. Most of all, it provides the opportunity to explore the relationship between the interests of consumers and the maximising of economic growth worldwide and the desire for stability and the steady restructuring of industries in the developed world which are involved in the textile industry but which have a natural cost disadvantage compared with developing countries.

It is apposite that we are considering this matter now as the Uruguay round of GATT expires in 1990 within which discussions on the multi-fibre arrangement, through the EEC, will begin in July 1990 and, we hope, be concluded in July 1991. These are not easy questions and there are no simple answers on whether the MFA should be abolished and, if so, when. Perhaps we should begin with the basic premise of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, which is that multilateral trade should be as free as possible and should be impeded only by tariff barriers, and that even those should be brought down gradually. Through that and through the process of comparative advantage, wealth will be maximised because countries with particular advantages, either on a labour or a technological basis, will be concentrating production on those areas where they have the greatest expertise. As a result, wealth throughout the world will be maximised because countries will be producing the products that are most appropriate for them.

From the outset, GATT was weighted in favour of the developing countries. It allowed them tariff-free access to the developed world and it laid down that the developed world should not raise non-tariff barriers. The MFA is specifically a derogation from GATT and from its liberal,

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

free trade principles. To that extent, it is an anomaly to allow the developed world, in particular the textile producers, to restructure against the threat of low-cost imports from the developing world.

When the system was first introduced in 1974 it was regarded as being temporary, yet 15 years on it has been renewed three times and now covers 45 countries with 26 bilateral agreements under MFA4.

I should emphasise that the MFA is a protectionist measure that discriminates against low-cost producers in the developing world and imposes costs upon consumers throughout the world. It is the most protectionist measure in any manufacturing sector in the world, and only this October it was called by Barber Conable, the president of the World bank,

"one of the most particular protectionist measures called for by the industrialised West."

In the Uruguay round, the EC and the British Government, who are signatories to GATT, have called for the phasing out of restrictions under the MFA and other restrictions on textiles and clothing not consistent with GATT rules and disciplines on a progressive basis and subject to restrictions. Even the apparel, knitting and textiles alliance agrees with the principle of ending the MFA.

Nevertheless, the abolition of the MFA is politically sensitive, as we saw on 9 December 1988 when every speaker, bar one, in a debate in the House spoke for the producers who would be affected by it. They argued that it provided relative stability in the United Kingdom's textile industry, despite the fact that employment in the industry has dropped from 700,000 to 480,000 in 20 years; it averted trade conflicts of the kind into which the United States has been tempted recently, and to a certain extent it allowed for a gradual restructuring and concentration of the industry which has invested £2 billion in the past five years, although the number of establishments in it has dropped during that period.

The arguments that hon. Members put forward in December last year were that the British textile industry needed protection from high interest rates, although they have been a relatively recent phenomenon; from high exchange rates, although between 1980 and 1987 the effective exchange rates for British textiles fell; and particularly because of unfair trade practices. For instance, there was a total ban on imports of textiles by Pakistan, high tariffs on textiles by Turkey, adding up overall to about 199 per cent. of basic value, and South Korea erected non-tariff barriers on the basis that its balance of payments was heavily in deficit. That is one of the things that can be done under the MFA, yet it had a trade surplus of $4·2 billion in 1986 and $11·4 billion in 1988.

It was argued that the MFA should be retained indefinitely to protect home industries. In the words of the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson),

"we can have free trade only if we have fair trade."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 567.]

To be fair, those are arguments that the Government have taken seriously and, to their credit, they have commissioned reports from Professor Silberston in 1984 and 1989, upon the latter of which they are still consulting.

Equally, it is a disgrace that the EC, which will effectively be doing the substantive negotiations on the MFA, did not commission such reports and wrote to an important part of the textile industry recently saying:

"The Commission itself is not undertaking scientific studies on the effects of the MFA, because it is lacking the resources which would be necessary to carry out a comprehensive assessment."

Nevertheless, it is my contention that the MFA should be phased out as quickly as practicable—within five years rather than the seven to 10 years favoured by Professor Silberston and the 10 years-plus favoured by the industry, for the following reasons.

First, the MFA is only a finger in the dyke of more fundamental economic forces that have seen the clothing exports of developing countries' share of the British market increase from 10 per cent. in 1955 to 48 per cent. in 1982. Secondly, the rate of import penetration has increased over that period. Textile imports have increased from 8 per cent. to 48 per cent., and clothing imports from 12 per cent. to 38 per cent. Thirdly, despite the panoply of controls under the MFA, five sixths of textile imports apparently come from countries not covered by the agreement, and two thirds of those come from Europe, which accounts for no less than £1·75 billion of our £3·6 billion textiles deficit.

Silberston makes the point that the MFA masks a rather awkward truth: that Britain's textile industry was not doing very well in its home European market, having exported to that market only 15 per cent. of its turnover, compared with France's 21 per cent., West Germany's 34 per cent. and Belgium's 80 per cent.

Fourthly, the Retail Consortium has argued that quotas mean that developing countries concentrate on higher value-added, higher-priced and higher-margin products which compete directly with the British textile industry and, as a result, militate against the United Kingdom's poorer consumers, who should be helped most by the developing countries' specialising in lower-value products.

The final argument is the strongest of all: that the MFA is, in effect, a very regressive tax. According to Silberston, the British people pay £900 million a year to subsidise an industry that would otherwise be restructuring itself—as Japan's textile industry has done—or diversifying to higher value-added products. Opposition Members—none of whom is present at this time of night—argue strongly against a progressive eye test and dental charge that raises £110 million a year, while supporting and seeking to retain a regressive £900 million tax that falls mainly on the least fortunate.

Ending the MFA would, of course, lead to a loss of jobs in the short term—Professor Silberston mentions a figure of 33,000. Even if that figure were doubled, however, the amount saved in terms of consumption would be twice the average pay of each worker. There is little doubt that the additional spending power available to British consumers, and the additional opportunities for British firms to export to newly industrialised countries, would mean the creation of more jobs to compensate.

Everyone recognises that ending the MFA would have transitional effects, particularly in certain regions of the United Kingdom—the north-west, Scotland and Northern Ireland are cited by Silberston. British export opportunities, and opportunities for import substitution in the home market, would depend on a level playing field, and on the developing countries' obeying GATT rules after the downgrading of the MFA quota system. I am sure that the Government are aware of that: the Minister will have seen the comprehensive statement made in July by the European Economic Commission's negotiating group on textiles and clothing, which mentioned a number of important respects in which GATT must be improved if the MFA is to be abolished without undue disruption of the British textile industry.

I nevertheless feel that the MFA should be gradually reduced over a five-year period, and that quotas should be progressively increased, provided that GATT is strengthened. Article 9 of GATT provides safeguards for countries which believe that imports are threatening a sector of their economy. They should be made more selective. Action should be allowed against particular countries, and it should be possible to take action more quickly. The article should be interpreted on a national rather than on a continental basis, or EEC imports, coming particularly via East Germany to West Germany, may be targeted on the British market and may disrupt our industry to a far greater extent than in other EEC countries.

The investigative powers of the textile surveillance body, or its equivalent body when the transitional period ends, should be improved to allow sampling against the state subsidies that are likely to cause disruption in the textile markets.

Settlement procedures for trading disputes should be made more effective through majority voting, not consensus.

In that way, the MFA could gradually be phased out over a five-year period and integrated into a strengthened and more comprehensive set of GATT rules. A significant restrictive trade practice, which has a bad effect on consumers, particularly poor consumers in this country, could be removed. Wealth throughout the world could be improved through greater specialisation and efficiency, to our comparative advantage. A balance could be held between consumers, retailers and producers in Britain and abroad. I am sure that the Government will wish to ensure that progress on the gradual abolition of the MFA is vigorous, responsible and speedy. I trust that the Minister will be able to give me that assurance.

2.11 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) for initiating this most important debate. The only sadness for both of us is that it has to take place at this hour in the morning, owing to the problems over earlier business.

My hon. Friend has put the case against protection and for maximising growth by liberating trade extremely well. He has stressed its importance to our consumers and to developing countries. His speech will stand alongside those of other hon. Members who in previous debates have put the case for the textile industry, which is well known to Ministers. I am delighted to have his ideas on record. We are conducting consultations, having studied the Silberston report.

The textiles and clothing sector is of great significance to the United Kingdom economy and to all of us as consumers. Textiles and clothing is our fourth largest manufacturing industry, employing 9 per cent. of those employed in manufacturing. In 1988 it had a total output of approximately £12 billion, of which over £3·6 billion was exported. As consumers, we spent in the same year some £17 billion at retail prices.

The present MFA protocol, MFA IV, expires in July 1991. Since the MFA was established in 1974 to replace earlier arrangements relating only to cotton products, the arrangements have been renewed three times. The difference this time is that the future of the MFA is not being looked at in isolation but as an integral part of the GATT Uruguay round, which is due to end in 1990. These are ambitious negotiations, in which the Community is only one of the players. With more than a year to go, not all the cards are yet on the table, but I can reaffirm the Community's objectives.

There are based on the commitment made by all GATT contracting parties in the Punta del Este declaration at the beginning of the Uruguay round

"to examine the modalities for the eventual return of textiles and clothing to strengthened GATT rules".

The MFA is a major exception to GATT rules, justified as a temporary measure to allow industry in developed countries to restructure in response to orderly growth in low-cost competition.

For developing countries, better access for their textile and clothing exports is a key objective for the Uruguay round. In their view, many of the other issues in the round will be of advantage principally to developed countries. They believe that this proposal will maximise growth in their own countries. For countries at an early stage of development, textiles and clothing are one of the few manufactured products they can successfully export. Such countries would certainly argue that, if they are to achieve sustained economic growth—and hence in due course become attractive markets for our exporters—they must have the opportunity to sell the products in which they are competitive. Textiles offer them a path to prosperity.

Community views of the MFA are not just a response to pressure from developing countries, important though that is. Any effective import restriction also imposes costs on the consumer. It is clear that the complicated network of MFA quotas also distorts international trade by providing an incentive for internationally mobile industry to move to unrestricted countries or to switch to products outside quota control even where these might not otherwise be rational choices. In addition, the continued existence of such an important exception to the GATT rules tends to undermine the whole multilateral system. For this reason, the Community is committed to negotiate about phasing out the MFA on acceptable terms.

I must stress that this is a matter for the Community as a whole, and not for the United Kingdom alone. A common commercial policy was created by the treaty of Rome, and it is the Community that is a party to the MFA and to the bilateral agreements negotiated under it with exporting countries. EC regulations implementing the arrangements have the force of law in the United Kingdom. It is also the Commission that negotiates on behalf of the Community in the GATT round, although on the basis of general policy positions agreed by the member states.

There is therefore no question of the United Kingdom going it alone. Of course, we want to play our full part in internal Community discussions. That means keeping in close touch with developments in the GATT and with the views of industry and other interested parties in the United

[Mr. John Redwood]

Kingdom. The objectives are set by the Community as a whole and, at the end of the Uruguay round, it will have to decide collectively whether they have been achieved sufficiently.

The essential issues in the GATT negotiations will be the timing of the phasing out, the method and the conditions. The Community set out its general objectives in a paper presented in July to the GATT negotiating group on textiles and clothing, which proposes that the gradual integration of textiles and clothing into GATT would proceed in parallel with the application of strengthened rules and disciplines. These ideas will need to be translated into more precise proposals.

To assist us in playing our part in more detailed consideration of the EC's negotiating position, we commissioned Professor Silberston to prepare a report on the MFA and its implications for the United Kingdom economy which was published on 19 October. We have invited comments on it.

The report runs to some 120 pages and provides a number of facts and estimates. Professor Silberston estimates that the extra competition brought about by ending MFA restrictions would result in an average fall of about 5 per cent. in retail clothing prices in the United Kingdom, leading to some increase in demand. The fall in yarn and fabric prices would be rather lower. He estimates the gain to consumers as some £980 million at 1988 prices. He has given a range of estimates of the effect on employment, while accepting that any overall estimate is bound to be crude, as there are considerable differences in the vulnerability to competition of particular sectors.

The effect on employment would be spread over a number of years, and there would be offsetting effects over time in other sectors of the economy that might benefit. We welcome further comments on these estimates, and I hope that they will be backed up by reasoned arguments. While there will always be disagreement about exact figures, every study of the MFA that I am aware of has concluded that the restrictions impose a net cost on the economy of developed countries.

Because we are awaiting other comments on the report, we will have to consider all the responses carefully before forming a detailed view. The main issues for discussion in GATT are clear. It is accepted that the integration of textiles and clothing into GATT could only be gradual and progressive. My hon. Friend agrees. He is tonight debating the exact time involved. There will have to be further debate about just how long a period this implies, in the light of our consultation findings. Timing is an issue on which the Community has not yet adopted a precise negotiating position, so we are still in time to influence that debate.

We shall also need to consider carefully what arrangements would be appropriate for the transitional phase. A steady increase in quota growth rates is one obvious option, but there are other possible techniques and we must consider whether certain categories of product or certain kinds of exporting country should be given special treatment.

The controversial issue in the negotiations is the interpretation of the Punta del Este declaration on the strengthening of GATT rules and disciplines if the MFA is to be successfully phased out. The Community paper made clear its view that strengthened rules and disciplines included more effective safeguard measures, greater market access through the reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers, particularly in newly industrialised economies, and the creation of fair competitive conditions in relation to unfair trade, protection of intellectual property and access to raw materials. This is an ambitious position, but these aims form part of the Community's wider objectives for the round as a whole and not just in relation to textiles. They will have to be judged against that background. A more effective GATT framework is, in our view, in the interest of all participants.

I know that there is already concern in the industry about increased imports, although not all of them are from countries covered by the MFA. I can understand the fears about job losses, even if restrictions are phased out gradually. Clearly some sectors are more vulnerable than others to competition from low-cost imports. In addition, nothing that we can negotiate in GATT will prevent taste and fashion from changing the prospects for particular businesses. Under the spur of competition, however, the industry in the United Kingdom has made considerable gains in productivity, partly as a result of investment in new technology. High-quality products hold their own in export markets as well as at home, and the United Kingdom industry must be able to respond quickly and flexibly to the demands of increasingly sophisticated consumers in the domestic market. The right balance is to work with our Community partners for greater competition and consumer choice within the framework of more effective GATT rules and disciplines.

The Government will consider what further representations to make to the EC about the handling of the negotiations once we have seen all the replies to Silberston and once we have had a chance to sift the evidence about the balance of advantage on the issues that I mentioned.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty one minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 10 November 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

World Climate Change

9.36 am

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I have pleasure in presenting a petition from the people of Nottingham in respect of their environmental concerns, it reads:

> the threat to the world climate and our global environment, including the ozone layer, requires urgent action, not more platitudes and declarations of intent; believes that the Prime Minister has talked green but continues to act dirty, failing to meet the commitments of the Commonwealth Conference and showing indifference to the needs of the Third world.
>
> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House holds an immediate inquiry into how rhetoric can be transformed into action to reduce emissions, clean up power stations, insulate domestic and commercial property, develop alternative and renewable energy resources, emphasise public transport over private, introduce lean burn engines, catalytic converters, and a wider differential between leaded and unleaded petrol, replant the world's forests, and establish a powerful energy efficiency agency in order to combat global warming, which threatens us all.

That is the petition from the people of Nottingham, and I forgo the opportunity to make a short speech.

To lie upon the Table.

Death Sentences (South Africa)

9.38 am

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the House, I wish to present a petition from more than 30,000 residents of the United Kingdom, which shows that they are opposed to apartheid in South Africa. They are

> 1. gravely concerned at the abuse of the judicial system in South Africa;
> 2. highly alarmed by the significant increase in the use of the death penalty against opponents of apartheid;
> 3. strongly believe that the use of the death penalty for political offences can only exacerbate the situation in South Africa.
>
> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will appeal to the state president of South Africa to halt the execution of opponents of apartheid.

I support that petition, which is in the same terms as early-day motion 1361, signed by 132 right hon. and hon. Members of all parties.

To lie upon the Table.

Private Bills

9.39 am

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The conduct of the affairs of the House is under your direct responsibility. I believe that I am correct in saying that it is your view, both in private and in public, that the way in which we conduct our affairs has improved in recent years. May I therefore direct your attention to the relevant *Hansard* reports of 1971 when the then Isle of Wight Bill was passing through the House? I ask you also, to examine the proceedings and events late last night and early this morning.

After the prorogation of Parliament, our proceedings will come under the scrutiny of the lens of the television camera. We shall do ourselves no service if we continue to conduct our affairs as we did last night. I say this, Mr. Speaker, not from the barrel of sour grapes but in view of the way in which the International Westminster Bank Bill was treated last night. Britain is supposed to be the financial centre of the world, but I believe that we made ourselves a thorough laughing stock last night. I hope that you will address these matters during your day.

Mr. Speaker: The House knows that opposed private business is a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means. I am aware of what went on in the Chamber last night and I shall look into the matter. I do not know whether there is anything that I can do personally, but I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the Bills which the House failed to debate.

World Climate Change

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

[Relevant documents: Sixth report of the Energy Committee, HC 192 of Session 1988-89, on the energy policy implications of the greenhouse effect, and the Government's observations, HC 611 of Session 1988-89.

First report of the Environment Committee, HC 270 of Session 1987-88, on air pollution, and the Government's reply, Cm. 552, as they relate to chlorofluorocarbons and the ozone layer, and the greenhouse effect.]

9.40 am

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Trippier): I am delighted that today we have an opportunity to debate an issue of vital concern to every individual in our country and, indeed, throughout the world. I do not think that it is an exaggeration to say that nothing we could discuss in this place could be of greater or more immediate importance.

I should like to apologise to the House at once for the fact that I shall be unable to stay until the end of the debate because I am due to present the Young Environmentalist of the Year Award at lunchtime.

Our knowledge of the environment that surrounds and sustains us has been expanding rapidly in recent years, and unfortunately——

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I am aware that it is important to present the Young Environmentalist of the Year Award, but surely the House should take precedence when the House is debating what the Minister correctly described as an "issue of vital concern". Does not the House take precedence over the young environmentalist?

Mr. Trippier: I do not think that there is any difficulty about that. If I were to reply to the debate, I would have to be here. As it is, the Government have an arrangement with the Opposition that there will be two speakers from each Front Bench. I am delighted to say that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will be replying to the debate. I shall be here for the bulk of the debate.

Our knowledge of the environment that surrounds and sustains us has been expanding rapidly in recent years, and unfortunately much of what we have learnt has not been good news. We are daily faced with more evidence that the activities of our species may be threatening not only the quality of life of ourselves, nor even just that of our children, but may be posing a danger to the very survival of life on this planet.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her speech to the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday—a speech which even *The Guardian* called profoundly impressive and moving—

> "It is life itself that we must battle to preserve. The evidence is there. The damage is being done".

Across the globe we can see irrefutable proof of the damage that human complacency and arrogance about the environment has already caused. That proof is being stamped on the face of our planet by the destruction of tropical rain forests, the effects of acid rain and the thinning of the polar ice caps. Some predictions are that a change in the global climate in future could devastate crop yields, flood huge areas of land and threaten the viability of societies in many countries. But we must not move from indifference about the environment to paralysis about our fate. There is no need for us to regard disaster as inevitable of preordained.

Previous predictions of inevitable doom have proven false, from those of Malthus, who believed 200 years ago that mass starvation in this country was inevitable, to those erroneous forecasts that India could never feed itself. The key is and must be human ingenuity. That, in a sense, got us into this mess. Now it is time to harness it towards the goal of getting us out.

The first point must be a proper scientific basis for understanding the problems that we face. It may therefore be helpful to the House if I set out briefly what the current scientific consensus is about climate change, and the greenhouse effect. Changes in the world's climate are inherent to the very structure of the planet and to our place in the solar system. The history of the Earth shows clearly that such changes in our climate have occurred in the past and would occur inevitably in the future even if there were no men or women here at all. Climate changes may be caused by small, natural changes in our orbit around the sun. They may be influenced by volcanic activity or even changes within the sun itself.

Scientists have predicted that in perhaps 5,000 years we shall enter another ice age, which would not reach its furthest extent for another 60,000 years. In fact, the rise or fall in temperature which can cause such a momentous change as a shift to or from an ice age may be very small. It is part of the great complexity of this problem that we as yet find it very difficult to disentangle these natural changes from the man-made effects which may be accelerating the process of global warming.

Mr. Dalyell: People should understand that talk about an ice age is not fanciful. It is a fact that it was not tundra that was found in the stomach of the mammoth. The mammoth was quickly encased in ice. That is precisely what many of us are concerned about. That is a climatological flow into an ice age.

Mr. Trippier: I should make it clear that the passage in my speech to which the hon. Gentleman has referred has been included in the publicity which the Department of the Environment is making available widely. I am grateful to him for his intervention. His last comment seems to support the publicity that we are issuing.

The naturally present greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, including water vapour and carbon dioxide, keep the average surface temperature some 30 deg C above the level that it would reach without them. In other words, if there were no greenhouse effect at all, we might freeze to death.

The problem lies in Man's activities since industrialisation which have created additional greenhouse effects. We have been producing and emitting gases, such as carbon dioxide, CFCs, nitrous oxide and methane, at rates at which the world's oceans and forests cannot absorb them. As a result these gases have been accumulating in the atmosphere and gradually building up a reflective capacity which retains heat from the sun which the Earth would normally lose to space. In the short term, this artificial global warming will continue whatever we do because the full consequences of gases emitted in the past have still to catch up with us.

We have learnt enough about the greenhouse effect to know that we should be worried about it, but we do not yet have all the information we need to devise comprehensive solutions. We still need to know by how much the temperature will increase, how fast this increase will occur and how high the seas will rise as a result. Most important of all, we need to know where these effects will be most severe.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Wednesday therefore announced a major step forward by the British Government. We shall set up an international centre for climate prediction as a focus for worldwide fundamental research on climate models. My Department will be providing more than £5 million a year to fund this important new initiative, which will build on the pioneering work of British scientists and meteorologists.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the many British scientists, notably at the Meteorological Office and at the British Antarctic Survey, who have established this country as one of the world leaders in knowledge on climate change and damage to the ozone layer.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the Minister accept that there is a widespread view that initiatives are all very well but that more should be done? The Government are setting up initiatives so as to obtain more information while blocking specific measures, along with the United States, to deal with the problems and to set targets. How does the hon. Gentleman reconcile the apparent inconsistency?

Mr. Trippier: I shall be fascinated to learn to which precise targets the hon. Gentleman is referring. I led the British delegation at Noordwijk in Holland earlier this week, and there was no blocking whatsoever. I shall make it clear that the British delegation acted as a broker in pulling together the major countries, especially America, the USSR and Japan. It was our initiative and only our initiative that led to the inclusion in the declaration of the date that was agreed by all the countries represented at that conference.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The countries which the Minister mentioned, led by Britain, took out of any proposed draft declaration any reference to targeting CO_2 reductions by specific dates and substituted a vague statement about "taking action in the future", with statements from the Minister about waiting until we had found out the kind of facts which the hon. Gentleman has just said we did not have. Surely, if we believe in the precautionary approach, we should have targets. The Government have no targets for the reduction of CO_2 emissions.

Mr. Trippier: I must caution the hon. Gentleman not to keep reading *The Guardian*. its account of what took place at Noordwijk was completely erroneous. The accurate account was given in *The Times* by the journalist Michael McCarthy.

Mr. Roberts: Do the Government have any target dates for the reduction of CO_2 emissions by Britain?

Mr. Trippier: Yes, it is in the declaration. The date is the year 2000. The hon. Gentleman seems to think that he knows more about what is in the declaration than I do. The levels will be decided when recommendations are made to the second world climate conference by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. We are chairing the scientific part of the IPCC. Earlier this week at Noordwijk, I asked the three major industrialised countries to which I have referred to agree to that date to achieve the levels, which will be based upon scientific information provided by the IPCC. As it is clear that Britain is very much in the lead in the scientific reasearch which is provided by the IPCC, and as the Government have paid the best part of £1 million initially to fund that scientific research, it is rather silly for the Opposition to devalue the currency of the IPCC in any way.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): We may pursue this matter later, but the Minister should be clear about the fact that the IPCC is not carrying out research: it is collecting research done by other people. The British contribution is not to chair the policy panel but to chair the research panel. Policy is a very different matter.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely wrong. I did not say that it had anything to do with policy. I said that the British are chairing the scientific panel. We must get this point right. We were flattered that, in recognition of the experience and success of British scientific research in these matters, we were asked to chair that sub-committee. It is chaired by Dr. John Houghton, the head of the Meteorological Office.

Mr. Allan Roberts: This is an important matter and we need to get it right. The Minister has confirmed that the British Government and other Governments at the Netherlands conference refused to accept the freezing of the amount of CO_2 emissions at the present level and will wait for the year 2000 before making any decisions about what to do. Then the British Government might freeze the level. In the meantime they could double them.

Mr. Trippier: If the hon. Gentleman does a little more research, he will find that a whole new world is opened up to him. I must make it clear that it was the British delegation, led by me, which brokered the date which was put in the declaration. I have said that any 20 per cent. figure which was mentioned at the conference may be inadequate. It may not be enough; no one knows. What on earth was the point in setting up the IPCC if we were not going to listen to its recommendations, which I understand will come forward in only a matter of months?

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I was advised by a first-hand observer who was at the Noordwijk conference that 11 of the 12 EC countries were prepared to sign an undertaking for that reduction in the year 2000, Britain being the only one that would not, with a caveat for Portugal and Greece. Is that true or false? Is the Minister saying that my observer's view of the meeting differs from his?

Mr. Trippier: There seem to be a number of different accounts. The hon. Gentleman is not in a strong position to speak with any authority, because he certainly was not at the conference. All the information which he is imparting to the House is very much second-hand. As it is clear that we are in the lead in providing the scientific evidence for the levels that will be agreed at the intergovernmental conference which will be held in 12 months' time, it is clear that, if we are supporting that initiative, the levels which are recommended should be the ones that are accepted. I can give a categorical undertaking to the hon. Gentleman that, when those recommendations are made to the second world climate conference, the

[Mr. Trippier]

Government will respond positively. We believe that, as a first step, we should be looking to the year 2000 as the date by which CO_2 emissions are stabilised.

I have already paid a genuine tribute to British scientists, notably at the Meteorological Office, for all their work. The Government are spending over £15 million on research on climate change and the ozone layer through the Natural Environment Research Council, the Science and Engineering Research Council, the Meteorological Office and Government Departments. We have also more than doubled Britain's contribution to the United Nations Environment Programme, and I echo the Prime Minister's call for other countries to do the same.

The quality of British scientific work on climate change was given international recognition last year, when we were chosen to chair the working group on scientific assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This body, which was set up jointly by the United Nations Environment Programme and the world meteorological organisations, is the principal international focus for research and action on climate change. I stress once again that we are fully committed to the work of the IPCC and we are providing £750,000 to support its work.

Collecting the international information we need is only the first step towards tackling the problem of climate change. The next step must be to take effective action. We remain committed to international co-operation as the only way that we can meet this global challenge, and we have called for the work of the IPCC to be continued. We have therefore called for the negotiation of an international framework convention on climate change. This proposal has been endorsed in the Langkawi declaration on the environment which followed the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Malaysia.

Britain has led international discussions on a climate convention and we were instrumental in securing the unanimous agreement of the nearly 70 countries represented at the conference on air pollution and climate change in the Netherlands for this initiative. I am certain that the strong endorsement which was given to the convention at the United Nations General Assembly following the Prime Minister's speech will help to focus minds on the benefits such a convention could bring.

It is vital that we recognise that action must be collective and international if it is to be effective. In particular, there would be no point whatsoever in securing an international agreement on reducing carbon dioxide emissions to which the major CO_2-producing countries —the United States, the Soviet Union and Japan—were not willing to subscribe. I hope, therefore, that some of the more short-sighted critics who earlier this week berated the British Government's attitude at the Noordijk conference —and in at least one case wholly misrepresented it—will recognise the significance of the agreement reached there, brokered by the British delegation, which I was proud to lead, and which was signed by all attending countries.

That sets out in clear terms an agreement to recognise the need to stabilize carbon dioxide emissions and to study the feasibility of a 20 per cent. reduction in emissions by industrialised countries by the year 2005. It is a major breakthrough in international efforts on climate change and I pay tribute to all the members of my delegation who helped to achieve it, and whose efforts were publicly applauded by our hosts.

Our efforts in the international sphere to secure multilateral agreement on what action is needed builds on Britain's successful leadership role in securing action to protect the ozone layer. Earlier this year my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister hosted the international conference on the protection of the ozone layer and in 1990, Britain will host the second conference of the parties to the Montreal protocol, which we hope will strengthen the existing protocol commitment of a 50 per cent. cut in emissions by the year 2000. As the House will know, Britain is 10 years ahead of schedule on its Montreal obligations and that is all the more important because chlorofluorocarbons are an important greenhouse gas too.

As well as the important role we can play internationally, there are important steps that Britain can take on its own to tackle climate change. There is our aid programme to other countries. The Overseas Development Administration is already promoting projects on forestry in nearly 30 countries and I am sure that all sides of the House will want to welcome the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this week that we will be providing a further £100 million bilaterally to tropical forestry activities over the next three years. I hope that we can build on the model of the memorandum of agreement with Brazil that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment signed in his capacity as Overseas Development Minister in July. I should add that in the United Kingdom itself we have increased our tree planting by 50 per cent. in the past 10 years.

Mr. Dalyell: I have here the text of the Prime Minister's speech to the United Nations and there is one point on which I should like clarification. The Minister said:

> "£100 million bilaterally to tropical forestry activities over the next three years."

The Prime Minister said:

> "mostly within the framework of the tropical forestry action plan".

What discussion has taken place with our partners in the tropical forestry action plan on this and what is meant by "mostly"?

Mr. Trippier: I am not aware of the precise discussions with that body. However, the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be very much welcomed. We talk with our partners in that body regularly.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Although we all welcome any effort made to preserve and protect the tropical rain forest, are his Department or the Government proposing any changes in the trading arrangement by origin marking of tropical timber so that virgin tropical timber is not imported into this country or western Europe in large quantities and that, instead, what one could call farmed timber is imported?

Mr. Trippier: I am not aware of any such measures, but as the hon. Gentleman has raised the matter, I undertake to look at it myself.

The Department of Energy has successfully promoted energy efficiency to the extent of securing recurrent savings of over £500 million a year since 1983. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State hopes to be able to deal with these matters in greater detail later. The electricity supply industry is investing £2 billion to reduce acid rain emissions by fitting flue gas desulphurisation equipment to six of our major power stations.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Trippier: Yes, but for the last time.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Are the Government saying that they are committed to the six and that the six will be desulphurised? As we understand it from announcements by the Central Electricity Generating Board and the private companies that are about to take over, before the next election only Drax B will be retrofitted, the decision on Fiddler's Ferry having been postponed.

Mr. Trippier: Having cleared that point with the Department of Energy, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that although the Department does not say when, it says that we are committed to fitting flue gas desulphurisation equipment to six of our major power stations. The statutory non-fossil fuel obligation embodied in the Electricity Bill is a further important commitment.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): It is a question of logistics. A £2 billion programme is in hand, but the implementation of retrofitting desulphurisation units to power stations can be carried out only when it is most convenient and proper. The equipment has to be available, and the power station has to be shut down and taken out of the grid for a period. That has an effect on electricity supplies, and all those practical considerations have to be taken into account.

Mr. Trippier: I want to underline my hon. Friend's point. It is important to stress that desulphurisation can be carried out only when convenient and proper.

The Electricity Bill has provided the vehicle for a new and unprecedented legal duty to be placed on electricity suppliers positively to promote energy efficiency. We shall continue to work sensibly and constructively with other countries, with British industry and with ordinary consumers to strengthen efforts to reduce the threat that global warming poses.

Unlike the Labour party, we do not advocate mindless and isolated public posturing in international forums. Agreements, not arguments, are what the world needs and agreements will not be secured unless the interests of all nations, industrialised and developing alike, are recognised and catered for. Unlike the Labour party we have no mandate from the National Union of Mineworkers to endorse coal-fired power stations, whatever the environmental consequences. We shall move ahead with an energy mix which is sensible for our economy and our environment. Above all, unlike the Labour party, we have the track record of economic growth and a long, firm commitment to the environment which alone can produce the green growth we need to fund the measures required both at home and abroad to tackle climate change. We are aware of the responsibilities these global challenges impose on us. We shall not fail to fulfil them.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to make a House of Commons point, not a party political one. Will you formally raise with the Chair the question of the practice of some Ministers? Some Ministers are extremely courteous to the House and some Ministers have sat through the whole of a Friday debate. The Minister has been asked a number of questions and there are likely to be contributions from the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment and the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd), who has a long record of interest and expertise in scientific affairs. Having made such a speech, the Minister will then go off to an engagement, which, however attractive, is not more important than the House of Commons. There are many other Ministers who could present awards to the young environmentalist of the year. Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, raise with Mr. Speaker the acceptability of the Ministers' behaviour?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Gentleman and the whole House know that the question of which Ministers turn up for a debate or how long they stay is not a responsibility of the Chair. However, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's point will be noted.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Ministers should be accountable to the House. This is an Adjournment debate and there will be no vote at the end, so in that sense, the Government are not held accountable for their actions. However, there are few opportunities for Back Bench Members to question Ministers directly by intervention or through their own speeches. Surely something should be done to ensure that Ministers stay to respond seriously to the points raised by hon. Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is nothing I can add to what I have already said.

10.7 am

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The whole House welcomes the opportunity to debate the important question of global climate change, but many Conservative Members were expecting the Secretary of State for the Environment to open the debate. To find that the Minister of State is unable to stay even over lunch is less than the House was expecting.

The Opposition welcome the attention being given to the global environment and to changes in the world climate in particular. However, the problem is to know what to do in the face of threatening, but uncertain future change. I want to underline that uncertainty by mentioning new research results which have been published in the past few weeks. In an article in *Nature* on 14 September, John Mitchell and his colleagues at the Meteorological Office, the group to whom the Minister of State referred, revised their estimates of the effect of doubling the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and on global warming from 5·2 degrees centigrade to 1·9 degrees. That reduction of more than one half was due to introducing into the Meteorological Office global general circulation model the effect of reflection and absorption of radiation by cloud with varying ice and water content. Further refinements could go either way, but the variation of 50 per cent. or more is characteristic of the problems that we face.

Fresh light has also been shed on the question of where the carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuel is going. It is possible to measure directly the amount produced, and the amount remaining in the atmosphere is about 50 per cent. of that produced. It had been assumed that the balance of 50 per cent. was dissolved in the oceans, passing through

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

the marine food chain into ocean sediments and eventually becoming the coal and oil of future eras. Through deforestation, the land was assumed to add to carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, not to absorb it.

On 2 November at an NERC press conference, Dr. Andrew Watson and his colleagues at the NERC Plymouth marine laboratory and the university of East Anglia announced that experiments in the North sea on the movement of gases between the sea and the air suggested that only 30 per cent. of the carbon dioxide produced from burning fossil fuels ends up in the oceans, compared with the 50 per cent. previously assumed. The implication is that 20 per cent. of the carbon dioxide generated ends up in the soil and biomass on land. The figure may be 10 per cent. or 30 per cent. but it seems to be large and positive.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could help me with the research to which he referred. I understand that it referred particularly to the capacity of the oceans to absorb carbon dioxide that the the effect of plankton and pro-plankton in the oceans and their capacity to absorb carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen was missed out. There are tremendous masses of these creatures in the southern Atlantic ocean which may be affected by the hole in the ozone layer. That creates a wholly different dimension. Was that aspect dealt with in the research?

Dr. Bray: The research was covered in a NERC press release dated 31 October and published on 2 November. Work was done on the transfer velocity of gases between sea and air in the North sea. it did not deal with the bio-geochemical fluxes to which the hon. Gentleman referred. He is right that many questions about the accumulation of carbon in the oceans remain to be answered, but it has been discovered that the first stage, where carbon dioxide dissolves into the water, is less important than previously supposed.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The statistics should be treated with some caution because they omit the possibility and probability that other organisms are at work in reducing the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Dr. Bray: Tighter restrictions on the absorption of carbon by the oceans would make the imbalance even greater than the 20 per cent. suggested by NERC. Absorption in the oceans would be less than the 30 per cent. that it now proposes. There would be a greater imbalance, which would accumulate in the soil and biomass on land. The hon. Gentleman is right that the major uncertainties call for more research into every aspect of the problem. I shall come later to the problems of designing policy in the light of those uncertainties.

We cannot do much about absorption in the oceans, but we can and should take measures to reduce carbon dioxide generation by improving energy efficiency and conservation. If casual and haphazard policies already lead to the absorption of 20 per cent. of the carbon dioxide generated instead of its release through deforestation, positive land-based environmental policies seem likely to contribute more to minimising global climate change than we thought a fortnight ago, before the NERC research was published. Such policies could help to feed an increased world population, preserve and enrich the natural environment and make our environment more pleasant for human habitation.

More observations, surveys and experimental work are required. Both the Met office and the NERC have said that theories about how carbon absorption on land is increasing include the extent of re-afforestation in temperate zones—which has tended to be dismissed—and the fertilising effect of increased concentrations of carbon dioxide, which causes greater growth of vegetation throughout the world. No hon. Member believes that we can be certain about what is happening.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): The hon. Gentleman has not touched on the problem of catalytic converters. I understand that the Government have been told by scientific advisers that catalytic converters will increase the output of carbon dioxide from motor vehicles by 10 per cent. One of the difficulties that we face is that as we try to cure one problem we increase another.

Dr. Bray: My hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) will deal with road transport and road vehicle standards and regulations. The hon. Gentleman is right that we must look at all the effects of specific measures, whether regulatory, fiscal or other.

On predictability, the Minister implied that variations beyond 10 to 20-day weather forecasts must be due to external causes. Some of those that he mentioned have been dismissed by scientists but others are significant. Long-term variations, whether due to the annual cycle of solar radiation, year-to-year changes in sea-surface temperature or others, do not necessarily explain the variations in the atmosphere. In *Nature* on 2 November, I. N. James and P. M. James of Reading university reported that with the non-linear dynamics of the atmosphere, long and slow variations can occur from purely internally-generated dynamics within the atmosphere—not from interaction with the oceans—over periods of 10 to 40 years. When the oceans are included, the internally-generated variations could spread over hundreds of years. At present, no one has the computing capacity to treat that problem. Indeed, even for the 40 years suggested by James and James as the minimum time over which purely atmospheric models should be run, it will take weeks for even the fastest computers to do just one run. The increase in capacity to analyse what is happening in the oceans and atmosphere may disclose a new uncertainty about long-term variations which no amount of computing could overcome. In that case, we may need enhanced capacity to respond to changing trends, accepting that how long they will continue is uncertain.

The pace of production of important new research will continue. I have given only three samples of such research. The results could go either way. New results will continue to flow from all over the world. Certainly, much more research is needed but, equally, we must act now in the light of the best information that we have. The alternative of waiting to react will make life nastier, more brutish and shorter.

The Minister looks puzzled——

Mr. Trippier: Just amazed.

Dr. Bray: Oh, he is just amazed. I hope that he will talk to John Mitchell at the Met Office. He did not go there to get a briefing for his speech this morning.

Mr. Trippier: Who?

Dr. Bray: John Mitchell, who is the scientist in charge of the general circulation model and deals directly with questions of uncertainty in these highly non-linear dynamic systems.

Mr. Trippier: I should be happy to do that, but it is more important to talk to Dr. John Houghton who has been selected to lead the scientific research as part of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The trouble with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion is that it conflicts with what he was saying five minutes ago. He accepted that a tremendous amount of work remained to be done, and certainly some of the evidence that is coming forward is conflicting. I have an assurance not only from Dr. John Houghton but from the chairman of IPCC that more and accurate information will be forthcoming in February next year.

Dr. Bray: I discussed the matter with John Houghton on Tuesday. I also met those present at the first meeting of the research committee of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which was held near Oxford. The Minister should talk to those who have been drafting the IPCC report. He will discover that their view is that, with increased research, the uncertainties might increase rather than diminish. We shall certainly get more information, but the Minister should ask the chaps what they think. The Minister seems to think that scientists can be detached and give the best views and answers, which politicians can then mull over. That is not the nature of the problem that we face. We need a much closer dialogue between scientists and politicians.

Let me continue on the question of how we handle the research. We welcome the new centre for the prediction of climatic change which the Prime Minister announced in her speech to the United Nations on Wednesday. We also welcome the fact that it will be located at the Met Office. It will clearly represent an expansion of the work that I saw there on Tuesday.

The Met Office is, by international standards, an outstanding environmental observation, forecasting and research organisation. The researchers there tell me that they gain both from their own experience as forecasters and from the flow of data and methods of handling it. As a visitor, I thought that they also gained—by contrast with some other research institutions—from the tightness and discipline of an organisation that has to work in real time and gets constant feedback from the accuracy or otherwise of its forecasts. No comparable feedback is possible in predicting climatic change but the benefits will spill over because the forecasters have learned what to look out for.

One problem that needs to be overcome is the isolation of the Met Office. It is nonsensical for it to be located in the Ministry of Defence. The disciplined nature of the work of meeting defence operational requirements is congenial and stimulating to those forecasting. But in defence terms, it is curious, to say the least, that the weather forecasting requirements for a modest number of British and NATO flying hours are greater than those for the greater number of civil flying hours. That matter must surely be due for review. The Met Office is moving to agency status, but surely more is needed.

The Met Office should become the core of a wider environmental monitoring, forecasting and research organisation. For example, its scientists had an essential role in tracing and monitoring the Chernobyl fallout. If they are to deal with climatic change, they will have to examine changing land use, changing salinity and ocean circulation and much else besides. They will have to deal with the research community generally. The Met Office will have to become an open and accessible research and communication centre whose methods are available to the scientific community generally.

Within their own central area the scientists now accept —they did not a year ago—that computing power is the limiting factor. But because they have lived in the in-bred world of weather forecasters who, the world over, have demanded and been given the biggest supercomputers, they have neglected the really powerful developments in computing, which are coming with massively parallel computers. Ask any parallel computing buff what is the leading application of parallelism and he will say, "Weather forecasting." Ask him whether he has talked to the weather forecasters, and he will say no.

I have asked the Met Office about this matter. First, it took on a PhD student. Now it has agreed to talk to the algorithm group of the national transputer programme. I bet that in two years' time the Met Office will be running its climate model faster on a parallel processing Meiko computing surface than they can on their Cray YMP, which is to be installed in January. In that form—running the general circulation model on parallel processing—the model can be made available to other scientists to run for themselves. There is a tendency on the part of some in the Met Office to argue that their model is so complex that no one else can run it. Foreigners may come in and run it at Bracknell but they cannot take it off and run it in Norwich or Reading, let alone Japan or Ottawa.

That is how economic modellers argued 10 years ago. The London Business School and the National Institute of Economic and Scientific Research said that their models were so complex that no one else could run them. However, there is the serious scientific counter-argument that if others cannot reproduce the results, those results must be questionable. Nowadays economic models are handed round on floppy discs and run on personal computers. For the economic models in the United Kingdom, it has been useful to have a centre at Warwick university which tests and compares the Treasury, Bank of England, London Business School, NIESR and other models. Similar testing and comparison would be useful for the global general circulation models. I have asked Professor Geraldine Kenney-Wallace, the chairman of the Science Council of Canada, the Government's chief scientific adviser, whether Canada and Japan would like to take on that role. Of the five general circulation models, four are American and one is British. If the Government think that by expanding Bracknell they will somehow pre-empt the world scene in general circulation models, they are up a gum tree. The whole point is that the models —four of which are in the United States—must be available to the scientific community throughout the world. That requires a more imaginative approach to the computing facility organisation and dissemination.

[Dr. Bray]

It is much easier to work in that kind of environment than it is with the supercomputer, common computing service arrangements that the Met Office has been used to. The need though for a wider approach extends beyond computing. Fuller participation in the research community is needed across the board. I am not criticising the fine scientists in the Met Office, who have their hands full and are best left to get on with their job. I am saying that their organisation is wrongly related to other research and other researchers do not gain the full benefit of the unique resources and experience of the Met Ofice. Met Office staff may be better paid than the research community because of the decline of academic salaries in the past 10 years. I hope that they are. The answer to that is that research salaries must be increased. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) says that he thought I would say that. Is it really sensible for our most brilliant graduates to be paid £6,000 a year while they are doing research when young, grossly underqualified merchant bankers can pick up twice or three times that amount in the City on leaving college? Does he really think that that is the way in which to treat scientists? He ought to be ashamed of himself, as, indeed, should the whole Government.

The thinness of research cover shows not only in the Met Office's limited approach to computing developments. For example, the Natural Environment Research Council in its recent experiments in the North Sea on the absorption of gasses by the oceans, could not find a scientist to count the white horses in different sea states to estimate the effect of spray and bubbles directly in increasing the effective air-sea surface area. The same story can be told across the board. We cannot carry out research in isolation. It must be done in the whole research community. If we starve the research community, the research will be second rate.

The right place for the Met Office and climate research is surely alongside the research councils. There should be a joint research directorate on the global environment. It could then carry out a coherent programme of research on the global and more local environment. The Met Office cannot track down the cycles of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases from the land, in the oceans and in the atmosphere.

The Prime Minister cannot co-ordinate all this herself. No Minister at a lower level has that responsibility. The Secretary of State for the Environment is not allowed to do it and the Minister responsible for the research councils would not accept that anyway. It is all a bit of a muddle.

The Prime Minister proposed in her United Nations speech that the role of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change should be prolonged after it submits its report next year so that:

> "It can provide an authoritative scientific base for the negotiation"

of a protocol on carbon dioxide emission.

The Prime Minister seems to be under a misapprehension. The panel was asked to write a report, not to direct research. It has not and will not carry out, plan or commission research. The report for the second world climate conference is being put together by 29 lead authors from 13 countries using 200 contributors to produce a 200-page report. I have been told that the material really needs a 20,000-page report. However, that 200-page report will be distilled into a 20-page policy summary and no doubt into a two-page press release. That will be all that most people will see. New research results will be fed into sections of the report on climate observations and predictions.

The report of the intergovernmental panel will be subject to peer review. But that is not the way in which research is carried out. The world climate programme and the international geosphere-biosphere programmes plan research. The Prime Minister said that we do not need more institutions. I am sure that the intergovernmental panel will produce an admirable report, but perhaps we should wait and see whether the scientists who draft the report and the politicians who read it feel that that is the best way of interacting and whether they even want to repeat that particular exercise.

Certainly the intergovernmental panel would be placed under great pressure if it had to pronounce the last word or even the best available word on global climate policies next November. That would place it in an impossible position. We should make it clear in this House that we accept that it is an unfolding story. The achievements of British scientists and their contribution to our understanding of the global climate have been despite rather than because of the appalling and abysmally incompetent way in which they have been organised by the Government.

In the much more difficult phase of application to policy on which we are now entering, the organisation as a whole must be put into better shape. There is a disjunction on policy between what the Prime Minister says and what Britain and Ministers do.

Britain emits more carbon dioxide per dollar of gross domestic product than any other industrial country. It emits 327 tonnes per million dollars of GDP compared with 307 tonnes in Canada, 299 tonnes in the United States, 293 tonnes in Germany, 216 tonnes in Italy, 204 tonnes in France and 184 tonnes in Japan. On carbon dioxide, Britain is not just the dirty man of Europe, but of the world. In that we are in a class of our own. I am sure that hon. Members will want to know that those figures come from estimates made in the journal "World Resources" 1988-89 with sources from the university of New Orleans and the Woods Hole research centre in the United States. The GDP figures that I have used are the latest figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and relate to 1985.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am always troubled by figures like that, particularly when they give percentages of emissions and activities in other countries. We know the methodology and the basis of figures produced in this country and we know the great care that is taken over them. However, some of the countries which the hon. Gentleman listed are perhaps not so methodical. The basis of those figures is not as accurate as ours. We have noted that not in that sphere, but in many others. Very often there is a basis of guestimate in the figures produced by other countries. Is the hon. Gentleman satisfied that the researchers to whom he has referred carried out the work themselves using a uniform methodology, or did they rely on figures supplied by other countries which may use different bases altogether?

Dr. Bray: I am afraid that in the international research and statistical community, the reputation and integrity of British Government statistics has suffered a great deal under this Government. There are great uncertainties and they must be more carefully examined. The figures for carbon dioxide emissions are by no means the least accurate. The greater uncertainties relate to other stocks and flows of carbon dioxide within the oceans, on land and in the atmosphere. It is easy to point to the general problems which lie with the fuel inefficiencies of British industry, lack of insulation standards——

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): What about coal?

Dr. Bray: The hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) has referred to coal. What about Germany? It is as dependent on coal as we are. However, we need more vigorous energy efficiency and conservation and insulation measures to get our figures anywhere near comparable to the levels in other countries.

It is generally agreed that easily the quickest and most effective way of reducing carbon dioxide emissions is through increasing energy efficiency. On information and promotional campaigns for homes and industry, regulations and standards for appliances and buildings, financial and tax incentives for homes and industry, the Government have a long and wide record of retreat and veto. On international protocols on chlorofluorocarbons, carbon dioxide, vehicle emission standards and water standards it has been the same story, with Britain trying time and again to set a slower and less definite pace.

The Secretary of State for the Environment tried to set a new direction when he moved into the Department. He gave a fanfare—or at least a peep or two—for Professor Pearce's "Blueprint for a Green Economy" which I thought was an interesting document. It was all about bending markets in an environmentally favourable direction and anticipatory rather than reactive environmental policies—anticipatory of highly uncertain measures of probability which the Minister seems to think that scientists will be able to brush away for him, which they certainly will not.

Since the Pearce report was published, we have heard nothing more. At the United Nations this week the Prime Minister was back on the same old theme. She said that free markets

> "would defeat their object if by their output they did more damage to the quality of life through pollution, than the well-being they achieve by the production of goods and services."

So what? Free markets often defeat their objective. Professor Pearce and the Secretary of State for the Environment would bend the market. The Prime Minister would re-define the benefit or the quality of life to make the market queen.

The general nature of environmental degradation is that the effect of damaging factors such as CFCs can grow rapidly, with the environment recovering only slowly when the factor is cut out. Every year's delay in acting on CFCs means four years longer before effects fall to half today's levels. There is an urgency.

At the United Nations the Prime Minister urged the adoption of binding protocols on the different aspects of climate change at the 1992 world conference on environment and development. She said that none will be more contentious than the need to control emissions of carbon dioxide. She can say that again. But why wait until 1992? Why not use the world climate conference in November 1990 to adopt initial protocols on all the obvious measures to conserve resources which should be undertaken any way, and which the Government have been steadily resisting. Why not set targets and dates, which can then be reviewed and tightened up in 1992? Why delay and risk diplomatic breakdown in 1992?

There is no inconsistency between such early and firm action, and the most demanding research. They reinforce each other. I am confident that we can hand on this lovely world to our children and grandchildren in a better state than we found it, if we take thought and act now.

10.41 am

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and I would probably be regarded by many of our colleagues—I say this without offence to him, even if it disparages myself—as members of that small group of political eccentrics who browse around in the dustbins of policy, hoping occasionally to come across the word "science". The hon. Gentleman and I have attended many debates on this and similar subjects over the past 25 years. Therefore, I wholly understand his reaction to the suggestion that our most brilliant graduates should be paid only £6,000 a year. I have heard that point made almost every year for the past 25 years, irrespective of which side of the House I was on.

I make a more general criticism. It is not so much a failure of one or other particular party, it is a failure of our culture to recognise the significance and importance of science and to elevate it within the nation more continuously and more substantially than Governments of either party have chosen to do during the past 25 years. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman would accept that comment. Obviously, he must make his political points, and I understand that.

I followed with great interest what the hon. Gentleman said about the importance of computing, not least because it is one of the subjects that we discussed in Washington a few weeks ago. I welcome and support much of what my hon. Friend the Minister said, although I disagree with one or two minor points. I particularly like his emphasis on the solution that will come from human ingenuity. There are vast problems, but human ingenuity is a vast resource. In this context, the primary resource lies within science and nowhere else. No one should ever forget that.

Here we are again on a Friday, discussing probably the most momentous issue facing the human race. I suppose we should be grateful for the crumbs of comfort which fall from the power man's table. My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House would probably validly reply that, if he were to grant us a two-day debate, the Chamber would probably be much fuller than it is now. Hon. Members who are concerned about these matters would probably find it difficult to keep the debate going. When the cameras are operating in the next few months, the country will begin to assess our judgments about the importance of our affairs, and that will be a constructive and positive influence on us.

The Select Committee on the Environment, which I chair, had the honour to present to the House a report on the energy policy implications of the greenhouse effect. The Government's response reached me yesterday. I will not weary the House by repeating many of the recommendations and conclusions in the report, which I hope most hon. Members present will probably have read for themselves, but the principal points were the urgency,

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

scale and complexity of the issue. I am pleased to say that, in their reply, the Government accepted virtually all of what we said, but I shall draw attention to one or two points of residual disagreement.

One issue is research and development. We emphasised as strongly as we could the need for a dramatic increase in research and development. The Government replied that they do not believe that they should

"arbitrarily specify a proportion of gross domestic product"

into global warming R and D

"because effective research requires a bottom up pressure of sensible ideas and cannot simply be called into existence by allocating large R and D funds."

I accept the generality of that conclusion, but we are now possibly looking at the necessary worldwide measures to defend the future of the human race. If one measures the R and D now being spent principally by the great industrial countries on this subject, and take that as a percentage of what they are still spending to defend themselves as nation states, one notes that it is a minuscule sum. In Committee, I argued—I am afraid, unsuccessfully—that we should form this as a percentage of defence R and D so that the willingness of Governments to face up to this issue can clearly be perceived by those who support them. In Committee, my friends supported me to the extent of making it a percentage not of defence R and D but of gross domestic product. I am sorry that the Government have not seen fit to go at least a little way down that road.

Dr. Bray: On the relationship with defence, does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is absurd for the Ministry of Defence to be in charge of the Met Office? Would it not be much better for it to be in its original position under the Board of Trade? There is absolutely no reason why it should not move from where it is now.

Sir Ian Lloyd: That is as may be. I do not disagree profoundly, but the importance of the subject requires our conclusion that its work should be thoroughly and well done and fully funded, under whichever Ministry it falls. From evidence given to the House of Lords Selection Subcommittee on this subject, I understand that those concerned are not greatly worried about their relationship with the Ministry of Defence. It is a somewhat esoteric point.

Mr. Dalyell: I have respected the hon. Gentleman's knowledge of these matters for 20 years. Has he seen page 28 of the copy of "New Scientist" of 4 November in which a table shows how Britain compares with other European countries in the distribution of Government funds for R and D? The figure for Britain is 48·4 per cent.—easily higher than any other European country's expenditure on defence—West Germany 12·7 per cent., Italy 7 per cent., and the Netherlands 2·8 per cent. It is a tell-tale table.

Sir Ian Lloyd: I agree that it is a telling table, and many conclusions can be drawn from it. We could incidentally draw a beneficial conclusion from it. If our defence R and D is high, so must our global warming R and D be high. The incentive would be to increase one and reduce the other if we are to keep both as a given percentage of R and D.

My Committee carefully considered many policies, recommendations and proposals on alternative energy and new systems which would be carbon dioxide benign. There is no doubt that immense interest has been shown in the use of hydrogen as a possible fuel, and even as a substitute for petrol and fuels of that kind. The OECD conference in April, which looked at alternative technologies for the reduction of the emission of greenhouse gases, produced some extraordinarily interesting papers on the subject of hydrogen.

I refer first to the Government's reply on the question of hydrogen. They say that they accept our recommendation that the potential benefits should be reviewed and that they are undertaking such a review with the energy technology support unit. They state:

"However, for any impact on CO_2 emissions to acrue from the use of hydrogen, it must be produced, usually using electricity, from a non-fossil source."

That is grotesquely inaccurate.

If those who drafted the paper had read the papers that were presented at the OECD conference in Paris, they would have seen that one of the most exciting new technologies now being considered is the use of nuclear heat to upgrade natural gas to hydrogen.

In the context of this paper, there is the suggestion that, if the industrialised world moves, as the authors think it will—and rapidly—during the next two decades, to a natural gas-based economy, yielding a hydrogen economy, the power requirement to convert natural gas into hydrogen would be about 3,000 GW of nuclear electricity. Worldwide, the figure would be about 7,000. The world energy economy would then be based completely on hydrogen and, to all intents and purposes, CO_2 would be eliminated.

The Government must think again and think carefully about their commitment to hydrogen research. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Energy has followed through what we told him about the work being done in co-operation by West Germany, Canada and the United States.

I now turn to the Prime Minister's speech at the United Nations, which I personally consider to be a fine speech. The lead must come from right at the top and my right hon. Friend has given that lead in her characteristically vigorous and effective manner. Much of that speech will stand careful and critical examination. My right hon. Friend emphasised the scale of the threat—and I agree with what she said. She emphasised the possible runaway or irreversible quality of the greenhouse effect. I entirely agree. She also emphasised the need for a vast international co-operative effort. I have some views on what she meant by that and on what I see as being necessary.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that science is an indispensable contributor to the solution, a welcome conclusion. She said that different nations may have to consider programmes differing in quality, scale and complexity. Those are my words, not hers, but I believe that I summarise what she said. I add simply that the main thing is that those programmes should respond to the same criteria. My right hon. Friend said that nuclear power is the most environmentally safe form of energy. I wholly concur with that view. I shall return in a few moments to the questions about nuclear power that were raised yesterday.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that we must expand our model building capacity. The hon. Member for Motherwell, South fully endorsed that point and I shall return to it. My right hon. Friend also said that we will not succeed without the full co-operation of the research and development capacity and capabilities of the multinationals—a sound point. She reaffirmed the initiative taken by the Government and said that we need a framework convention, filled out with specific undertakings.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Prime Minister did not accept any commitment to action and refused to set targets for reductions in CO_2 emissions in Britain?

Sir Ian Lloyd: I am coming to that because my next point is to endorse what the Prime Minister said about the need to agree targets and to develop new technologies for dealing with those problems——

Mr. Allan Roberts: When?

Sir Ian Lloyd: I shall come on to the question of when, because it relates to the problem of scientific uncertainty. The hon. Gentleman must not assume that I do not understand the importance of this or the policies that are now required. If he will exercise a little patience, he may approve of what I am about to say.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that we had to increase our research and development. I agree and wholly endorse that view. Finally, she said that we must help the poorer countries. That point raises one of the biggest policy and political issues that has ever been before the House.

My endorsement so far of what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said is thus enthusiastic and whole-hearted. However, in fairness to the House and to my own position, I must enter a few caveats. My first is purely scientific and technical. The Prime Minister said, in effect, that we had to place great emphasis on the planting and replanting of forests, and that this process contributes to the CO_2 position. That is not quite accurate. As the evidence presented to the House of Lords Select Committee that considered the science base of this question pointed out a few weeks ago, stable forests—whether tropical or temperate—do not remove carbon dioxide, whatever their other merits. That is an important point.

The evidence pointed out that the most that one can expect from forest replanting on a massive scale as a contribution to the greenhouse problem, in relation to the massive scale of our present pollution of the environment, is about 10 per cent. Of course, 10 per cent. is not insignificant; it is of the greatest importance, but it is produced only by new trees growing to maturity. The moment those trees reach maturity, the natural ecosystem goes into balance as far as carbon dioxide is concerned. It is important that that fact is known, because it could exercise an important and significant effect on policy.

The International Institute of Applied Systems Research recently produced a profoundly interesting analysis of carbon 14, a radioactive component of carbon, from which it reliably deduced the proportion of carbon dioxide contributed by various activities. Its analysis is relevant to this debate, because that which has come from land clearance over the centuries, including in the Brazilian forests, is the major contributor and accounts for 265 trillion tonnes of carbon dioxide, whereas that which has come from fossil fuels—although also very large—is less, at 170 trillion tonnes of carbon dioxide. When we are considering the relative contributions from different sources, we must therefore pay close attention to land clearance.

Although this is perhaps understandable in any Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend seems from time to time to exhibit a certain antipathy towards new institutions. In her words, we need to strengthen those which already exist. However, I ask the House to consider whether that will be enough. I believe that it will be enough to produce the science and to organise great international conferences at which great and important resolutions are passed. It may be enough to organise the necessary exchanges of data. I do not need to remind the House—and certainly not the hon. Member for Motherwell—that exchanges of data between supercomputers are a necessary component of the research, but can be an expensive business.

What about the specific undertakings and protocols to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred? She referred to "effective regimes" to supervise and monitor their application. I agree, but do such effective regimes exist? What could the United Nations do as an organisation to enforce such regimes and how could it enforce them? Even the light protocols cause the most profound reactions. I remind the House that the 20 per cent. protocol agreed at the Toronto conference could be described as a light protocol in the context of the threat. When the policy makers returned home to say, "We may have to reduce fossil fuel emissions by 20 per cent. within a decade," the reactions were profound and far-reaching. Therefore, I repeat the question that has already been asked—what are we going to do about it?

I turn now to the vital point, which is where I disagree to some extent with my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), who believes that the political will exists to execute imminent change on the scale that is contemplated. Logically, he may therefore have to agree that the institutions exist through which we can exercise that political will. Although the political will has been expressed in vigorous, interesting and dramatic terms at international conferences, in my judgment the political will to follow through that policy right across the globe to a degree that will be effective does not exist. That political will does not exist because public opinion has not yet begun to be aware of the scale of possible change that Governments will ask their publics to accept. When the public do not understand that, there is no political will because Governments do not have public support.

Do the institutions necessary to carry out policy exist? Our international institutions are frail, fragile and tend to be powerless. We may be moving into an era when frailty, fragility and powerlessness are simply not enough. The proper institutions must be created. At the Paris conference, a distinguished Japanese contributor, Mr. Akira Kinashinta, said:

> "There seem to be no adequate policy sciences capable of handling this issue."

I believe that that is accurate.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is optimistic —that optimism has been qualified to some extent by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South—about the eminence of scientific proof. That scientific proof is necessary to underpin the political decisions and policies that must be followed if it is correct that we are already suffering from the greenhouse effect. The circumstantial evidence to support that theory is powerful.

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

I am not optimistic about the eminence of scientific proof. The consensus of the advice given to my Committee and to the House of Lords Committee—unfortunately that Committee will not report until next week, but I have read all seven volumes of the evidence given to it—by responsible scientists is that we shall not have the answers in under 10 years. Both Committees visited Washington a few weeks ago. We had a fascinating week which started with a meeting with the scientific adviser to the President, Dr. Bromley. We talked to the National Academy of Sciences, the Department of Energy and the Department of the Environment, and we had discussions with the advisers to some of the relevant committees in the Senate and Congress. The judgment given to us in evidence was wholly reinforced in the United States. No one there is expecting demonstrable proof from their scientists within the next 10 years.

In the United States, we were given a remarkable example of what is involved. At the moment, the vast global climate models that have been created are limited by the number of grid points from which information can be received and processed. Dr. Bromley told us that they would like to reduce the grid size from 100 square miles per grid to about 20 square miles per grid. To process that information so that policy makers can obtain the answers means that the supercomputers would have to be 500 times more powerful. The hon. Member for Motherwell, South will understand precisely what that means. Although the rate of increase in computer power has been staggering, we are asking for another staggering increase before we can achieve the grid size necessary to enable us to make reasonable predictions about regional variations, never mind about other matters.

Dr. Bray: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. It is now suggested that further research might disclose that we are up against a barrier of ignorance that will be with us for ever, whatever the amount of computing. We shall always be faced with the problem of having to act against the background of great uncertainty.

Sir Ian Lloyd: I accept that and I am reminded of Albert Einstein, who said that the tree of scientific knowledge would continue to grow, but that the space between the branches would always be far greater than that which they occupied.

The global climate models are of immense sophistication and brilliance. They demand ever vaster computer power, but they remain primitive, incomplete, partial and tentative.

One of the vital areas areas of contribution to the interchange of carbon dioxide between the oceans and the climate is the Southern ocean. The key area of the Southern ocean is off South Africa, but that country has been excluded from the world meteorological conference. It is no longer supplying information on the scale required by various organisations. How stupid can we get?

The conclusion that must be drawn by policy makers is that we shall have no scientific proof or certainty for 10 to 20 years. The evidence that appears within that period is likely to be circumstantial or anecdotal. Within that time, we cannot separate the signal from the noise—an interesting term used by communication engineers. In this case, the noise is that of the natural environment and refers to such immense forces as the movement of the El Nino current, about 400 miles north of the Pacific. We do not know whether the droughts in the mid-west of the United States last year were the direct result of El Nino or the direct consequence of the imminence of the greenhouse effect.

For the next 10 to 20 years we are on our own, and there will be an unavoidable and tremendous dependence on judgment. We must start examining the political requirements presented to us by that situation. We must start examining now the consequences of what can only be described as "worst case" scenarios. We were shown one curve in the United States relating to an assessment of the economic cost to the United States if sea levels rose successively. That curve traced the effect of a probable rise of a few centimetres through to the possible rise should the Antarctic ice cap melt.

If that happens, sea levels would rise by between 10 and 15 m. Under the worst case scenario, nearly the entire gross national product of the United States would be absorbed in defending its coastal regions. An equal analysis would apply to the rest of the world. In the United Kingdom we must start looking at worst case, medium threat and low-threat scenarios. We must start to publish the results and prepare public opinion for what might be necessary.

Neither the political will nor the political mechanisms exist to deal with any worst case scenario. Even medium-threat scenarios would challenge the incomplete, spasmodic and largely powerless instruments that have been created by the nation states. Faced by the problem, the nation states will not set environmental policy examples that are industrially damaging to their own economies. The internal political pressure against such policies would be overpowering. They will not make great sacrifices by restricting greenhouse emissions when logic shows that their marginal contribution brings no national benefit and is offset by massive increases elsewhere.

Even allowing for the figures produced by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South, the United Kingdom contributes 3 per cent. to the greenhouse effect—the contribution from our industrial power stations is less than that. Any decision taken by policy makers will be queried if, for example, next year, the Chinese increase their coal burn emissions more than the total reduction of emissions achieved in western Europe. That is the key point. Will the Chinese react to an extreme event? They will do so only if it occurs within their area of political and economic interest.

I attended a conference in London a couple of weeks ago when I said:

> "By adopting the most rigorous and sensible greenhouse effect policies, individual nations can conceivably mitigate the consequences for everyone. They cannot mitigate the consequences proportionately to their own efforts for themselves and this is a completely new state of affairs. The implications are very far reaching. In increasingly large areas of life and policy and in all the areas covered by energy, there is no longer such a thing as a coherent national policy."

Such a policy can be said to have coherence only if it forms part of a global energy policy which, as a whole, has relevance to the problems for the global environment caused by the global energy system and fuel mix.

What questions should we ask, and are we doing the right sums? Will enough answers arrive in the right timescale? We do not know. If not, will more money achieve that objective? Money is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for success and it is one necessary condition which we can and must fulfil. Are we beginning to prepare public opinion and institutions for the possibility of having to face severe short-term energy-related dislocations?

Putting man on the moon demanded new tools and technology, and a massive commitment of resources on a scale unprecedented for the human race. Keeping man's tenancy of the earth may well require a worldwide programme by comparison with which all previous resource allocation records—even in war and when putting man on the moon—will pale into insignificance.

I shall refer to the reaction in this morning's national press to yesterday's announcement about nuclear energy. Those opposed to, and hostile to, nuclear power claim the announcement as a great victory. They said that the British Government had recognised the folly of their ways and are going to slow down and then retreat from nuclear power. That is not a conclusion of which anyone need be proud. Anyone who is fully aware of the range of complexities involved in this issue will realise that no solution is available to the United Kingdom, Western Europe or the industrial developed world which neglects or sets on one side the vital contribution now made by nuclear power and which—as I implied earlier in relation to hydrogen—could have to increase dramatically.

Alternatives are all very well. The latest estimate by the International Energy Agency is that, at the most, it could make a 1 per cent. contribution.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): It has not had the chance.

Sir Ian Lloyd: May be it has not had the chance, but even the most optimistic assessment—the free capital investment at zero rates of interests—gives figures of about 5 per cent. I am not concerned about those figures, but about the other 95 per cent. of contributions which we know cannot be met in that way. I have no doubt that the contribution from energy conservation could be dramatically increased but, during the next several decades, we shall depend on slow transition because there is no other way. Our societies cannot afford greater capital investment than more than the 3 per cent. or 4 per cent. change per annum in our energy systems.

During the next few decades we shall be vitally dependent on not only coal, the supply of which we shall have to improve by dramatic capital investment and changes in technology, but on nuclear power. We may well have to become dependent, if predictions prove correct, on natural gas and the nuclear power processing of natural gas. Therefore, those who cry triumph must look carefully at their analysis and the information on which they have based their judgment. I fear that they will have to eat their words and will become uncomfortable.

Let us not destroy the prospect of nuclear power by clutching vast numbers out of the air, as we have been doing, and attaching them to such processes as decommissioning when we do not know what the capability and contribution will be from the ingenuity which will exist in science and technology in half a century or a century's time. We may be able to decommission a nuclear power facility at a small fraction of the cost which is now estimated. Therefore, let us not take a figure of £10 billion, apply that to the British nuclear industry and say that it is uneconomic, we must scrap it and not consider it as an option. That is a fatal judgment which is fatally flawed.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know that last night a European instrument was discussed and debated in the House and that next week further European instruments are to be discussed and debated. Those instruments have a major effect on the powers of this House. You will also know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the dramatic events in Germany and the potential for the reunification of Germany which is pregnant with impact for our continent. Massive events are taking place which could radically effect the relationship of this country with Europe and European institutions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Marlow: The point of order for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that in view of the dramatic events which have taken place and the, as yet unknown, impact which those events should have on our potential relationship with Europe and European institutions, would it be possible for you to get a Minister to come to the Dispatch Box to give a statement on the relevant significance of these major events and the likely outcome for this country and its relationship with other European institutions? That is an urgent point which should be addressed immediately.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have received no request for a statement. I am sure that what the hon. Gentleman has said has been heard by Ministers.

11.17 am

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): When I was coming into the House on Wednesday I read a headline—I think in the *Evening Standard*—which struck terror in my heart. It said "Thatcher to save the world". That was the sort of hype about the speech last Wednesday. If the Prime Minister wants to save the world, why do we have a debate in the House on a Friday and not in prime time? If she wanted to save the world, why did not the Prime Minister come to the House and make a statement about her speech to the United Nations? Apparently, the whole world was in her hands. Surely she could come to the House and tell us about it.

The matter is being discussed on a Friday and the Secretary of State is not even present. However, a Minister is present for whom I have the highest personal regard and respect because he has helped me and my constituents considerably. But even he has to leave the House before the end of the debate. That is a sign of the sincerity of the Government's attitude to the environment.

Let us consider the events of three days of this week. When my noble Friend Lord Wilson of Rievaulx was the Leader of the Opposition he coined the famous phrase that a week was a long time in politics. As time has advanced, the timescale has gone down and now three days is an immensely long time in politics.

The Minister attended and led the delegation at an important conference at The Hague. He has given his version of events to the House, but it contradicts what I have read, and not only in *The Guardian*. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), the Liberal spokesman, also gained a totally different impression of the conference.

[Mr. Gordon Oakes]

My impression of what the Government were going to do was formed from my reading of *The Observer*—*[Interruption.]* The Minister laughs about *The Observer* and *The Guardian*. I read *The Observer* and the impression that I formed, and still have, is that we were delaying and saying that instead of having fixed dates and targets we would act as soon as possible. That was what we were saying to Europe when the issue of air pollution was raised. At that time we wanted to delay and forestall our action. I fear that that is precisely what the Prime Minister was doing in New York.

It is well known that if there is a problem, a royal commission is set up. The Prime Minister suggests that we should set up a world commission and do nothing about the problem. Although I admire and appreciate the Government's generosity in spending £100 million over three years to stop the erosion and deforestation in Brazil and Africa—it is a good and generous move on the part of the Government who are heading in the right direction—they are spending money on more blotting paper when we should stop spilling ink. We should not put the blame on the Brazilian or Zaire Governments and bribe them not to use their natural resources.

We should stop pollution, but the Government are significantly failing to do that. I agree with the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I Lloyd). Indeed, I agreed with every word of his speech—as I usually do. It is always interesting to listen to him.

On Wednesday, the Prime Minister said that, environmentally, the nuclear industry could be the salvation of the atmosphere. Yet what happened when she stepped off her jet plane? She went to a Cabinet meeting which, for commercial reasons, said that the nuclear industry should not go ahead. That is the measure of the Government's sincerity on the atmosphere. I fully accept the right hon. Lady's assertion that nuclear energy is cleaner for the atmosphere than our fossil fuels—but having boasted about that, she has decided that the taxpayer must take responsibility because the private sector cannot afford decommissioning and the control of nuclear waste. Presumably, the public nuclear sector will be in competition with the privatised sector, which exists to make a profit. Will further resources be committed to nuclear power when it is in the public sector while the remainder of the industry is in the private sector? The truth is that when it comes down to commercial reasons, the environment goes out of the window.

The nuclear industry is costly because we set environmental standards following public concern about the disposal of nuclear waste. We accept that the disposal of such waste must be paid for. Coal-fired and oil-fired stations simply chuck their waste up into the atmosphere where it does no much damage. If we dealt with those fumes—as we have the technology to do—reduced the amount of acid rain, took out the SO_2 and reduced the carbon dioxide content, the true cost of the privatised energy sector would be as high as the nuclear sector. At the moment, we merely chuck all the fumes into the atmosphere and other nations, as well as ours, suffer.

There are three main factors in the warming of the atmosphere: first, carbon dioxide, which is by far the biggest; secondly, the emissions from cars of nitrous oxide; and, thirdly—and more minor—CFCs. As I have already said, the Government are simply providing blotting paper for Brazil, but are doing nothing about the ink that is being spilt. Indeed, they are going backwards.

For carbon dioxide and car emissions we have the necessary technology. We do not need new technology, we simply need to spend more money on the technology that we already have. It is a question of cash. I noted that in her New York speech the Prime Minister referred to lean-burn engines. Britain is in the forefront of the world in that technology. But although they reduce pollution at slow speeds—for example, when driving round London—once on a motorway when the speed increases the lean-burn engine emits just as many pollutants as the traditional engine. We already have catalytic converters, and I believe that they are the answer to the problem. I am glad that the Government reduced the tax on unleaded petrol; it is the sort of initiative that they should be showing to a much greater degree. Catalytic converters would significantly improve the environment. They should be compulsory not only on new cars but on existing cars.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Although the hon. Gentleman is right to say that the use of catalytic converters will reduce the volume of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emitted into the atmosphere, they also increase the amount of carbon dioxides emitted—in other words, they aggravate the greenhouse effect and global warming.

Mr. Oakes: I am not a scientist, but I understand that nitrous oxide from car emissions has a catalytic effect with carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which seriously increases the warming effect. Apparently the two go together. I am not a scientist, so I will not argue the point.

The Government have not seriously dealt with the two factors of carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide. The Prime Minister might make a great speech in New York, but this country is doing nothing about that problem.

Britain has a success story on CFCs and the Montreal agreement, although no thanks to the Government. I am proud to say that in my constituency, ICI—the cradle of the chemical industry—has found the alternative to CFCs. It has spent more than £100 million on a crash research programme. The plant making the new product will be in operation in 13 months, in January 1991. Another plant will be opened in Louisiana in the United States. This country is ahead of the world in providing substitutes for CFCs. The new product will be called KLEA 134A—it is a trade name and the initials have no significance. It has been toxicologically tested and is as good as, or better than, CFC 12. In addition, and at its own expense, ICI has agreed to take in all old refrigerators so that it can safely dispose of the waste. It will also take in fire extinguishers using halon. ICI is an environmentally conscious company.

The Prime Minister was at least right when she said in New York that some of the criticisms of multinational companies was wrong. ICI is an example of a multinational company that is making a considerable impact on improving the environment.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I was interested to hear the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about KLEA 134A. Has ICI given an undertaking to take all the redundant refrigerators in the country and remove the harmful CFC gases, or is it just a local initiative? I am sure that it is a move that would be welcomed in Leicestershire.

Mr. Oakes: It is certainly not a local initiative; I think that it is national. ICI has reached agreement with a major waste and scrap firm to take off its hands anything containing CFC 12, which is the most damaging of the CFCs to the ozone layer.

Mr. Dalyell: I wish to put on record the appreciation of an hon. Member from a different part of the country for the efforts both of my right hon. Friend and ICI at Runcorn in explaining objectively, while open to critical questions, the marvellous work that the company has done.

Mr. Oakes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), to my hon. Friends the Members for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and to some Conservative Members whom I do not see in the Chamber for attending the meeting with ICI. The people at ICI are scientists and know the damage that could be caused to the climate and to the world. They wanted to inform hon. Members about what they were doing, but not in an advertising sense because at that time they did not have the product. The ICI scientists merely told us what they were trying to do. At the time they had not succeded, but now they have. I am proud of that success and the fact that the product was developed in my constituency. I welcome the debate, but I do not think for a moment that the Government are sincere about the environment.

Mr. Trippier: I am listening carefully to the right hon. Gentleman. Much of what he says is fair and I am grateful to him for the nice things that he said about me. If he wishes to continue to be fair he should not make such statements. He said that the Government played no part in the reduction of CFCs. But about four things have happened in which the Government took the lead. First, as he and I know, it was British scientists taking part in the Antarctic survey who first discovered the erosion of the ozone layer. That survey was sponsored by the Government. We were the first to sign the Vienna convention and played such a part in the Montreal protocol that it was recognised that we should host the ozone layer conference. It is recognised internationally that we are in the lead because people are content to come back to London next June. We should be proud of that. The Government have taken many initiatives on the matter and the right hon. Gentleman should not say that we are not in the least concerned about the environment.

Mr. Oakes: The Government have taken an initiative by saying that there is a problem but they have done nothing to provide a solution. That was left to ICI. When the product was first developed by ICI no one knew about its effect on the ozone layer or the environment. As soon as the Government found out they reacted and tried to do something about it. The Government should take much greater initiatives with companies such as the Central Electricity Generating Board and with industry generally to make sure that it is as environmentally conscious as ICI. They should do something to save the planet.

11.32 am

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): As this is the first opportunity that I have had of doing so on the Floor of the House, may I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to his new post? Last week, my Committee found his attendance most helpful. At that time he gave evidence on another subject and displayed a concern, an openness of mind and a willingness to be flexible on the issues that concerned us. I am grateful for that.

I was fascinated by the erudite contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy. The House knows the contribution that he has made to that subject. For many years he has devoted his parliamentary life to a study of such matters and he and his Committee have added greatly to our knowledge about matters which have recently become of much greater political significance than was the case when he embarked on his course many years ago.

It is understandable that Opposition Members should take a cynical view of what they regard as the conversion of the Government. Reference has been made to the speech by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the United Nations. My hon. Friend the Member for Havant put that speech in its proper perspective, and I join him in welcoming the profound and important statements that it contained. Britain should be proud of the fact that it is being seen to take the lead in matters that present the world with enormous problems requiring solutions.

I know that Opposition Members do not want to hear about such matters and adopt a cynical attitude. However, it is part of the Opposition's function to adopt such an attitude, because if they did not question what the Government were doing they would not be operating correctly. The way that some Opposition Members talk about what are called the green issues is a little rich. I recall —the hon. Member for Bootle will remember this—that only six years ago my Committee decided to look into the phenomenon of atmospheric pollution. We embarked upon an inquiry which, for want of a better term we called acid rain, into the consequences of the burning of fossil fuels. The hon. Member for Bootle will remember, when the Chairman first raised those subjects as possible matters for inquiry, the bemusement with which some members of the Committee greeted the suggestions. They asked what acid rain was, how it was important and how it affected us and Parliament. They asked how it affected the nation and, in an aside, they said, "There are not many votes in it, are there, because the public are not concerned?"

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman has said so far, and especially with his suggestion that concern for green issues has come late to all political parties. One of the things we complain about is that it has come particularly late to the Prime Minister. There is an element of cynicism among those of us who have been involved with those issues for many years, even before we were in Parliament. In many senses, the Prime Minister is using them as a way of diverting attention from what is going on at home so that she can get headlines such as:

> "Thatcher's plan to save the world".

Sir Hugh Rossi: I do not accept that for a moment. I have nothing whatever to gain by doing so but I can say that I am perfectly satisfied that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has a deep personal conviction on these matters.

Let us look at what is happening. I spoke about the inquiry into acid rain, which was met with scepticism and cynicism all round. As my Committee says in the opening

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part of its report, members of the Committee approached the subject with an open mind because they knew very little about the subject at that time. That reflected the situation in the House. We came back absolutely convinced about the problem and the need for action, and we reported accordingly.

The reaction outside to the report was typical of the mentality of the country as a whole. No political party excluded, the reaction was summarised very nicely in the third leader of *The Times* following the publication of our report. It posed the questions: "What are these 11 men up to? Are they trying to scare us? They have gone over the top by exaggerating a situation for which there is no real scientific evidence."

The consensus at that time was that no scientific nexus existed between emissions from power stations and industry and damage to the environment. That was the majority view in this country and the advice given to the Government. That advice was given also to the Labour party. It required 11 hon. Members from all parts of the House to take the trouble to study, to go abroad and to investigate the subject for themselves, so that they could subsequently identify the dangers. From that time on, some notice began to be taken both in the House and outside.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Is it not the case the Britain was about the last country in Europe to acknowledge the problem of acid rain and the last to join the 30 per cent. club? Is it not true also that Britain has done less to tackle the problem than any other Community member?

Sir Hugh Rossi: It is the last country in Europe to record the effects of acid rain, for the reasons given in the Environment Committee's report. The complacency that existed at the time of the report was based partly on the enormous success of the Clean Air Act 1956, which removed the dirt and dust from our atmosphere, did away with London smog, and brought a 100 per cent. increase in the sunshine enjoyed in London in the 1970s over the 1950s and the return to central London of many species of wildlife that had not existed there since the industrial revolution.

That was coupled with the tall chimney policy, based on the scientific belief—still prevalent in respect of the oceans —of "dilute and disperse" It was thought that the atmosphere was so vast that it could absorb, dilute, disperse and render harmless anything put into it. We know now that that theory was wrong. We were misled partly because, while tall chimneys took the muck high into the atmosphere, that only served to carry it elsewhere —and then the people at the receiving end started agitating for changes and corrections. That is why members of the Committee visited many of the countries so affected.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I accept, as a member of that Environment Committee, that the report was good and was before its time. However, it was published six years ago. Recommendation 3.50 in the Fourth Report was

> "*(a)* that the United Kingdom joined the 30 per cent. club immediately"—

after six years, we still have not done so—

> "and that this target be achieved by the CEGB being required to reduce its emissions accordingly."

In fact, Britain has increased its emissions accordingly over the past six years, and the Government have done nothing.

Recommendation 3.50 *(b)* was

> "that in the medium term as power stations come to be refitted"—

none has been refitted, and the proposal is to refit only one before the next general election—

> "the CEGB should be required to instal equipment to attain the overall national reduction of 60 per cent in accordance with the EEC draft directive, that is, by the end of 1995."

None of those recommendations has been accepted or implemented by the Government, and nor have any of the Select Committee's latest significant recommendations.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I acknowledge the enthusiastic role that the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) played subsequently in the work of the Select Committee. Like him, I regret that the Government did not see fit to join the 30 per cent. club, as the Committee unanimously recommended. However, he knows as well as I do that this country is likely to attain the targets that have been set far earlier than many of the signatories to the agreement. We have, however, joined in agreeing the targets of the EEC directive in respect of large combustion units, and we are well on target with the reductions required by that directive. We are playing our full part.

The hon. Member for Bootle is right to say that there was a reluctance to accept immediately the dangers that the Committee cited, because of the scientific advice that the Government were then receiving. The attitude taken by the scientific world at that time was very similar to that which it adopted many years ago on the link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer—"Not proven . . . it is in doubt that . . . the balance of probabilities is . . . ." A similar view was taken in respect of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions and their impact on the environment.

One cannot blame a Government, having listened to scientific advice, for adopting a cautious approach. However, the hon. Gentleman must acknowledge that the Government accepted all the Committee's recommendations——

Mr. Allan Roberts: Because they did not cost any money.

Sir Hugh Rossi: —as to the need for research and for monitoring air quality, in order to establish the facts. Contrary to the hon. Gentleman's remark from a sedentary position, I had it from the chief scientist to the Department of the Environment that, following the Government's acceptance of the Committee's report and recommendations, money became no object insofar as scientific research into that area was concerned. It proceeded apace.

It is hardly surprising that, following that research, just as night follows day, the Government reached the same conclusions as the Committee reached in 1984. Some 18 months after our report was published, a programe of desulphurisation costing £600 million, now increased to £2 billion, became part of our country's efforts to achieve the norms set in the EEC directives. I am satisfied that the United Kingdom will continue to honour its obligations under that directive and will reach its targets before many other members of the 30 per cent. club.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): We obviously welcome reductions in sulphur emissions, which reduces acid rain, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman will turn his attention to another significant cause of pollution that is increasing throughout the world: the internal combustion engine. Is it right for the British Government and every other Government in Europe not only to predict a 120 per cent. increase in private car ownership over the next 25 years but positively to encourage it? Should not the Committee turn its attention to reducing the number of internal combustion engines and to increasing the use of public transport, which would inevitably give rise to much less pollution?

Mr. Tony Banks: Yes—bring back the sedan chair.

Sir Hugh Rossi: If the hon. Gentleman will compose himself and become more patient, he will find that I shall direct myself to transport in a minute or two. I wish that my Committee could examine problems that are associated with transport. It has been difficult to deal with energy matters without trespassing far too far into the province of my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd), who is Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy. Similarly, it cannot examine transport policy. It can, however, consider the environmental consequences—

Mr. Oakes: I intervene on the £2 billion and the report of the hon. Gentleman's Select Committee. Surely he must realise that the spending of £2 billion is not directly the result of his Committee's report. The Government fought tooth and nail against it. They lost, and that is why they are spending £2 billion.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Gentleman must be relying more upon newspaper reports than on personal knowledge of what happened. If he studies the record, he will find that the Minister who was concerned in the Department of the Environment with EEC directives on large combustion played a leading part in getting the norm settled and agreed to. That is the role that Britain played in the Montreal protocol and its revision.

Mr. Allan Roberts: What about CFCs?

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Gentleman is preoccupied with CFCs, as we all must be.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) must be fair. It is not always entirely safe to rely upon newspaper reports as a source. If he wants sources, I suggest that there is more than an abundant supply to satisfy him in the Library, in the reports of my Committee and in those of the Committee of my hon. Friend the Member for Havant. In that material he will find the matter dissected and analysed, followed by recommendations. I recommend that he read that material instead of the more facile commentaries upon what may or may not have taken place, many of them being based on conjecture.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I must get on. I have a great deal of ground to cover and I want to be fair to those who wish to participate in the debate.

My Committee dealt with the subject that is before us again in 1985-86, when we produced an update on acid rain. We did so once again when we produced the report on air pollution of May 1988. We discussed the Montreal protocol and recommended that the Government should take action to tighten the protocol, which happened subsequently.

My Committee dealt also with the greenhouse effect. I am sure that the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) will agree with what I am about to say, because the Committee's findings conform very much with the burden of his speech this morning. The Committee underlined the necessity for more and more expenditure upon research. In paragraph 154, it stated:

> "The urgent need for more research on the problem is underlined by our understanding that the development of abatement technology for greenhouse gases is in its infancy. Techniques of removing and disposing of carbon dioxide from fuel gases are unproven and, if technically feasible, are likely to be prohibitively expensive. We were told that carbon dioxide emissions are more likely to be reduced by a strategy of more efficient use of energy and a changing to non-fossil fuels."

In other words, we do not know very much about it and there is a great deal more to learn. The hon. Member for Motherwell, South underlined that when he spoke of the effects upon the oceans of the absorption of carbon dioxide.

Dr. Bray: The hon. Gentleman's Committee has an admirable record on recommending action at the same time as research and not regarding research as an excuse for not taking action.

Sir Hugh Rossi: At some stage, politicians have to make a judgment on the balance of probabilities. They cannot wait for absolute scientific proof: I accept that. However, we need to know some of the basics before we can make value judgments on the balance of probabilities.

There is unequivocal evidence that the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has increased over the past 30 years, and that the gases existed in much smaller concentrations before the industrial revolution. The Meteorological Office has made a major international contribution to modelling climatic change, whether that be under the auspices of one Government Department or another. It estimates that the range of possible time scales for the doubling of greenhouse gas concentrations from their pre-industrial revolution levels is from 60 to 100 years plus. The effect of such a doubling would be to increase average world temperatures from 1·5 deg C to 4·5 deg C, with a rise in sea levels of between 20 cm and 1·5 m.

The European Commission has analysed some of the possible effects of global warming in Europe. It suggests that these could include permanent inundation of many coastal areas; coastal erosion; flooding; storm damage; lack of water for human consumption, power generation, effluent dilution and navigation; changes in the growing seasons of plants, agricultural yields and crop certainty and quality; changes in forestry; an increase in tropical diseases; more frequent famines and food supply shortages; and an impact on marine life and the diversity of all life systems. That is an appalling scenario. One may feel that it is almost Cassandra-like in tone. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore it, even if it is only half true.

The problems of predicting the effects of greenhouse gas emissions were emphasised last week when the Natural Environment Research Council revealed the results of the first phase of the North sea community project, to which the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) has referred. That research has revealed that the take-up by the ocean of carbon dioxide may be only 30 per cent.

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compared with the 50 per cent. thought previously. Dr. Andrew Watson of the NERC's Plymouth marine laboratory warned that CO_2 in the earth's atmosphere may increase 20 per cent. faster than current models predict.

On 3 November, in *The Independent*—I am sure that the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) will not mind my quoting from a newspaper—Dr. Watson said:

> "we do not know if, or why, the land vegetation takes the carbon dioxide up, or how long they might continue to do so. Scientists are being asked by the policy makers what they should do. It's rather embarrassing to admit we do not even know where the carbon dioxide is going."

That is the dilemma with which we are faced in discussing these matters, not as scientists but as politicians. It is the dilemma that the Government must face in deciding upon actions which might have enormous consequences for the people of Britain and throughout the world in terms of their lifestyles and way of living.

I should like to refer to some aspects of this dilemma, one of which is, of course, transport. We know that deforestation causes the build-up of CO_2 in two ways. The burning of forests produces CO_2 directly and means that there are fewer trees taking in CO_2 to retain growth and then release oxygen. In addition, any change in land use which increases erosion and soil degradation is likely to result in a greater release of carbon held in the soil.

I was delighted when, last July, the present Secretary of State for the Environment, then Minister for Overseas Development—my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten)—signed the first agreement between Brazil's Ministry of External Relations and any foreign country. If the right hon. Member for Halton is asking for action by Britain, here is one: Britain will supply money and expertise to train Brazilian officials to explore the environmental impact of projects.

Last week, at a meeting of the International Tropical Timber Organisation, made up of the big consumer countries—such as Japan, the United States and the EEC—and countries that have or used to have tropical forests, it was the United Kingdom that proposed a worldwide labelling scheme for tropical hardwoods which would identify their origins and allow the consumers to refuse to buy those hardwoods. That would have an impact on the trade, but the matter goes further than that. It is essential that we help those countries with reafforestation programmes. If hardwoods have to be cut down because they are needed, new hardwoods must be planted at the same time to replace them.

The developed world can help the developing world by a price mechanism for hardwoods to enable developing countries to bear the costs of reafforestation. It is difficult for the developed countries to persuade developing countries to change their ways and not to maximise their produce as economically as possible. Developing countries may say, "You have had your industrial revolution and you have attained your standard of living. All you are trying to do now is to stop us catching up with you." We must recognise that problem and do what we can to solve it. It is true that there is virtually no control today over the world timber trade. The statistics are wholly unreliable and short-term cash need has meant that countries such as Thailand and Nigeria have literally run out of cash crops and have been forced to place a ban on exports.

Research on the relative advantages of maintaining rain forests or cutting them down to cultivate other crops has shown that the forests produce twice as much cash if left standing. Managed Amazonian forests that produce Brazil nuts, rubber and honey yield £4,500 per hectare compared with £2,000 if cleared for cattle ranching. I hope that the future liaison between the United Kingdom and the Brazilian Government in carrying out research and in finding alternatives will make a contribution both to the Brazilian economy and to the world in terms of a reduction in global warming.

About 10 per cent. of land in the United Kingdom is wooded and that area could be expanded to 25 per cent. If the area were merely doubled and the extra land were devoted to broad-leaved species, 3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide would be absorbed per annum. The Select Committee on Energy noted that if trees were used as fossil fuel and constantly replaced by new trees, no net carbon dioxide would be added to the atmosphere and they could provide 20 per cent. of the United Kingdom's electricity requirements. Clearly, there is a need to think out our policy on land use carefully. Taking land out of agriculture and the planting of trees—broad-leaved wherever possible—would not only create a pleasant environment in terms of the physical view, but would contribute considerably to alleviating the problems that concern the House today.

I was asked about cars, and I must say that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is right. Cars are responsible for about 60 per cent. of all greenhouse emissions from the transport sector. It is a matter of current controversy between Her Majesty's Government and our EC partners whether the three-way catalyst or lean-burn engine technology is the correct way forward. Our Government prefers the lean-burn technology and that was the conclusion to which the Select Committee on the Environment came in its 1984 report on acid rain. But again, the scientists do not agree and they continue to fight among themselves.

The hon. Member for Islington, North may be surprised that there is common ground between us on any subject, but it is clear that an increase in the use of motor vehicles, even in the light of recent technology, is bound to contribute significantly to the greenhouse effect. That must be taken into account seriously when evolving transport policy.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman and I agree that the internal combustion engine is the major source of greenhouse gases. Will he confirm that catalytic converters, while purifying vehicle emissions to some extent, increase carbon dioxide emissions because of less efficient burning and that we need a long-term policy of reducing the number of internal combustion engines and increasing communal forms of transport to reduce the total amount of carbon dioxide emitted by transport?

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Gentleman must have temporarily left the Chamber when I made precisely that point when I intervened in the speech of his hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell (Dr. Bray). I put it to him that catalytic converters increase the amount of carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere. That is why I told the Select Committee on the Environment that, in the light of information received in 1984, the lean-burn approach was the way ahead. Lean-burn motors operate on a reduced quantity of petrol compared to air, therefore emit fewer gases into the atmosphere. Whether we can achieve and implement that technology is still open to doubt—which is why, in agreement with our European partners, we are adopting the three-way catalyst solution.

Behind that European decision, there is pressure from the manufacturers of larger motor cars which rely on a powerful engine to sell their product and meet the market. Such larger engines would run less efficiently on lean-burn technology, so the manufacturers prefer the three-way catalyst which will enable them to build ever more powerful cars to zoom up and down the autobahns of Europe where there are no speed limits.

A European transport policy must be evolved to deal with the problems mentioned. The hon. Member for Islington, North will recognise that the people of Europe demand as much personal freedom of movement as possible. Nothing achieves that as well as the motor car parked on the doorstep, into which one can jump and arrive immediately at one's destination.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Immediately?

Sir Hugh Rossi: That is the preference of the British people. Perhaps the hon. Member for Bootle will pledge this in a moment, but it would be a rash Government that limited the size of motor cars to say, 1,000 cc or insisted that people use their motor cars only once a week or for essential purposes. I do not know whether the Labour party has any such regulations in mind, but I doubt that it would dare to contest a general election advocating them.

Mr. Allan Roberts: We would contest a general election pointing out that what the hon. Gentleman says is not the case. The motor car is not a convenient mode of transport into which one can jump and arrive quickly at one's destination. Anyone who thinks that it is possible to travel quickly across London has not tried to do so recently. The M1 and the M6 have become the longest car parks in Britain. One cannot drive along them; one simply parks on them. We are destroying the advantages of the motor car by allowing too many on our roads. By failing to support public transport, the Government have failed to encourage people to use it.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Member is introducing a personal note. If he is interested, let me tell him that I use my motor car to get to my constituency at inconvenient hours—inconvenient in terms of my programme, that is —and to depart from the House at unsociable hours. My preferred way of getting round London is by underground. Most Londoners who are worldly wise go by underground at every opportunity. That is the way to get around London, for all the reasons that the hon. Gentleman gave. Before long, those responsible for transport policy will have to turn their attention to the whole question of inner-city traffic, but for the moment I am concerned only with environmental issues and the effects of CO_2.

I did not intend to detain the House for so long, but I have had to deal with interruptions or appear unreasonably discourteous. I hope that I have explained some of the problems that exist and the matters that we need to examine.

The Environment Select Committee has also been considering the disposal [illegible] waste, landfill and the generation of methane gas. Methane gas is a significant contributor to the greenhouse effect. We must find ways of trapping it and using it to generate electricity. There are about 20 schemes in operation at the moment. We should like a process to be adopted universally whereby we can eliminate the gas and turn it to good use. We shall then have made a double gain. It is for local authorities, which are responsible for the regulation of landfill sites, to ensure that that comes about.

We must also consider much more seriously than hitherto combined heat and energy systems and the disposal of refuse and sewage sludge by incineration. We should ensure that such waste is not dumped at sea or in landfill sites and allowed to create further hazards. It should be incinerated under controlled conditions and used to produce energy, as an alternative to the burning of fossil fuels.

The debate raises a whole range of issues. These are early days yet, and our knowledge of these matters is still limited. Despite what Opposition Members say, however, it is quite clear that the Government are apprised of the problem, and that they are anxious to act in the light of advice that they receive concerning the best way forward. I am sure that the Opposition are equally concerned about the problems. In the Select Committee that I chair, I have been able to achieve co-operation between the parties in finding solutions to the problems rather than continually carping and selling the country short—the role to which Opposition Members frequently reduce themselves.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Several hon. Members wish to speak, in addition to the Minister and the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen. I therefore appeal to hon. Members on both sides of the House for short speeches.

12.14 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): We should perhaps take the advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the secretary of the Budapest chamber of commerce, who told members of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry a year or so ago that in Hungary they believe in short speeches and long sausages. Unfortunately, it seems to be the other way round in this place. I shall try to make my remarks as compact and systematic as possible.

The Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd), and the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment, the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) both seemed to be saying that we needed more information and better knowledge. They claim that it is very difficult to take decisions without that knowledge and the Government should put their resources into securing more information.

No one would disagree with the need for research to get more information on which we can base decisions. Most people accept, however, that the potential seriousness of the crisis that we face is such that we must take positive and specific action now in the light of the knowledge that is currently available. Both the hon. Member for Havant and the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green drew considerably on the Prime Minister's speech to the United Nations. It is obvious that the Prime Minister has an excellent speech writer on the subject of the greenhouse effect, and she delivered the speech extremely well—it even came across as a visionary speech. It was a little unfortunate, however, that at the very moment when the Prime Minister was making her speech to the United

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

Nations the Minister for the Environment and Countryside was blocking specific agreements on real reductions. The record appears to be disputed on that, but that is the information from all the first-hand reports that I have from people who were present and from the press.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman has just misled the House yet again. This is probably the fourth time that he has misled the House so far. He said that it was at the precise moment, when in fact it happened the day before. As vicars say in the Church of England, could he also share with us the names of the people who gave him his information at first hand?

Mr. Bruce: I could do that, but I do not see why I should do so without their authority. There is no secret about it and I would give the Minister that information, but I will not put it on the record as that would be invidious and a discourtesy to people who give me information.

The Minister is disputing press information. Is he saying that *The Observer* and *The Sunday Correspondent* are wrong? *The Sunday Correspondent* has a headline, "Britain shuns gases freeze." The article states:

> "The Government argues that there is no scientific consensus on the size of a cut needed to avoid climatic change."

The article in *The Observer* to which reference has already been made states that the objective was to:

> "'stabilise' emissions of carbon dioxide in industrialised countries at present levels by the year 2000 and 'investigate the feasibility' of reducing them by 20 per cent. by the year 2005."

Did the Government agree to that? My information is that they would not agree.

Mr. Trippier: This is the fifth time that the hon. Gentleman has misled the House. He is referring to an article in *The Observer* which was written by Mr. Geoffrey Lean. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to be very well briefed on the subject. The ministerial conference did not start until first thing on Monday morning. Any supposition that Mr. Lean reported in *The Observer* was thus conjecture at best.

Mr. Allan Roberts: But he was right.

Mr. Trippier: No he was not. The situation changed dramatically, and I changed it. That story is in *The Times* article on the Wednesday morning.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to the Minister. It is his word against others. My advice from someone who attended the conference is that 11 of the 12 members of the Community *[Interruption.]* The Minister has not told me whether the Government agree with specific targets for the year 2000. If so, what are they?

Mr. Trippier: Honestly, the hon. Gentleman must listen more carefully to me. It was my responsibility , and I am proud to accept that responsibility, of putting the year 2000 into the declaration. The hon. Gentleman obviously has not read the declaration. The levels would be agreed at the climate conference put forward by the IPCC. If I say it at least 13 times, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be on to it in a flash.

Mr. Bruce: I understand that the other member states wanted to include specific agreements about targets, but the Minister wanted to take them out. That is the most important issue.

Mr. Trippler: What other members?

Mr. Bruce: Eleven out of 12 Community countries wanted to do that. The only reservations came from Greece and Portugal which were given caveats because of their circumstances. One day soon, I trust, the facts of the meeting will be reported and the Government's position will be clear. The Government's position remains unclear at the moment. It appears to me that, as in virtually every case when such international agreements are sought, the British Government tried to avoid specific commitments. When the Government are finally boxed into a corner, they have the audacity to claim that they have triumphantly secured an agreement that has advanced the frontiers of environmental protection. That is the standard ministerial speech.

Since the Prime Minister made her Royal Society speech I have taken the view that she is genuinely concerned about the greenhouse effect, but she has failed to grasp that it is incompatible with her political philosophy to take appropriate action. It is incompatible with Thatcherism. That is a problem for the architects of that philosophy. Thatcherism does not appear to control the Cabinet any longer. That being so, we saw the first step in a positive direction yesterday, when the Secretary of State for Energy announced the abandonment of the nuclear power programme, which should have been abandoned years ago.

Mr. Tredinnick: Surely the fact that the Prime Minister chose to speak to the United Nations about the environment—she could have chosen any other issue—is an illustration of her commitment.

Mr. Bruce: No, I am afraid not. I have made it quite clear that fine words do not alter a situation unless real, specific action is taken. All the fine speeches in the world will not alter things. So far, the Prime Minister has acquired a good speech writer, but she has taken very little action to back her commitment.

As has been acknowledged by hon. Members, greenhouse gases from various sources are causing concern and they could get out of control and cause an irreversible disaster at any time. It is worth remembering that dinosaurs are regarded as one of the evolutionary failures of this planet. They managed to survive for 70 million years but were apparently wiped out virtually immediately after a major climatic change. The human race has been in existence for only a tiny fraction of that time, but it could face exactly the same annihilation. It could take place at any time within the next few years, and within a short space of time, unless we take action now.

The main greenhouse gases include, chiefly, carbon dioxide, which comes from fossil fuel burning, deforestation, and the burning of biomass; methane, which comes from animals, the burning of biomass, and landfill sites, rubbish sites, gas leaks, paddy fields and swamps; CFCs, which come from aerosols, refrigerators, air-conditioning and solvents; nitrous oxide, which comes from fertilisers, the burning of biomass, and fossil fuel combustion; and ozone, which is caused by the reaction of sunlight and car emissions. All those matters must be addressed if we are to deal with the problem. Carbon dioxide may be the biggest problem, but the others are on the increase and cannot be left without action.

It has been acknowledged that carbon dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom are the second highest in Europe, after West Germany. We have no reason to be complacent about that. Whereas emissions in West Germany and France are decreasing, they are continuing to increase in the United Kindom. Although we are getting a reduction in emissions from power stations, vehicle emissions are increasing.

I do not wish to dwell for too long on catalytic converters, but there is no doubt that introducing mechanisms to clean up car exhausts is utterly useless if we do not have a transport policy to ensure that we switch from private transport to a proper public transport system. That is borne out by the fact that the investment of subsidy in our railways, for example, is the lowest in Europe. Britain invests £1·95 per kilometre, France invests £5·83, and West Germany invests £5·37. Luxembourg, which may not be directly comparable with the United Kingdom, invests £16·06 per kilometre. That is illustrative of how out of touch we are. Of course there is also the Channel tunnel mess. The Government refuse to accept their responsibility to ensure an environmentally sound and efficient link—if we are to have the tunnel at all.

However, the Government continue to promote a massive road-building programme which, apart from not solving the traffic problems, will add greatly to the problems of vehicle emissions. Whereas in the United Kingdom 4 per cent. of freight travels by rail, the comparative figure for West Germany is 20 per cent. The Government should have a policy of closing that gap.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that one of the problems is that although the major motor manufacturers in the world may be forced into accepting improved environmental standards in western Europe and the United States, that is not happening in poorer countries? Indeed, many of the economic models that poorer countries are persuaded to accept encourage road development and internal combustion engine transport, whereas they should be encouraging the very opposite, railways and other forms of public transport.

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman's intervention deals with a different but relevant argument about the appropriate method of ensuring that poorer countries can aspire to improved living standards in ways that are environmentally sound. That is an important point.

Unless this view is picked up by his successor, one regret at the departure of the former Chancellor will be that at least he recognised that company cars are a major source of the growth in traffic in the United Kingdom. That issue should be addressed because a company car is a heavily subsidised perk. In the circumstances that we are discussing today, it is time that we reconsidered whether that policy should continue, given the resulting costs to the environment and traffic congestion.

Methane comes from various sources, which include gas leaks, about which more should be done. I understand that it is slightly less than 1 per cent. of the total, but that still amounts to a substantial tonnage. According to written answers that I have received, only 26 landfill sites in Britain exploit the methane from such sites although 438 sites are suitable for commercial exploitation. Again, what are the Government doing to ensure that that wide discrepancy is sorted out?

I turn now to the problems caused by CFCs. It is worth mentioning that when *The Sunday Times* had a questionnaire to try to discover how green Members of Parliament are, it maintained that the main concern caused by CFCs was the increasing incidence of skin cancer. I dispute that. The main concern about CFCs is their impact as a greenhouse gas, especially when one discovers that the ozone layer over the Antarctic can disappear in a matter of days when the sun rises at the end of winter and that that phenomenon could race through the whole of the ozone layer at any time if circumstances got out of control. That makes dealing with CFCs an urgent priority, especially since they do not disappear but have a long life in the atmosphere.

The Government have tried to claim some credit for the Montreal protocol, but that protocol is now wholly out of date in relation to what can be achieved. I am increasingly of the view that my Chlorofluorocarbons (Control) Bill, which I introduced earlier this year and which I was told is impractical, is exactly the legislation that the Government should have picked up. Indeed, it is almost identical to the legislation now being adopted by the West Germans. The fact that the Government were not prepared to take that action shows a lack of urgency in their thinking.

The hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) intervened on the question of ICI's willingness to recycle fridges. I want to put on the record the fact that the first two local authorities in the United Kingdom to offer recycling of CFCs from fridges were the London borough of Sutton and my own district of Gordon. They did it because they are controlled by Liberal Democrats and because our party takes action on such matters, while others only talk about it. If we as local councillors can do it, the Government should be able to do a great deal more if they have the will, but I fear that they have not.

The problems of nitrous oxides—NOX—come back to vehicle emissions. No doubt that argument will run and run with more European orders late at night as the European Community forces us, kicking and screaming, into a more environmentally sound transport policy.

As the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy said, it was interesting that the Prime Minister chose to pick out the environmental virtues of nuclear power. I totally dispute the claims made for nuclear power and make no secret of my belief—I may be castigated by the Chairman of that Select Committee for this—that the expansion of the nuclear power industry over the past 10 years cannot be justified on either economic or environmental grounds. I have opposed nuclear power every inch of the way. I note that the South of Scotland electricity board has now admitted that Torness, which I demonstrated against, is an expensive white elephant and should never have been built in the first place. That is true of other power stations that should not have been built.

I accept, however, that if we get through this crisis, the next generation or subsequent generations may see a role for nuclear power—generated by fission, fusion or from hydrogen. I accept that we may come back to that option, but I do not believe that we should advance with that programme now. Resources should not be diverted to that end. They would be better invested in more immediate

[Mr. Bruce]

means of reducing the greenhouse gases. We should promote energy conservation and promote more benign energy alternatives.

If nuclear power was seen as the sole solution to the greenhouse problem we would have to build one new nuclear power station every day and a half for 40 years at a cost of $787 billion per annum. That would ensure that we had sufficient nuclear power capacity to replace the energy capacity generated by other sources of power. At the very best, nuclear power can make only a small contribution. It is a red herring to try to pretend that nuclear power is anything other than a small component of energy generation. It was ironic for the Prime Minister to try to make that claim the day before the Secretary of State for Energy announced the effective abandonment of the expanded nuclear power programme.

I do not accept the argument that nuclear power is environmentally sound. That argument is not borne out when one considers the costs of the programme, the unknown problems of decommissioning and the increasing problem of reprocessing nuclear waste materials. Because of that, the case for any further development in the future cannot be made. The resources would be much better spent elsewhere.

For many years my party has taken the environment issue seriously. In the local councils that we control we have ensured that environmental issues are put at the top of the agenda. We can stand up and defend our record far better than any other party. We have put forward to the Secretary of State for the Environment a raft of proposals in our environment Bill. They represent specific measures to deal with the problems that face us. Let us consider what the Government have done. They have cut the budget of the Energy Efficiency Office. They have maintained limited support of research and development into renewable sources of energy and that support does not compare with the investment they have made in nuclear power. In many cases they have pulled the research from under those projects just when they were becoming viable. That is particularly true of wave and geothermal research. They introduced a programme to clean up our coal-burning power stations only as a result of intensive pressure from our European Community neighbours. They resisted that pressure as hard as they could.

I hope, however, that there is a glimpse of light and wisdom appearing in the Cabinet. I was extremely encouraged when the new Secretary of State for Energy made a speech in Canada—interestingly enough he did not make it here—when he said:

> "Energy efficiency is the single most cost-effective response to the effort to limit carbon dioxide."

The right hon. Gentleman made a good start yesterday, in embarrassing circumstances, when he scrapped the nuclear power programme. Perhaps he will come back to the House soon to tell us exactly what he will do to ensure that his belief that energy efficiency is the single most important way in which to reduce the greenhouse effect will be put into practice by Government policies. Those policies should ensure that we achieve the targets set. We have been told time and again by the Department of Energy that energy savings of 30 per cent. on current use are perfectly attainable within existing technology. We do not achieve those targets, however, because the Government refuse to invest the necessary money to do so.

At the bottom end of the fuel poverty and energy efficient scale no one in this country is eligible for any grant towards loft insulation. All the available sources of grant aid for energy efficiency have been effectively phased out. That shows that the Government do not have the slightest idea about how to grasp the problem. Energy efficiency is the most important policy that they could follow. They could take a lead. The Prime Minister cannot get away much longer with making fine speeches while allowing Ministers to obstruct the development of practical policies to achieve the desired objectives.

In the Select Committee on Energy, Edmund Burke was quoted—for the benefit of the Committee—as saying:

> "Nobody made a greater mistake than . . . who did nothing because he . . . could only do a little."

I regret to say that the Government are all talk and very little action.

12.35 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): This debate could not be more timely. This week we have seen, first, the meeting of the world's leading industrialised countries at Noordwijk in the Netherlands and, secondly, the Prime Minister's address to the United Nations in New York.

Earlier this year the Government demonstrated their commitment to the environment at the international conference on saving the ozone layer held in London, which was widely acclaimed throughout the world. In 1987, the Government accepted the Brundtland report on sustainable development and the Government's response, "A perspective by the United Kingdom on the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development" was published in July 1988. Therefore, when Opposition Members say that we have been doing nothing, they need only look at the record of the Conservative Government this year and in the preceding two or three years to see that a great deal has been done.

When I looked at the report last weekend, my fingers found chapter 10, headed "Managing the Commons". I wondered whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had had a chance to look at that chapter to glean some insight into controlling the House in difficult times.

The report's central message relates to the concept of sustainable development or development without destruction. It is sometimes claimed that this is a new concept, but it is not. For centuries that approach has been adopted by rural societies. We are taught at school that in working the land, farmers rotate the crops. But it is a concept which the industrial society is having to relearn. Brundtland suggests that by successfully applying the tried and tested method to modern conditions we shall achieve a major breakthrough in managing and reconciling economic growth and the conservation of natural resources.

Later, I shall contrast Brundtland's stance, which is supported by the Government, with some of the views held by other parties in this country. Only a decade ago these two vital elements, the breakthrough in managing and reconciling economic growth and the conservation of natural resources, were regarded as fundamentally incompatible. However, this great and important report demonstrates that with wise management not only can they be made compatible but that they are essential to each other.

The report states:

"Poverty forces many of the people of the world to overdraw on the earth's ecological capital creating this vicious spiral of environmental degradation and further poverty." However, the technology and the advanced social and commercial systems of our industrialised world can be harnessed to provide opportunities for all mankind and, at the same time, protect the natural systems that support life on earth. That is a key point at a time when there are tremendous pressures on our eco systems.

I said that growth was essential, and that view is supported by the Brundtland report. The policies advocated particularly by the Green party and some other Opposition groups are detrimental to the process of protecting the environment in a major industrialised society. The Green party's commitment to reducing the country's economic growth as part of a strategy for protecting the environment, although well meaning, is profoundly misguided.

We must face the fact that we are an industrialised society. In the past 10 years we have seen sustained economic growth under this Government and a massive investment in measures to protect the environment—in particular, the £1 billion programme to combat acid emissions from power stations. We can argue that more should be done, but the fact is that we are spending £1 billion that was not previously being spent. The Green party's doctrine of negative economic growth would do more than lead to a decline in the resources available to protect the environment and to improve our life; it would create mass unemployment and stop the production of the financial resources necessary to combat the environmental problems that we face. I find its policies profoundly wanting.

We all know that global warming caused by the greenhouse effect is the greatest threat to the prospect of sustainable development. The best estimates suggest—my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) touched on that—a global warming of 1·5 deg C to 4·5 deg C by the year 2050. The United Kingdom can be proud that it supports research in that area to the level of £7·5 million. The Department of the Environment has almost quadrupled research on climate change, from about £600,000 to £7·5 million.

The Opposition have attacked the Government for not doing enough, yet the Government have been involved in measures to protect the ozone layer from at least 1985, when we signed the Vienna convention for the protection of the ozone layer, and in 1987 the United Kingdom and the EEC signed the Montreal protocol to that convention. As hon. Members will recall, the protocol requires that CFCs should be reduced by 50 per cent. by 1999 and that the production and consumption of halons should be frozen from 1992. That is hardly a laggardly approach.

I have already referred to the March conference on saving the ozone layer held across the road in the Queen Elizabeth centre. I was fortunate to attend that conference. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister opened it and I noted the strong conviction with which she delivered her address. It is absurd to claim that nothing was achieved because, as a direct result, another 20 countries agreed to join the Montreal agreement and 14 others, including China—that is very signifiant—are seriously considering doing so.

Following the United Kingdom initiative, on 2 March EEC Ministers agreed to reduce the production and consumption of CFCs by at least 85 per cent. as soon as possible, and to eliminate them by the year 2000. It is important that these points are highlighted because it appears that Opposition Members have skirted the positive steps that my right hon. and hon. Friends have taken this year and in recent history.

Just as Britain played a leading role in pressing for an agreement on CFC reduction earlier this year, so we played a leading role at Noordwijk on Tuesday in securing agreement on how global warming should be tackled. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) took my hon. Friend the Minister to task about the substance of that meeting. I have read the reports in the newspapers and I understand that at that meeting there were very real disagreements. However, my hon. Friend was the key person in bringing about a compromise. The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) may laugh, but it was my hon. Friend's work that brought Ministers together so that they could come up with the statement and an undertaking to stabilise CO_2 emissions by the year 2000 at the latest. Surely it is better to have such a firm agreement than no agreement at all.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is right when he says that the Government were instrumental in watering down the proposals, in refusing to accept the setting of targets and in coming up with a statement that means nothing.

Mr. Tredinnick: The hon. Gentleman has not listened to what I said. The Minister managed to persuade his colleagues to come up with a statement that shows firm agreement. The hon. Gentleman may be jealous of the fact that the Minister was able to pull that off. It is another illustration of the Government's determination to tackle environmental issues and to lead the world. We should be proud of that.

As I said in an intervention, on Wednesday the Prime Minister took the opportunity at the United Nations to devote her speech to environmental matters. It might have suited her domestically to talk about many other issues, but she chose to speak on the environment. The Opposition rather uncharitably suggested that the Prime Minister's contribution was the work of a speech writer. I watched the Prime Minister on television and to me she came across as the scientist that she is, as someone with a real understanding of the problems. There are not many scientists in the Opposition and the nation is fortunate to have a scientist as its Prime Minister. At the next general election the electorate will look to the leaders of the political parties to comment on environmental issues. Of course the Conservative party will win hands down because our leader has a proper understanding of science.

At the meeting in New York the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Government, gave specific undertakings that will benefit the environment. The first was the decision to establish a new research centre because of the climatic change expected from an increase in the level of CO_2. That is welcome and will be set up next year. I am sure that the £5·5 million per annum to be spent on that will turn out to be cheap in the long term.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister quoted a scientist from the British Antarctic survey who said that recent recordings have shown that the ozone layer is much reduced. It was a British scientist who discovered the hole in the ozone layer and it is important that we move forward yet again with measures that will reduce the

[Mr. Tredinnick]

problem of thinning. The Prime Minister called for three international conventions to commit the world to action on climatic change, ozone depletion and the preservation of plant species. Such preservation is crucial. It is a tragedy to lose species, because most of our medicines are derived from plants or animals or from other forms of life. I see that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is nodding. Most developments in food production also derive from plants. To see species wiped out through negligence and ignorance is the greatest possible tragedy. Plants are the raw material of nature, and we forget that at our peril.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister also gave an undertaking to provide an extra £100 million over three years to aid the tropical forestry action plan sponsored by United Nations, which aims to stop the destruction of the Amazon rain forests. Many years ago I hitchhiked through the Zaire jungle. Opposition Members might ask why I did not stay there.

Mr. Corbyn: We have more respect for Zaire.

Mr. Tredinnick: I was fishing for that sort of retort.

I gained an enormous respect for the jungle and for the different species of animals and plants that exist there. Although the jungles of the world serve as home for different species, they are similar in other respects. A tremendous amount of animal life is crammed into all of them. Right hon. and hon. Members who have not had an opportunity to visit such places should be aware of that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant described the speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister as outstanding, and I certainly agree.

Having covered the international measures that we have taken and the events of last week, I turn to specific parts of the world, starting with east Europe. I have spent some time also in east Europe, where I experienced at first hand its pollution problems. If one drives from Detmold to Dresden, one quickly discovers that the level of pollution there is phenomenal by western standards. One has to contend with huge clouds of polluted atmosphere. People who move from East Germany to West Germany often coment that the first change they notice is that the air smells so different.

The pollution in East Germany is principally due to brown coal emissions.

About a month ago I was in Poland, where the same pollution problems are to be found. Pollution there is way above anything that is acceptable in the West. In the light of Egon Krenz's historic announcement that the Berlin wall is almost redundant, and in view of other dramatic developments recently in Poland, Hungary and even in Russia itself, as well as in other east European nations, now is the time to spread our environmental ideas into those countries.

When we talk about aid packages, we must ensure that environmental matters are not forgotten. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will be given a positive reception by his east European counterparts. When I was in Poland, I spoke to Ministers of the Solidarity Government, and they are keen to take up ideas on improving the environment. The representatives of at least one other east European country have approached friends of mine who work within the Tory green initiative group, also looking for ways of inroducing pollution controls.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant remarked that China is increasing its coal burn by a greater amount than the total reduction of coal burn in the West. Smog levels in Shanghai are so high that one cannot spend more than a couple of hours in the open. My hon. Friend referred to energy consumption. The Chinese also hope that soon every household will have a fridge, which will phenomenally increase CFC gas emissons.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) mentioned ICI's contribution in respect of CFC substitutes. Both ICI and Du Pont are both developing such substitutes. The Government will have to find a way of making those substitutes freely available to Third world countries which want to use them. We shall have to buy them in, effectively, regardless of the cost. There will be a disaster of the most enormous proportions if what is almost a subcontinent that is populated by millions produces damaging CFCs.

I shall move on to more local issues. The positive lead that the Government have taken has encouraged environmental work at local level. I congratulate Leicestershire county council on its efforts. Last month, it held a lead-free campaign for 10 days, which was extremely successful. Secondly, it has adopted a programme for the next four years that is aimed at promoting attitudes to improve the environment, including the recycling of materials. There is a problem because although the public will save, there is a shortage of processing companies. For example, it may be said that the bottom has fallen out of the wastepaper market. Too much is being reclaimed. In Leicestershire, voluntary organisations cannot get rid of the waste paper that they are collecting. I understand that there has been a drop from £20 to £5 a tonne for waste paper over the past two months. The Minister should consider those problems and those which are being experienced with the recycling of bottles and aluminium.

At district level, Hinckley and Boswell borough council, which comes into my constituency, ran a community project from 1981 to 1988 that enabled the unemployed to gain new skills and to implement schemes to improve towns and villages and derelict land. That is another illustration of the knock-on effects of the Government's policies. The council is discussing establishing a special fund for environmental schemes in 1990-91, not just for the main town of Hinckley but for every village. I am sure that the fund will be welcomed throughout the constituency. Another scheme involves canal and park renovation, and is proceeding apace.

Finally, I make a plea for improved labelling. Discussions are taking place on introducing various schemes. I speak as a Member who is closely involved with the Tory green initiative, which is a Conservative green group. The group believes that the product label for Europe should indicate whether a product is environmentally friendly and whether it is recyclable. I suggest that a heart symbol would be appropriate, perhaps with a line down the middle with a green sign for environmentally friendly and a yellow sign for recyclable. The two colours should be present only if the product meets the two criteria.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I understand that a plea was made earlier that hon. Members should not make overlong speeches. I hope that it will continue to be borne in mind.

12.59 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I think that there is a consensus that we are dealing with possibly the most difficult environmental challenge that is facing the globe. There are great uncertainties when it comes to quantifying how dramatic is the threat that confronts us. I have been impressed by several of the contributions which have been made to the debate, but especially by that of my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench. My hon. Friend highlighted the need for much more scientific research and the uncertainty that there is in estimating the seriousness of the greenhouse effect.

It is clear that the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is increasing. That is something that has been measured for centuries. The amount has increased from 270 parts per million 200 years ago to 350 parts per million, and it is still increasing. The more we use our fossil fuels—coal, oil and gas—and the more we cut and burn our trees, the more carbon dioxide is put into the atmosphere. Projections based on the historic growth in energy demand show that, by the middle of the next century, we will have doubled the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

It is clear that carbon dioxide emissions raise the planet's temperature. Venus provides an example of the greenhouse effect. It has a dense atmosphere of carbon dioxide and, while it is closer to the sun than the earth, its temperature is still much higher than would normally be expected. Heat is trapped by the carbon dioxide, resulting in a temperature of about 800 deg C.

It is difficult to work out the mean global temperature. Measurements show that there has been an increase of about 0·5 deg C this century. The projection for the middle of the next century is between 2 deg C and 5 deg C, increasing the sea level and causing flooding. Despite the urgent need for much more research, we are facing a catastrophic threat not only of flooding but of climatic change, which will affect our food supplies. I support the call for more research. It is time to take action.

The hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) referred to the increase in the budget for private research into climate changes in Britain—£7·5 million this financial year. The energy budget—the value of the coal, oil and gas that we burn—is about £15 billion a year. One 2,000th of the amount spent on burning our fossil fuels is spent on evaluating its effect on the climate. I am reminded of the campaign by ASH—Action on Smoking and Health—to prevent cigarette smoking; the resources spent on preventive care are feeble compared to the economic impact of the problem.

I regularly attend Energy Question Time. Over the past two years, I have heard all sorts of accusations about coal-fired stations and the greenhouse effect. Such stations contribute only about 10 per cent. of the greenhouse gases worldwide. Even if it were possible to replace coal power with nuclear power in the short term, that would solve only 10 per cent. of the problem. Oil and gas are a part of it. Emissions from cars and central heating—whether gas, oil or solid fuel—are contributing to the greenhouse problem. The difficulty is almost intractable, because in tackling it we are attacking living standards. The increase in living standards has caused a growth in energy demand. Difficult political choices must be made. The hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) questioned whether there would ever be the necessary political will in any advanced country to confront this problem. It is all the more difficult in Third world countries. We talk about limiting carbon dioxide production in Third world countries such as China, India, Africa and the countries of south America. We talk about limiting carbon dioxide production here, but are we to deny them the energy they need for development and so block that development?

Other hon. Members have mentioned CFCs and the case for their almost immediate disuse is overwhelming, especially as substitutes are available. Nitrogen oxides are a problem, but lean-burn technology and catalytic converters can stop their production in motor fuel. Methane is also a problem and it is not recognised sufficiently that in the production, distribution and combustion of natural gas, there are considerable leakages of methane. Methane molecules which get into the atmosphere are 30 times as potent as carbon dioxide molecules. As a result of those leakages, natural gas contributes just as much to the greenhouse effect as coal does, despite the fact that it holds two or three times as much energy per tonne.

Energy efficiency must play the largest role in cutting carbon dioxide production. Energy conservation cannot solve the problem, but we could use energy far more efficiently than at present. The Government's own advisers estimate that we could improve energy efficiency by about 40 per cent. in 25 years by insulating our houses, factories and offices, and by introducing district heating and combined heat and power.

I was a member of the Committee on the Electricity Bill earlier this year and Labour Members and the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who is not in his place at present, tried to introduce dozens of amendments on energy conservation. I regret to say that the Government accepted none of them. The Bill's commitment to energy conservation is limited. We wanted the Government to accept especially the concept of least-cost planning, so that when the private companies built new power stations, they would have to demonstrate that the money would not be better spent on energy conservation. In the United States, power utilities themselves are taking responsibility for home insulation to improve energy efficiency for consumers. Many studies show that £1 billion invested in energy conservation is five to 10 times as effective as £1 billion invested in a power station.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the role of nuclear power. Nuclear power is nonsense in terms of the least-cost planning concept. It would be far better to spend £2 billion on energy conservation than to spend it on Sizewell. The results of such investment would be almost immediate. It would create many more jobs and would be 10 times as effective in terms of helping with the greenhouse effect. I was delighted by the Government's decision yesterday, but I wish that they had gone further, decided to scrap Sizewell B and spent the money on energy conservation.

We shall have to move away from fossil fuels to alternative sources of energy. For a host of environmental reasons, nuclear power is quite unacceptable. We should be moving far more to renewable sources of energy and we

[Mr. Alan W. Williams]

should be scaling up dramatically our investment in wind power, solar power, geothermal power, tidal power and hydro-electric power. As we now know, the Severn estuary barrage project is perfectly feasible. It could produce more power than all our nuclear power stations and would not produce carbon dioxide. It would generate electricity without contributing to the greenhouse effect. It would not add to the problem of nuclear waste. Its environmental impact would be very different and would not threaten the future of our planet.

I am delighted with the Prime Minister's announcement earlier this week of an extra £100 million to tackle the problems in tropical rain forests. The rain forests are critical on a planetary scale to the solution of the greenhouse problem because of their terrific photosynthetic potential. Every acre of tropical rain forest is 10 times more fertile and productive in absorbing carbon dioxide as an acre in temperate zones. In Brazil, vast acreages of forest which would absorb carbon dioxide have been destroyed. Such pillage of our inheritance of the planet threatens our survival.

The Government have not said what they will do about private transport. The contribution of motor vehicles to the greenhouse effect is greater than that of coal-fired power stations. Motor vehicles produce nitrogen oxides as well as carbon dioxide and ozone at ground level. That contributes about 12 per cent. to the greenhouse effect. Curbs on motor cars may be politically difficult, but they must be put on the agenda. The Department of Transport's White Paper published in July proposed a £6·6 billion road-building programme, but did not mention energy efficiency once. It proposes a 40 per cent. growth in road building over 15 years and a doubling of road traffic over 35 years. There are politically difficult decisions to be made and all advanced countries must bear in mind the greenhouse effect.

No one has mentioned a carbon tax, but I have an open mind about it. It could play a critical role internationally. A tax on the use of all coal, oil, gas and motor transport could raise money to subsidise public transport. We need to move from private to public transport. The revenue raised from fossil fuel power stations could be used for energy efficiency measures, such as home insulation. A carbon tax could help to improve the efficiency of our transport system and reduce energy demand.

Many hon. Members mentioned the Prime Minister's speech at the United Nations. We are proud that Britain has taken a part in the international forum and, lately, taken the lead on the ozone layer. However, the Government's rhetoric at the United Nations is completely at variance with their record on so many environmental issues.

The Prime Minister said that by the turn of the century 50 per cent. of our domestic waste would be recycled. What is the Government's record after 10 years in power? Less recycling is carried out in Britain than in any other European country. We have had a £2 billion programme to deal with acid rain, but by the time that the Government leave office, not a single power station will have been desulphurised. In comparison with Germany, Sweden and other European countries we are way behind. The Government will have cut the budget of the energy efficiency office by half between 1986 and 1990.

While the Prime Minister was speaking those fine words in the United Nations, the Government were recalcitrant and were dragging their feet in the Hague. They were there with the United States and the Soviet Union working against the European Community. They, alone among Governments in the European Community, do not have explicit targets written into agreements.

We need specific targets to deal with the greenhouse effect. Whatever the uncertainties, it is time to act, politically difficult though that may be. We must freeze CO_2 production at present levels by the year 2000 and aim to cut and cut during the next century, because the planet simply cannot absorb the CO_2 that we are producing.

1.15 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I strongly agree with the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) that people who have spent time in the rain forest come to have very strong feelings about its biological diversity. That is why he was justified in making remarks about his own experience in Zaire and that is why some of us with experience of staying in rain forest will go on and on raising the issue. I have been here since 9.30 am and whatever the effect of greenhouse gases on the global environment may be, the greenhouse effect in the House of Commons is pretty unacceptable. The Leader of the House will have to consider the question of climatic change brought about by the television lights because the glare and heat simply will not do.

Let me cut down my speech by putting some questions. In what respects were the reports of the Noordwijk conference in *The Guardian* and *The Observer* inaccurate? A good deal has been said about that but it is not at all clear which aspects of the reports the Government find inaccurate.

Does the Minister accept the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) about the importance of the work of ICI at Runcorn, and what will the Government do to encourage other firms to follow ICI's example? On nuclear power, I record my great admiration for the technical achievements of the South of Scotland electricity board and leave it at that.

I shall concentrate on the rain forest. I believe that global climate is a momentous issue. In one sense, it is as important a topic as any that the House has discussed in my 27 years here.

Let me ask for the Government's view on a basic problem. Defence spending was outlined in a table referred to on page 28 of *New Scientist* of 4 November. Will the Government tell me in writing whether they in any way challenge the figures given by the statistical office of the European Community?

Many of us have had pressing representations from our constituents about Ferranti and its orders. Is it fanciful to suggest that the time may come when we have seriously to consider exchanging spending on European fighter aircraft and ever more sophisticated equipment for spending on forest equipment that is urgently needed throughout the world? I am not naive about it—of course, there must be defence spending—but do we really need to spend so much on defence and has any real thought been given to turning swords into the ploughshares that are so desperately needed if we are to tackle the problems to which hon. Members have referred?

I am not the most uncritical fan of the Prime Minister. However, as I can express only a personal opinion, I thought that she was right to go to the United Nations. She made a very important speech which repays study. On page 6 of the text of her speech, she said:

> "We also have new scientific evidence from an entirely different area, the tropical forests. Through their capacity to evaporate vast volumes of water vapour, and of gases and particles which assist the formation of clouds, the forests serve to keep their regions cool and moist by weaving a sunshade of white reflecting clouds and by bringing the rain that sustains them.
>
> A recent study by our British Meteorological Office on the Amazon rainforest shows that large-scale deforestation may reduce rainfall and thus affect the climate directly. Past experience shows us that without trees there is no rain and without rain there are no trees."

Is that a reference to a matter that I have raised before in the House, on 14 March this year? If there is any more felling in the state of Para or in the eastern Amazon the rains that have come in from the Atlantic for tens of thousands of years through the classic process of evapotranspiration will not give way to that hopscotch effect of vapour—I am using the loosest of physical terms here—which across the Amazon gives life to the rain forest. In particular, is the problem perceived to be that if there is a cut-off on the Atlantic seaboard by any more destruction, the dry period may get longer, many of the plants may wither for want of the waters that have come to them automatically and the cattle ranchers may have to press even harder for new land on which to feed their miserable cattle? Might forest fires be even more frequent?

In February I went to Altimera to attend the rally of the Amerindians. Never in my life have I seen such destruction. Mile after mile of rain forest had been destroyed. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) knows exactly what I am talking about. Has the Prime Minister accepted this problem?

We must also consider the Brazilian view. The Brazilians state:

> "It must be pointed out, moreover, that Brazil's hard-won trade surplus is largely being consumed by interest repayments on its foreign debt, rather than in overcoming the country's pressing developmental problems."

The Brazilian view is crucial to the whole issue especially when they refer to

> "the depletion of the ozone layer, arising from the use of chlorofluorocarbons and halons in refrigeration and aerosol propellants. According to figures from the United Nations Environmental Programme, developed countries are responsible for 95 per cent. of their production—USA 28 per cent., EEC 44 per cent., USSR 10 per cent., Japan 13 per cent.—while Brazil contributes less than 1 per cent."

Is not the £100 million no more than a drop in the bucket in relation to overcoming the very real problems?

I want to set a marker about British support for the Tapajos project about which I have questioned the Minister for Overseas Development. I approve of the four projects—the Caxiuana national forest management project, the Ducke reserve project, the tropical forest research project and the Varzea management study. All those are estimable as far as they go. It was also estimable for M. and N. Norman and Company, a timber merchants, to organise a conference in Glasgow on labelling at which the Department of Trade and Industry was represented by Terry Veness. We could possibly hear more about origin labelling of tropical timber.

From Sarawak there are pleas from the Penan people, and, in particular, the letter of 14 October to the Prime Minister from David Gee of Friends of the Earth. I beg the Government to take the matter seriously.

In view of what was said about biological diversity, it is fair to ask the Government about their reaction to the four proposals of Tony Juniper and his colleagues of the International Council for Bird Preservation. They are, first, an EEC import ban on all parrots at risk of extinction; secondly, strict new EEC welfare standards for all parrots in transit; thirdly, a "buy captive-bred" campaign in the United Kingdom promoting the purchase of only captive-bred birds as pets; and, fourthly, a habitat tax payable on parrots sold in United Kingdom pet shops.

This is a truncated speech. Perhaps I will have the courtesy, as I always have had in the past, of a full governmental answer in writing.

1.25 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am delighted to take part in this debate. Conservation issues and an interest in the environment first propelled me into politics when I was at university about 20 years ago. It is significant that that was a time of growth and productivity, and there was much interest in environmental concerns. My political career developed as the country became much more concerned about the problems of lack of growth, lack of investment, high unemployment and so on. Once again, we have a period of high growth and productivity and environmental issues are at the forefront of the political stage.

This issue has always been important to me. For many members of my generation, the first images of the planet Earth, seen from outer space, brought home more forcefully to us than any words ever could the nature of the earth as a finite spaceship flying through space. It reminded us of the necessity of preserving our environment.

As Conservatives, we should not be apologetic about these issues. In recent years, the green lobby, which is often motivated by the Left, has taken over the debate. That is why I welcome the Prime Minister's initiative last autumn, her speech in the United Nations this week, and all the other initiatives that she has taken. There is something deeply important in Conservative philosophy about preserving the best of the past and preserving our environment. That happened in the 19th century when we were not a laissez-faire party. People such as Lord Shaftesbury and Lord Salisbury stood up not for preserving the environment but for protecting workers' rights and ensuring that they were not exploited. In many ways, that tradition continues throughout Conservative party thinking and philosophy.

However, we must apply our own emphasis. We cannot fight the battle on the ground of our opponents' choice. We must make our own response and develop our own philosophy to meet what is undoubtedly a major global threat. We should consider doing that through the pricing mechanism—not necessarily bureaucratic trade mechanisms—for example, when dealing with fossil fuel emissions.

The Prime Minister's step-by-step approach is right. We must start with evidence. I am told that there has been global warming to the extent of 5 deg over the past 100 years. The highest recorded temperatures were in the

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

1980s, but it will be at least 10 years before we can gather enough scientific evidence to be sure of our facts. From evidence, we must proceed to research. That is why I welcome the Prime Minister's initiative to set up a world research body to examine the world climate.

Thirdly, and most importantly, we must work with industry. We cannot hold up multinational industry as the villain of the piece. Indeed, we can do nothing without multinational industry. I have been impressed by the work that I have seen in oil companies such as Conoco and British Petroleum and by the efforts that they are making to plough their initiatives back into the environment.

Therefore, we start with evidence and progress to research and to working with industry. However, we can do nothing on our own. It may surprise Opposition Members to know that I am a believer in the necessity for overseas aid and in accepting that we are one planet. That is why I welcome what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said this week about putting more British resources into curbing deforestation, especially in the south American continent.

We should work from a sound Conservative philosophy, be true to our past and consider concepts such as the pricing mechanism, rather than bureaucratic solutions. We should rely on carefully researched evidence and be determined to promote international evidence, such as we saw in Noordwijk this week, because that is the best way to proceed.

1.30 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Of necessity I shall be brief, because the debate has been dominated by several excessively long speeches which do no credit to the subject or to the way in which the House treats it.

Many hon. Members have a serious interest in and concern about this issue and I very much welcome the fact that at last the House is debating world climatic change.

The debate has emphasised and underlined the inefficiency and incompetence of House of Commons and Government procedures for dealing with major environmental issues. We should have a Select Committee on the Environment which is not dominated by local government considerations. We need a Select Committee to consider environmental considerations and to bring together all the issues affecting environmental change. Likewise, we should have a Ministry to deal with environmental matters, not a Department of the Environment which, again, is largely dominated by local government considerations. However, I suspect that we shall have to await the election of a Labour Government before we have a serious environmental Ministry.

The magnitude of the issue of climatic change brought about by industrial pollution and development is well understood by millions of people. Indeed, it is probably better understood by many outside the House than by hon. Members inside. Environmental considerations are not the sole preserve of the industrialised North, which is taking part in the impoverishment of the southern part of the globe. Environmental considerations are widely understood. They are understood by those people in this country who live in polluted towns or cities. They are also understood by people who live in other parts of northern Europe and who suffer the acid rain emitted by Britain.

Environmental considerations are also understood by people in poor countries. One of the most illuminating discussions that I have ever had about the environmental damage done by the northern part of the world was at a small village in the delta south of Calcutta in India. I had a long discussion with the people there one evening. They told me that they too were suffering environmental damage because of the imbalance of the world's wealth. Their rice fields were being flooded so that they could take part in fish farming, but none of the fish was ever available to them. It was all immediately exported to Japan. Those people were losing their crop-growing facilities simply to promote greater wealth in Japan and there was very little that they could do about it.

Similarly, the forest peoples in Malaysia and in Brazil, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has just referred, are losing their livelihoods and their opportunity to preserve their environments simply because of the activities of the international logging companies which are pillaging and destroying those forests and promoting cattle ranching and the like, leading eventually to desertification and to local climatic change, which then becomes a major climatic change.

We are at a time in the history of our planet when the power of human kind to dominate and to change the climate has come to full fruition. The hole in the ozone layer is but an example of that. Many climatic disasters are already happening. I refer, for example, to the loss of the rains in north Africa, to the droughts and floods in north America and to the changes in the currents off the coast of Peru, which have led to the loss of Peru's fishing industry. There are already many obvious signs about what is happening.

We must decide our response to what is happening and, in the four minutes left to me, I want to develop two approaches briefly. The first relates to the question of what the United Kingdom Government's policies should be and the second deals with how we can relate that to the rest of the world. The British Government have an obsession with the free enterprise economy and the market approach. The Prime Minister cannot propose any solution to any problem without putting it in the confines of the price mechanism. Frankly, it is the free enterprise system that promotes consumerism, pollution and environmental damage. It is about time that people began to understand that.

Of the energy consumed in this country, 20 per cent. is immediately wasted. For years, the nuclear power industry has lied, but, at last, it has been revealed that nuclear power is twice as expensive as any other form of conventional power. Similarly, the investment and research into alternative energy sources and the promotion of wind, wave, water or solar power is tiny compared to the investment and research into nuclear power potential —all because there is no immediate capitalist benefit attached to such alternative energy. We believe that there should be much more research into renewables and alternative sources of energy that are non-pollutants, and which therefore do not produce greenhouse gases.

We have presided over a mammoth growth in the use of internal combustion engines and we have promoted multinational capital, which has encouraged the use of those engines all over the world. Those engines are the biggest single polluters.

We have promoted consumerism, which is inevitably wasteful. Why are electrical goods made to last for only five years? Why do cars have a life of only 10 years? Why is our manufacturing industry based entirely on consumerism and waste? A different attitude towards the economy and towards society is required.

The problems are summed up by the Government's attitude towards the environment. When the Prime Minister made her speech to the United Nations, no one would have believed that her Government, only two weeks before, had vociferously argued at the Paris conference on the future of the Antarctic for the development of the continent for mining purposes. The hypocrisy of the Prime Minister and her Government is breathtaking.

Many people live a poor existence. Life expectancy in two thirds of the world is half that in Britain. Living conditions in many parts of the world are absolutely appalling. That is partly a result of the economic relationship between the North and the South. It is also the result of the arms race, on which $3 billion a day is spent. I welcome any increase in the powers of the United Nations Environmental Programme. I wish that all Governments would give more resources to it. I welcome the fact that the British Government intend to give more money to it, but it is not enough; it needs far more.

We should exert political pressure on the International Monetary Fund and on the World bank to change their attitude towards environmental schemes and towards the poorer countries. It is no good when they tell poor countries to get themselves out of debt and to reduce their balance of payments deficits by increasing their export-led industries. That does nothing to improve the living standards of the people and the policy has led directly to the destruction of the rain forests, as mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow.

A great deal can be done to improve our environment and to promote the improvement of the world environment. It requires a change of attitude and an end to the philosophy that advocates that price is everything and that the free market economy can solve all. It cannot do that because, of itself, it is the basic cause of the belief that the natural world is there to be exploited for ever more. That is not its function.

We require a real commitment to sustainability in the management of our economy and that of the world. It is not a question of the northern, rich Governments lecturing the poorer Governments; it is a question of working with them to improve living standards and to protect the environment at the same time. Those two objectives can go together, but not if our attitude towards the world economy is based on the idea of an endless supply of natural resources on the never-never.

Waste and climatic damage cannot continue for ever more. Unless we pay serious attention to those problems, we shall reap the whirlwind.

1.38 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): In some respects this has been a comprehensive and thorough debate. Some rather long speeches have been made——

Mr. Corbyn: Not by me.

Mr. Roberts: No, indeed. Those speeches made it difficult for Back-Bench Members who wanted to speak.

This is an important issue and we must put on record not only what the Government claim they have done, but what the Opposition will do when we become the Government after the next election.

Scientific opinion is divided about our knowledge of the greenhouse effect, but no one doubts that the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is increasing. One school of scientific thought says that we cannot yet disentangle natural oscillations in the climate from man-made intrusions, let alone the route by which increased CO_2 and methane levels in the atmosphere impact on global warming. The Government seem to use that as a justification for not taking action on targets. The other school of thought, supported by the major international conferences on the greenhouse effect at Toronto and Hamburg in 1988, have urged an early commitment to major cuts in CO_2 emissions, especially in OECD countries.

Both schools of thought are agreed on two matters: first, that there is an urgent need for a huge international collaborative scientific effort to follow the Brundtland comission on the global environment and deepen our understanding of the causative changes of global warming and, secondly, that there should be no obstacles to an early decision on large cuts in greenhouse gas production, especially in those sectors where it kills two birds with one stone. Since CFCs produce about 18 per cent. of the greenhouse effect and also deplete the ozone layer, they should be eliminated as rapidly as possible.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend is speaking to Benches that are unoccupied by those Conservative Members who have taken up 128 minutes of parliamentary time. That is quite unacceptable.

Mr. Roberts: Since CFCs produce 18 per cent., of the greenhouse effect and also deplete the ozone layer, they should be eliminated as rapidly as possible. Likewise, energy conservation initiatives should be introduced without delay because they are at one and the same time the least-cost solution for the consumer for balancing energy supply and demand, and the largest single insurance policy available against the onset of further global warming.

The Prime Minister is trying to postpone any decision on greenhouse gases until well after the next general election—at least 1992. At the Commonwealth conference in Kuala Lumpur recommendations were made by the scientists who were there as expert advisers, led by Martin Holgate—who came from Britain, and used to be the Department of the Environment's scientific adviser. They recommended that the developing world must carry the overwhelming burden of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, 73 per cent. of the world's carbon dioxide comes from industrialised countries and 80 per cent. of the world's greenhouse gases come from the developed countries.

Barber Conable, president of the World Bank, has spoken about north America and Europe together being responsible for three quarters of CO_2 emissions. Only 8 per cent. of the world population live there, whereas the developing world, in which 80 per cent. of the world's population live, is responsible for only 7 per cent. of CO_2 emissions.

[Mr. Roberts]

Although it is important that we do something about the tropical forests, and the contribution that is being made by the developing world to save the tropical forests is environmentally desirable, it is not the way to deal with the major problem. The way to do that is to deal with the emissions from the developed world, not the developing world. We are the culprits.

The United Kingdom, Canada and Australia removed the first draft clause from the Langkawi declaration—the Commonwealth environment statement. The clause said that Governments should reduce pollutant emissions through planned and regulated policies. The other countries, which are not developed, supported its continued inclusion.

In the conference in the Netherlands at Noordwijk, the club of big polluters—the USSR, the USA, Japan and Britain, which produce 50 per cent. of the world's carbon dioxide—were represented. The initiative to reduce pollutant emissions came from the British Government who, at the Netherlands conference this week, removed any proposals for targeted CO_2 reductions. The Government also killed an initiative to freeze CO_2 emissions at 1987 levels by the year 2000. The Minister seems proud of the vacuous comment that he inspired, that the Government would agree to do something non-specific about it as soon as possible or some time in the future.

The USSR, the USA and the United Kingdom are free to increase their CO_2 emissions under the agreement reached in the Netherlands. For example, they could double them now and then freeze them in the year 2000. Is that the central role for Britain on climatic change? The Minister says that we must wait for science, that we must wait for a report at the end of 1990, within the IPCC framework, before taking any action. That is what we said about acid rain, about CFCs and about the relationship between smoking and lung cancer.

The Prime Minister has said that we must wait for a global convention in 1992 before setting targets or implementing any action to reduce CO_2 emissions. The Government are delaying action until after the general election. In the Netherlands, the right hon. Lady admitted that Britain had no targeted reduction programme for carbon emissions. Why are the Government so reluctant to act, even though the Prime Minister, in her speech, accepted the nature of the problem? It is because of the Government's energy and transport policies. The CEGB energy projections given to the Energy Committee show that CO_2 production for the electricity supply industry in England and Wales in the year 2005 will be up to 26 per cent. greater than in 1987. That will be a direct result of the Government's refusal to change their policies. Energy production is the major source of CO_2 emission.

Another major source is transport, as many hon. Members have already mentioned. Vehicle traffic miles will increase by between 83 per cent. and 142 per cent. by the year 2025. The Government policies mean major increases in CO_2 emissions. The Open university calculates that, on top of the 98 million tonnes already being created, road traffic will create between another 6 million and 130 million tonnes. The Government are refusing to take any significant action to switch resources to public transport. Some 6,000 new cars a day come on to our roads, 50 per cent. of which are company cars that arrive on our roads as a direct result of Government subsidies. Two Budgets ago, the Chancellor said that the Government would take action about subsidies for company cars, but we are still waiting.

Carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, hydrocarbons and lead all come from motor vehicles. The catalytic converter will solve a significant number of pollution problems, but not carbon dioxide. Without a switch in emphasis towards encouraging and developing public transport, the problem will not be solved. Emissions from cars have increased by 33 per cent. during the past 10 years. The Prime Minister may understand the problem, she may make fine speeches about it and she may urge others to act, but she shies away from action herself. She makes a lot of noise and obtains a lot of publicity but, like Eddie Edwards—Eddie the eagle—she and the Government always end up coming last. She is the Eddie Edwards of the environmental world—a lot of noise and a little bit of action. The fact that she shies away from action because of the consequences on the already published plans of her Departments was no more clearly illustrated than by the statement in the House yesterday. That has altered the whole perspective of Government policies on nuclear power.

The United Kingdom is the sixth largest producer of carbon dioxide. If we do not take action, no one will. Total emissions of CO_2in Britain have remained stable for the last 10 years. There have been no reductions, but there will be increases. There would have been reductions if the Government had not closed many industries, because it is only in the industrial and not in energy or transport sectors that there have been any reductions in CO_2 emissions. As I have said, there will be a continuing increase in car and energy production emissions.

The Prime Minister promised £33 million a year for three years to protect the tropical rain forests. We do not object to that, but it is not enough. Much more needs to be done by Britain and internationally. As I said earlier, the developing countries are not the main cause of the problems. It is a technique and trick of the Government to highlight the problems and then to blame the developing countries and try to assist them, even though it is the developed countries that are the culprits. That was done in the case of CFCs. It was said that it was all the fault of India and China, but they are responsible for only 5 per cent. of the world's CFCs. Now it is said that these foreigners in the developing world are causing global warming, even though the developed world creates 95 per cent. of the problem.

Global warming will flood Ireland and destroy whole forests. It will cause the slow death by starvation of millions of people and millions more will wander the world looking for a home. In the face of that, the Government and the Prime Minister are playing politics. They are claiming to save the world and exploiting concern by their speeches, while refusing to take the action that is necessary, such as the decision by the West German Government to phase out all CFCs by 1992.

The Government highlight the Montreal convention agreement as a great breakthrough for Britain and quote the 50 per cent. cut in CFC consumption that is planned for this country. Such a cut would be totally inadequate, but it is only a 35 per cent. cut. The balance will be sold to the developing world, as if the developing world has a different ozone level from that of Britain.

We need more effective action. Carbon dioxide emissions from power stations, industry, motor vehicles and home-heating systems are responsible for 50 per cent. of global warming. Only one third of the United Kingdom's carbon dioxide emissions comes from fossil fuel power stations, so that source makes a contribution of 15 per cent. to the problem. Therefore, we cannot say that the problem will be solved simply by switching to nuclear power.

Other pollutants such as CFCs, tropospheric ozone—much of which is produced by motor vehicles—methane and nitrous oxide—much of which comes from the over-use of nitrogen fertilisers, a problem that the Government will not address because of the lobby from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—all contribute to the greenhouse effect. A high priority must be given to developing more efficient and cleaner methods of using coal. The projects on fluidised bed combustion should be given a high priority. That type of technology, together with combined cycle gas turbines, should be ideally placed in small electricity generators and combined heat and power schemes. The more efficiently we burn fossil fuels, the fewer greenhouse gases are produced.

We should target the major fossil fuel burning power stations for retrofitting and flue gas desulphurisation. The Government still refuse to join the 30 per cent. club and will not commit themselves to the 60 per cent. reduction in the time scale that is required by the European Community. They have plans and proposals for retrofitting only one fossil fuel power station. Fiddler's Ferry has been cancelled and Drax B is the only one in the programme. They say that they will eventually see to six power stations, but that will be done well after the next general election. That is not a commitment and the Government's inaction is a scandal. We must also take into account the type and content of fuel. For example, heavy fuel oil has a ratio or more than 2:1 of sulphur compared with coal.

Britain must have a major programme of energy efficiency and conservation, and it will get one from the next Labour Government. The efficient use of energy and the efficient management of its demand will benefit Britain. We are committed to energy saving. That will save money and create jobs. Our comprehensive energy efficiency programme will insulate and help to heat the homes of the elderly and those in need. It will boost home markets for Britain's energy efficiency industry, slow down the loss of finite fuel resources and create jobs in home insulation and heating.

We shall launch a major programme of domestic insulation in co-operation with local authorities, and we will involve industry in a partnership with central and local government to develop major initiatives for energy saving within industry. Research and other activities relating to alternative energy resources will also be increased. In 1984-85, Britain spent between £15 million and £17 million on research and development into alternative energy sources such as wind, tidal, wave and solar power, and geothermal energy, but in the same period, we spent £154 million on nuclear power. That illustrates the Government's priorities.

As to CFCs, in an interesting speech at a major conference, the Prime Minister acknowledged the problem but only urged the market to deal with it, refusing to ban the use of CFCs in aerosols. She declined requests for Government intervention or expenditure in phasing out totally the use of CFCs. The United Kingdom contributes 10 per cent. of the world's total CFC production, which is a massive amount. By simply imposing an effective ban on aerosols, the Government would meet their obligations under the Montreal convention. Even if British consumption of CFCs were reduced by 90 per cent., it would still account for more CFC usage than India. Greenpeace is calling for a 100 per cent. phase-out immediately. West Germany is taking that action, so such a demand could be implemented in the United Kingdom.

ICI is the world's second largest producer of CFCs, and Europe's largest producer and exporter. I welcome the company's initiatives in finding alternatives, but commercially it would have been in great difficulty if it had not done so. Britain produces three times more CFCs than India and China together. Last year, the United Kingdom exported CFCs to 117 countries—80 of which have not signed the Montreal agreement.

The Department of the Environment has also agreed to allow methyl chloroform to be used until 2030. That substance, an industrial solvent, is responsible for one twentieth of ozone depletion, yet the Government refuse to take any action on it.

Both the lean-burn engine and the catalytic converter should be speedily adopted in this country. The Government's recent campaign against the catalytic converter, in opposition to other Community countries, was scandalous. They now accept the inevitable, but use the lean-burn engine as an excuse for doing nothing about insisting on the fitting of catalytic converters. We want to see both technologies implemented. They are not alternatives..

The lean-burn engine burns more air than petrol. The more air that is burnt, the less petrol—and the emissions are leaner. Everyone wants a car that does not use so much petrol, but the technology can be developed and implemented only within limits. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) remarked, the faster a lean-burn engine car is driven, the more pollutant it emits—so we also want the catalytic converter adopted. We want public resources switched to public transport, action on nitrogen fertilisers, and the cuts made in research to be restored. The Natural Environment Research Council recently lost 60 staff, and 700 environmental scientists have been shed over the past five years. If the Government are really placing more emphasis on research, why are they cutting the number of staff involved?

We support also the action being taken in respect of rain forests. However, the Government recognise that environmental concerns—the green issues—are of growing importance to the British electorate. It will be considered the height of cynicism if the Prime Minister and other members of the Government, in an attempt to appear concerned about the environment, make fine speeches but by their actions prevent genuine international concern being translated into action. It will be seen as the height of cynicism also if the Prime Minister's most recent speech on the environment is not translated into action, with the setting and achievement by the developing world of specific targets.

The Minister must take back to the Prime Minister a message of concern from right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House, and stress to her and to other members of the Cabinet that the House wants specific targets to be set and action to be taken—and that fine words are not good enough.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Conservative Members who spoke respectively for 27 minutes, 32 minutes, 41 minutes and 23 minutes were not present throughout the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts).

2 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I am pleased to have listened to a good debate, and I shall try to respond to as many points as possible. I welcome the fact that we have been able to cover two important reports produced by the Select Committee on Energy and the Select Committee on the Environment. We were helped by two notable contributions from the Chairmen of those Committees, my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi).

My two hon. Friends and many Opposition Members have stressed that climate change is surrounded by great uncertainty. Britain is playing a leading part in the huge international effort being made to understand better the complex factors at work. The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), who opened the debate for the Opposition, was right to point to the uncertainty. We have all been following the debates in the technical press and we know that an enormous amount needs to be done. The hon. Gentleman was rather grudging in his welcome for the initiative that has been taken by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her speech this week to the United Nations announcing the setting up of a new climate change prediction centre.

The centre will do much of what the hon. Member for Motherwell, South apparently wants. It will, for example, have a new computer. I accept that we need new and powerful computers to do the necessary climatic modelling. The centre will be annexed to the Meteorological Office. There will be the closest possible co-operation with the Meteorological Office and other centres throughout the country and abroad. It will be open in its links and open to scientists from other countries to visit.

I have mentioned the uncertainties that surround the hugely complex phenomenon that we call climate change, but at least the main facts are clear. There has been a build-up in the atmosphere of so-called greenhouse gases, chiefly carbon dioxide. This may have led to a small but progressive warming in average global temperatures. If that continues unchecked, the consequences, although difficult to predict, are likely to be serious and even catastrophic. I agree with hon. Members on both sides of the House who said that our action must not await final proof. I recognise that final proof of the changes and factors at work is likely to be highly elusive.

We have taken action already to reduce some of the greenhouse gases. CFCs are known chiefly for their damage to the ozone layer. The phenomenon was first detected by British scientists in the Antarctic. It is true also that CFCs are among the most potent of greenhouse gases. That is why we enthusiastically signed the Montreal protocol. We are 10 years ahead of our obligations under that protocol to reduce our use of CFCs. We are in the forefront of the countries pressing for even steeper reductions. I agree with the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) in his praise for the way in which ICI has developed substitutes for CFCs at its plant at Runcorn. I congratulate ICI on that. It shows that commercial interests can be harnessed to meet some of the environmental challenges that we face.

Methane is another greenhouse gas. It is produced by animals, rice paddy fields, mining and the escape of natural gas. It is a difficult gas with which to deal because it is linked so obviously to the relentless increase in the global population, but Governments can do their bit. This Government are already doing so. We have taken action to promote the use of landfill methane, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). Not only does this cut methane emissions from the ground but, by burning methane, we can use it to produce energy. My Department, in association with the Department of Energy, is working on schemes to promote and extend these initiatives.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I specifically asked why less than 10 per cent. of the suitable sites are developed. Does the hon. Gentleman know what will be done to increase take-up? Less than 10 per cent. is a long way short of potential, as I am sure the Minister will agree.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Not all sites are suitable. It is difficult to get the necessary equipment in place to use all the methane available at all sites, but we are working with local authorities to find out whether the number of sites can be extended. Considerable success has been achieved.

Far and away the largest greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide because of the huge quantities released each year into the atmosphere. Of course, there are huge natural flows of carbon dioxide from the land and the oceans into the atmosphere and back again, but man's activities are putting more carbon dioxide into the air than can be absorbed. The burning of fossil fuels—mostly coal and oil —is the main cause. Simply put, we are taking carbon which has been built up over millions of years out of the earth and putting it into the atmosphere through combustion. We must try to control our emissions of carbon dioxide and also, separately, find ways of absorbing it back again. Both sides of this coin are receiving attention.

I agree that international action is essential. We have been over the Noordwijk conference. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside has made clear the leading role that he played. For the avoidance of doubt—I sometimes wonder whether hon. Members have had the chance to read the Noordwijk declaration—I stress that the final declaration recognises the need to stabilise carbon dioxide emissions and states:

> "Such stabilization of CO_2 emissions should be achieved as a first step at the latest by the year 2000,"

It is true that some of the large industrialised countries, including Russia, the United States and Japan, had difficulties getting this far. That is why Britain played an important role in getting those countries to achieve a consensus and to sign this declaration.

Mr. Allan Roberts: That declaration does not mean a thing. Those three countries and Britain refused to accept the original draft which included targets and which would have meant a much earlier freeze on CO_2 emissions. Britain was instrumental in supporting the USSR, the United States, Japan and other countries in reducing the commitment. The compromise is a fudge that means nothing.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The hon. Gentleman will agree that it was right that all countries at the conference should sign a final declaration. Britain played a leading part in getting those other countries to achieve that mainstream international consensus. We know that the next stage is to assess the scientific evidence at next year's meeting of the IPCC, followed by the second world climate conference at which specific carbon dioxide targets will be negotiated and agreed.

I want to pass on from Noordwijk to the more general question of what we are doing to reduce carbon dioxide. The task will not be easy. When I hear criticism from the Opposition about the lack of specific tagets, I cannot help turning to the new Labour party document, "Meet the Challenge: Make the Change". I have looked through all its 88 pages of closely written type to try to find a commitment to a reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. It is not there. The document is consumer-friendly and full of generalised aspirations, but there is nothing about the difficult decisions which are necessary if we are to move forward on the issue. I shall not take lectures from the Opposition about the lack of specific targets when they fail to give specific targets in their own policy document.

We have our own programmes to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. I have explained how the adoption of specific targets must await international agreement, but we already have programmes that offer long-term benefits in carbon dioxide reduction. Conservatives believe in diversity of supply: nuclear, gas and the alternatives. But the Labour party is the party of coal and, therefore, the party of carbon dioxide.

We know that nuclear energy is going through a period when the economics may rule out an expansion, but we are promoting—and expect—an increased use of natural gas because gas-fired power stations are not only more energy efficient, but produce less carbon dioxide for each unit of fuel.

Mr. Corbyn: It is interesting that despite the Government's own statement yesterday, they still appear to be obsessed with nuclear power. Would not the Minister be better advised to tell the House what research facilities and resources he will put into renewable energy sources such as wind, wave, water and solar power, rather than to pursue his obsession with nuclear power? He still seems to be besotted with it.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Department of Energy has an excellent programme of research into renewable energy. In addition, the Electricity Act 1989 allocates a specific role for renewable energy. We expect that by the end of the century, at least 600 MW of electricity should be generated by so-called "alternative" means. If that programme can be expanded so much the better.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I must make it clear that the Labour party is the party of clean coal. We want to continue burning coal in fossil fuel power stations to produce energy, as do the Government. The difference is that we would carry out that burning cleanly and we would ensure that fossil fuel power stations are retrofitted. It suits the Government not to take action to clean up the burning of coal so that they can stigmatise it as dirty to justify their obsession with nuclear power.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We recognise that coal will continue to play an important part, but however clean the hon. Gentleman gets his coal, it remains a fact that every tonne of coal burned produces two tonnes of carbon dioxide. Nuclear energy, whatever the economic situation at present, does not produce carbon dioxide or emissions leading to acid rain.

Energy efficiency has been mentioned by several hon. Members. The Electricity Act 1989 requires the Secretary of State for Energy and the Director General of Electricity Supply actively to promote energy efficiency. In addition, suppliers will have to give advice to consumers on the efficient use of electricity. The success of our energy efficiency campaigns is shown by the fact that although United Kingdom output has increased by 40 per cent. over the past 25 years, our energy consumption has stood still. My own Department is giving a lead here and has reduced its energy bill by 24 per cent. since 1985-86.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the Minister acknowledge that in the past eight years energy consumption has increased and that it is only because of the 1979-81 debacle that the net result is a decrease? Does he accept that the Government have cut funding for energy efficiency projects and the Energy Efficiency Office and that as a result we are nowhere near achieving the targets that the Department says are technically feasible?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The hon. Gentleman has chosen his own base date. I have chosen a longer time scale which gives a more accurate picture. I mentioned the Electricity Act 1989. It is not only the crude sum devoted to energy efficiency but the way in which the money is targeted and the specific administrative arrangements that are important. The hon. Gentleman served on the Standing Committee considering the Bill, so he should know the provisions that it contains to promote energy efficiency and encourage alternative power sources.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: I, too, served on that Committee. The clauses that the Government have written into the Bill are almost meaningless. The new privatised utilities can get away with a mere leaflet conveying information to the consumer. Such leaflets are already published. A Government committed to energy efficiency would have included in the Bill least-cost planning and targets, as proposed by amendments moved by Social and Liberal Democrat Members.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My recollection of the Committee proceedings is not the same as the hon. Gentleman's. The Act contains specific and binding obligations on electricity suppliers to promote energy efficiency.

The other side of the coin is the need to trap more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and put it back into the land. The importance of forestry was mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for Havant and for Hornsey and Wood Green. I agree that forestry has an important part to play. Deforestation may account for up to 20 per cent. of the greenhouse effect.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) mentioned forestry, too. He raised several points, but I do not have time to answer all of them. Some strayed outside the subject for debate this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the Minister that the motion is that this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman was free to raise any point that he wishd. Perhaps I should rephrase what I said. Some of the points that the hon. Gentleman made strayed outside my responsibilities in the Department of the Environment. I shall ensure that he receives responses from the appropriate Departments.

I have always listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman says, both through journalism and in the House, and I respect his views. He was characteristically generous to the Prime Minister about her speech to the United Nations. He was right that she had in mind the Amazon basin when she described the dangers of deforestation. He criticised the figure of £100 million for an initiative to help with the management of tropical rain forests. We can argue about the amount, but the essential point is that the Prime Minister has put forward the notion that we cannot dictate to countries such as Brazil, India and China. We must work with them, not merely tell them what to do. We must show them how to manage the important natural resource of rain forests and give them financial help and technological assistance.

Mr. Dalyell: The most practical way to do that is to put to work the three nuclear power stations between Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo. As Siemens and Westinghouse are at fault, that seems that most practical thing that can be done.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Nuclear energy may have a part to play in Brazil, too. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should try to persuade other Opposition Members of its importance.

The hon. Gentleman will agree that we need to conserve tropical rain forests and promote sustainable management. It is acceptable for mature tropical rain forest trees to be harvested provided that they are replanted. What we must not do is to burn them, thus putting the carbon straight back into the atmosphere. There is nothing wrong with using the wood for buildings and furniture because that locks up the carbon in solid form. Provided that the trees are replanted as part of a sensible and sustainable policy of regeneration, everyone benefits—those living in the forests, the countries concerned and the international community.

Temperate forests in countries such as ours also have a part to play. Temperate trees are less good at removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, as I am sure the hon. Member for Linlithgow knows, but we have played our part and continue to do so. The United Kingdom has increased its tree planting by 50 per cent. over the past 10 years and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has a number of schemes, such as the farm woodland scheme, which should lead to increased planting. Our target is 36,000 hectares of new planting.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) said that we must get to the front of the international pack in our response to climate change. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did that at the United Nations, but I should stress that these matters cannot always be dealt with by Governments, even if Governments co-operate. Public concern, co-operation and acceptance are important. That is one reason why my Department recently produced a leaflet, which I commend to hon. Members and their constituents. It is called "Global Climate Change" and its aim is to try to increase public awareness and understanding of this complex issue.

The public are also involved as consumers. We have seen from the success of the campaign to encourage the move from leaded to unleaded petrol that consumers can be persuaded by administrative measures and the price mechanism to make the change to more environmentally friendly fuels. Moreover, consumers voluntarily choose some items, such as aerosols, that do not contain CFCs.

Mr. Leigh: Can my hon. Friend comment further on my argument that the Government should work out a distinctive response to environmental concerns based on the pricing mechanism? Will he pursue that matter with his colleagues in the Department to see how we might proceed?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The leaded petrol example that I gave shows how the price mechanism can be turned to our advantage. I do not rule out the possibility of, for example, a carbon tax, although it would not necessarily work to the advantage of coal. If all the external environmental costs can be swept together and attributed to the burning of coal, the price of coal might go up and, who knows, nuclear energy might come back into the economic arena.

But we reject a centrally planned system. The command economies in eastern Europe are among the most polluting of all the economies in the world and that is why we favour a voluntary approach involving the consumer in what we are trying to do by using a mixture of persuasion and fiscal incentives. The public must also be shown that none of this will be painless.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to the need to remove sulphur oxides from power station emissions. We know that those emissions contribute to acid rain. Criticisms were raised that that was not being done fast enough. However, removal is not a cheap or a problem-free option. Flue gas desulphurisation equipment needs limestone as its raw material. That limestone must be quarried, frequently in places of great natural beauty. In addition, the sludge produced by the process must be disposed of. I hope that hon. Members will understand that the solution to one environmental problem can lead to another. Very difficult decisions must be taken, but nothing is served by pretending that the way will be easy or cheap.

Several hon. Members raised the issue of exhaust emissions. This country has an excellent record in responding to the need to reduce pollutants from vehicle exhausts. We have made great strides in removing lead from petrol. We have also signed the Community directive to bring in catalytic converters within three years. They will greatly reduce the emissions of carbon monoxide, unburned hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides. However, as several hon. Members have stated, they do not deal with the problem of carbon dioxide. That requires the development and manufacture of lean-burn engines and I am delighted that research on that is being pursued vigorously by the Ford Motor Company and the Rover Group.

We must make our vehicles more energy-efficient. That does not conflict with what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is doing to make our road transport system more efficient. Nothing wastes fuel more than congestion in traffic. The constant stopping and starting in traffic is the least energy-efficient option. That is why we are pressing ahead with a road programme while at the same time recognising that we must make our cars and vehicles more energy-efficient.

Several other topics were raised in the debate and I have not had time to cover them all. The problems will not be solved easily or quickly. This is a global issue. Britain produces only about 3 per cent. of the world's emissions of carbon dioxide. Anything that we can do to reduce that —I have referred to some of the measures that we are already taking—could simply be swamped by increased coal burn, for example in China. In a different sense, it could be swamped by the continuing deforestation of tropical hardwoods, which was an issue raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

The science involved in these issues is extremely complex and not fully understood. There is a pressing need to increase our understanding. Britain is playing a leading role. We are chairing the first working group on scientific assessment which will pull together the work being carried out. The second working group, chaired by the Soviet Union, will investigate and report on the impact of climate change, and the third working group, chaired by the United States, will look into and report on policy responses to climate change. Those are the appropriate forums to pull together what we know and then go forward to a second climate conference at which specific emission targets will be set.

The criticism levelled at the Government by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) in relation to the Noordwijk conference is misdirected precisely because we already have in place other organisations within which the decisions will be taken. If the hon. Gentlman wishes to be taken more seriously, why did he not, as a Labour party spokesman, tell us of his emission reduction targets and how he would meet them? Difficult decisions will be taken. I looked in vain for a commitment in the recently published Labour party policy document.

We are moving forward on a general front. Our uncertainties about this complex phenomenon are not stopping us taking action now. We are doing something to increase forestry planting in this country and to try to stop deforestation abroad. We are looking at ways of getting more energy out of our existing fuels in powers stations and——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournement of the House lapsed, without Question put.

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That this House do meet on Thursday 16th November at half-past Nine o'clock.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 (Amendment) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 1501), dated 16th August 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 23rd August, be approved.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Question agreed to.

Meningitis

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): It is always with much diffidence that an hon. Member who has no medical qualifications brings a medical matter to the attention of the House. When I think how little I know about medicine —I barely recognise the difference between a bacterium and a virus—and of what medically qualified people know, I am naturally hesitant to raise the topic. However, when constituents' lives have been shattered by a tragic and probably avoidable death and they bring the matter to the attention of a Member of Parliament, he or she has a duty to raise the matter in the House.

There are lessons to be learnt from the death of my constituent, three-year-old Anneka Brown, in the Wick Ferry holiday camp near Bournemouth on 23 August of this year. I raise the matter also on behalf of a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), who is unable to be here today because of the ambulancemen's dispute. He has asked to be associated with my sentiments. Fifteen-year-old Stephen King died at the Pontin's Wall park, Brixham camp. That is probably where Stephen King contracted the meningococcal meningitis virus which also eventually tragically put an end to the life of Anneka Brown in another Pontins holiday camp four weeks later.

Stephen King died on 19 July 1989 at Wall park holiday camp outside Brixham. The family had to wait 13 hours for medical help. A resident camp nurse was supposed to be available, but one was not available. Non-medical staff administered aspirin on the ground of suspected sunstroke. Obviously, the expected 24-hour medical care was not available. The circumstances were remarkably similar in the tragedy which occurred four weeks later, in another Pontins holiday camp, where my constituent died. Although it is upsetting, I shall read the mother's letter to describe the circumstances in which her daughter died. She said:

> "On Tuesday 22 August, we went into Bournemouth for the whole day because I did not feel that the camp was safe enough for my children. On returning to our chalet mid afternoon some friends took my six-year-old son and three-year-old daughter to the swimming pool, but when I arrived and saw that the pool was extremely dirty I returned them to the chalet.
>
> On pages 14 and 15 of Pontin's brochure they offer a facility of resident nurse and chalet patrol. At 5.45 pm on this day I went to the reception office as I found the first-aid room was closed. When met by the receptionist I requested that a doctor be called for my daughter and after waiting 10 minutes she gave me the telephone so that I could speak to the doctor but he refused to come out. The receptionist asked if everything was all right and I said 'No'. The doctor had told me to give her Calpol. I asked her where the nurse was in case I needed her later, and she informed me that she finished at 3.30 pm but if I needed help to go to security and he would get me a doctor. Later that evening my husband went to the reception area to ask the security officer for help in getting a nurse or doctor, to his surprise there was a note on the door 'If security is required please go to the main building', this was the ballroom. My husband went to the ballroom and had to go through crowds of people drinking as the security officer is in an office behind the main bar. This same man patrols the area as well so it took my husband an hour to find him. The security officer who helped us was David Martin Campbell, he

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

> took my daughter's temperature himself then telephoned a doctor. The doctor arrived and diagnosed an ear infection without even examining her.
>
> At 4.00 am my daughter's condition had worsened so I went looking for the security officer in the main building but this was all locked up so I ran to a telephone box on the camp but found it was out of order and had to go outside the camp to use a telephone there where I managed to get help after ringing the emergency services. When the ambulance arrived it could not get through the gates as there were cars parked blocking its way. When my daughter eventually got on her way to hospital unfortunately it was too late."

What lessons can we learn from that? I shall give the House the reply received from the Dorset Ambulance Service to the questions raised about the service being unable to enter Pontin's holiday camp. On 1 November, Mr. Jolliffe, the chief ambulance officer wrote to my constituent:

> "We have had discussions with the manager, Mr. Rozier, who explained the difficulty they have with controlling parking during the peak season, due to the limited number of staff available to deal with the problem. Clearly this is an unsatisfactory situation for all concerned, not least the Ambulance Service but is an issue which is outside our jurisdiction. Any long-term solution to this problem will need to be addressed by the owners of the camp and the local authority."

I return to the questions of the lessons that we must learn about the seriousness of the disease and the new strains of meningitis. I am told that it is the commonest cause of childhood deaths from any infectious disease. It recently passed the predicted levels and is now surpassing the incidence of the heavy 1974 outbreak. Children have far less natural immunity than adults. Indeed, the high incidence of the virus among adults is extremely important in building up antibodies to the disease, but that is not the case for children, and especially not for children aged nought to five. Unfortunately, adults can carry the disease in their nasal passages for long periods of time at no harm to themselves. They are innocent carriers, but in blowing their nose or sneezing they can pass the virus on to children who do not have that natural immunity because of their age.

I refer to some of the serious statements made recently about meningitis so that the House can appreciate how seriously the Government should be taking it. The Royal College of Physicians of London stated in January 1982, when we were not in a period of serious infection:

> "Meningococcal infection is the cause of 2 per cent. of all deaths between one and four years".

An author called Raman wrote in the *British Medical Journal* in 1988:

> "early diagnosis and treatment are vital . . . delay may be catastrophic".

How true that is of the two cases that I have mentioned. Another comment, from Abercrombie and McConaghey in "The Encyclopaedia of General Practice" also needs underlining. It states:

> "Bacterial meningitis is one of the great emergencies of medicine".

My last quotation comes from the report of the task force on diagnosis and management of meningitis, by Klein, Feigin and McCracken in1986, which states:

> "Prompt diagnosis and aggressive management are the goals".

We are certainly not getting prompt diagnosis and aggressive management of meningitis in the cases that I have raised this afternoon.

I turn now to what the Government should be doing to ensure that such cases are not repeated. We should look at the quality of the medical guidelines issued to GPs by the Department of Health and its territorial equivalent in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We should also consider the particular case of holiday camps.

I commend the work of the Meningitis Trust. Next Tuesday it is bringing out a new information pack designed for the medical profession and for interested lay people such as those living in areas where there have been epidemics—for instance, Stroud, Plymouth, south and mid-Glamorgan, the area in south Wales from which I come. Where there is such a concentration of infection the information published by the trust will be of interest not just to the medical profession and to school nurses, but to parents. I greatly commend the work of the Meningitis Trust and I am glad that its efforts are receiving some attention.

I am not completely happy, however, that the Department of Health has pushed the guidelines that it issued, through Sir Donald Acheson, on 3 February 1988. It should act to ensure that those guidelines have been read and are acted upon in the areas most prone to the disease. It is particularly important for those guidelines to be studied by those who deal with a lot of children in the nought to five age group or the 15 to 24 age group. The tragic deaths to which I have referred occurred in those age groups. Those age groups are particularly prone to attacks from the group B meningococcal meningitis virus.

One can issue as many guidelines as one likes, pile the paper into the post and assume that those guidelines are read by doctors and others who are supposed to receive that information. One can assume that they act on that information, but doctors receive an enormous quantity of paper through the post from drug companies and so forth. How does one ensure that they read information that is absolutely essential to them and which they may have missed out on at medical school 20 years ago when outbreaks of meningitis did not represent a particular crisis?

Efforts should be made to ensure that medical advice on the new strains of infection is absorbed by those doctors who are likely to be faced with a decision—sometimes in the middle of the night—on whether to treat something as sunstroke or ear ache instead of recognising it, as it should have been recognised in the two cases to which I have referred, as suspected meningococcal meningitis. One cannot afford to withhold the requisite penicillin treatment in such cases. Perhaps the most important medical fact to emerge from the study of the recent meningitis outbreaks is that penicillin should be administered on suspicion of the disease, rather than on certain diagnosis. If the symptoms turn out to be meningitis, delay often means it is too late to administer the treatment to small children or teenagers.

Which areas of the medical profession should be targeted for the specific instructions currently issued regarding new strains of this highly infectious disease? Obviously those instructions should go to the members of the profession who deal with closed or semi-closed communities—residential schools, military camps and holiday camps. As a criticism of Government health guidelines it is fair to say that they generally think of closed communities as residential schools or military camps. The Government have paid insufficient attention to holiday camps. Such camps do not always have even a minimum standard of medical care. Frequently such camps, as with Pontin's this summer, advertise a resident nurse. In the case to which I have already referred there was no resident nurse, nor was there a non-resident nurse available after 3.30 in the afternoon. To leave an untrained security guard to look after children who may be subject to the meningitis infection is well below the minimum standards that we should expect in such large communities. Generally 1,200 people stay in holiday camps, many of them children who play together in the swimming pool, and are therefore likely to pass infection between them.

In the case I have described the security guard acted heroically, but security guards are unable to match up to the demands of such a situation. The Government must ensure that holiday camps receive the same specific medical advice about the new strains of infection as is sent to military camps or residential schools, both of which contains many teenagers. The nought to five age group is less likely to be in either of them, but will be likely to be in holiday camps. That is an essential factor to which I hope that the Minister will be able to respond today. Clearly, there is a deficiency in holiday camps, which should provide a minimum standard of medical cover. Such camps are still a popular form of holiday for families. Minimum guidelines should be sent out to holiday camps to ensure that they have GPs with specific training so that if infectious diseases such as meningococcal meningitis break out in the camps, as happened this summer, the GPs will know how to recognise the suspicion of the presence of an extremely serious and potentially fatal disease which has a particular tendency to emerge where large numbers of children live together briefly for a week here or a fortnight there.

It seems that the Department of Health has not yet got the measure of this disease. More must be done and higher standards must be set for residential establishments in which children congregate in the summer. Ten or 20 years ago we used to be able to say that when it came to health we were lucky to be born British. After all the events of this summer, I am not convinced that that is still true today.

2.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): The House owes a debt of gratitude to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) for bringing this matter to its attention. It is an important issue and the hon. Gentleman has set out the concerns not only of himself and his constituents, but many other members of the public. I wish to try to reassure him, his constituents and other hon. Members.

I was extremely sorry to learn of the death of Anneka Brown. Death is never an easy thing to come to terms with, but the death of a young child is perhaps all the more sad. I have a three-year-old daughter who is almost the same age as Anneka would have been today. If my wife and I had been placed in the same circumstances as Anneka's parents, we would have suffered a grievous and devastating blow. I feel very much for Anneka's parents and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will convey to them my condolences and those of other hon. Members.

The hon. Member has raised a number of important questions in his speech which reflect the concern he expressed in a letter of 24 October to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. I shall try to deal with his various points and I hope that he will accept my reply today as a full answer to his letter.

First, I shall turn to the issue of what guidelines are issued to doctors about the recognition and treatment of meningitis. Following a noted increase in the prevalence of meningitis, Sir Donald Acheson, the chief medical officer, issued—as the hon. Gentleman has explained—two letters in February 1988. He issued one to all doctors and copies to regions, districts, family practitioner committees and environmental health officers and another to regional medical officers, also with copies to regions and districts. I have sent the hon. Gentleman copies and placed further copies in the Library.

The hon. Gentleman may know that the Meningitis Trust pack, to which he referred and which I also commend, contains the chief medical officer's letters with his support and approval. I shall not of course read from those letters, since they contain a lot of detailed medical information, but I should like to draw attention to certain points. Meningitis is the inflammation of the lining of the brain and can be caused by viruses or bacteria. The former are usually less serious and self-limiting; the latter need urgent treatment with antibiotics and may lead to death or handicap. The chief medical officer's letters mention that infections can occur at all ages, but the highest rates of the commonest group are seen at ages nought to four years. Anneka was three when she died. The classical features of meningitis are neck stiffness, sickness, headache and intolerance to light, but they may not always be prevalent, particularly in children under one year old.

I am advised by the medical officers in the Department of Health that it is difficult to diagnose meningitis in its early stages and that rapid deterioration is unfortunately common.

Guidance is given about the treatment that is recommended if diagnosis of meningitis is suspected. The letters stress that it is a statutory requirement to notify cases of meningitis to the proper authorities, usually the medical officer for environmental health. They also draw attention to a leaflet, attached to both letters, prepared by the Gloucester health authority. The leaflet, which is extremely well written, is a step-by-step guide and explains what meningitis is, what the signs and symptoms are, what can be done to prevent it, and how it is spread. On that last point, it is interesting to note that the leaflet says that the germ

"cannot live long outside the human body so it cannot be picked up from buildings or factories, water supplies or swimming pools".

The bacterial infection can be spread only by personal contact. The hon. Gentleman underlined that fact.

In addition to the two letters I have mentioned, in December 1988 my Department issued a circular on the management of communicable diseases following the Government's acceptance of the main recommendations of the chief medical officer's report "Public Health in England". The circular is also in the Library.

The circular reminded health authorities that effective arrangements for the surveillance, prevention and control of communicable disease and infection were an important part of their responsibility to improve the health of the population. Health authorities were also advised, in that circular and in later guidance, as to the action that should be taken to ensure that those responsibilities were discharged. That includes the appointment of a consultant

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

in communicable disease control, eventually, in every district to take executive responsibility for the surveillance, prevention and control of communicable disease and infection, whether notifiable or non-notifiable, in the local population.

Of course, at present every district has a medical officer of environmental health whose duties we have redefined for the new consultants. We have also just issued a consultation document on the review of the law on infectious disease control seeking views from all health and local authorities, a variety of professional bodies and anyone else who wishes to reply, about how we might go about providing a more modern and effective legislative backing to the control of these diseases.

I know that the matter that the hon. Gentleman has raised relates to two specific cases. If he has not had time to look at the consultative document, I shall write to him and send him a copy. I should welcome his views on the wider issue. Indeed, in the light of the sad experience of his constituent and the constituent of his hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), his views would be particularly appropriate.

With the recent issue and broad circulation of both the chief medical officer's letters, the circular, the leaflet and the consultation document, we have widely informed professional people and authorities about the guidelines and services available for the recognition and treatment of infectious diseases such as meningitis. The hon. Gentleman rightly said that it is one thing to write and to distribute, but another to ensure that people read and understand. I shall return to that point in my closing remarks.

Another of the hon. Member's points was the question of guidelines to holiday camps for the provision of medical cover. We would expect holiday camps to adopt a commonsense approach by having trained medical staff available; should they be in any doubt as to what service to provide, they should either contact a local medical practitioner or seek advice from the district health authority or the proper officer, usually the medical officer for environmental health, who has the local lead responsibility when cases of communicable diseases occur. Such bodies are best placed to give advice based on local circumstances and the needs of patients.

Similarly, should the nursing staff become aware of an outbreak, whether it be meningitis, food poisoning or something else, we would expect them to contact an appropriate doctor. We expect those running holiday camps, like any other facility or organisation where people, especially the young, gather together—and holiday camps are not the only location where young children gather—to have clear guidelines for their staff such that, if they are approached about an individual incident or group of incidents, they should use their common sense and promptly call a general practitioner or the hospital. Indeed, despite the catalogue of organisational and procedural disasters to which the hon. Gentleman referred, the procedures were properly followed, a general practitioner was called and did take action, but, sadly, too late.

I should like to take this opportunity to clear up one or two points in relation to the cases of meningitis where Anneka Brown was concerned. Cases of meningitis occurred at the Brixham holiday camp at the time that Anneka and her family were there. However, it has been established that the organisms were all of different strains and therefore were not connected with each other, but had occurred by chance. I know that the hon. Gentleman did not imply that there was an epidemic of similarly related cases at that camp, but it is worth putting that on the record.

About four weeks after visiting that camp, Anneka and her family went to another holiday camp at Christchurch. The period between the family's stay in the two holiday camps makes it highly unlikely that there was any direct connection between the incidents as that period is way beyond the incubation period of infection which is only two to three days.

While it is possible that some member of the Brown family unwittingly became a carrier after the stay in the first holiday camp, it is also important to appreciate that up to 25 per cent. of young adults may be carriers at any one time and that the carriage rate in the normal population is about 10 per cent. The hon. Gentleman quite properly referred to that. Doubts have been expressed about how widely the treatment should be given among possible contacts of confirmed infectious cases, but the advice of experts in the field is that antibiotic medication should be given only to the close family contact. That is brought out in the chief medical officer's letters.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman mentioned the role of the local general practitioner in the diagnosis and treatment of Anneka. Hon. Members may like to know that, under his terms of service, a general practitioner is obliged to render to his patients all necessary and appropriate personal medical services of the type usually provided by general practitioners. Such services include arrangements for referring patients as necessary to any other service provided under the Health Service.

As for the doctor's obligation to make a visit, all I can say is that it is for the doctor himself to decide in each case whether such a visit is necessary, in the light of his professional knowledge and judgment. I cannot say more than that because I understand that the family is in the process of making a complaint or has already complained to the local family practitioner committee and, given the role of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in these matters, it would be injudicious for me to say anything more.

I hope that I have been able to give some reassurance to the hon. Gentleman and to the Brown family. We recognise the distressing nature of the disease and have taken steps to advise health professionals about the diagnosis and treatment of meningitis. I am advised that meningitis notifications are now subsiding. Peak levels were reached last year. Periodically since the war, there have been increases in the number of incidents, but as I say, notifications are now subsiding.

I have reflected on the hon. Gentleman's suggestions about how to make sure that more people, and especially those in holiday camps, are aware of the affliction and its early signs and what steps they should take to ensure that medical advice is promptly called. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall take steps to see that districts with large seaside holiday camps pass to those camps copies of the meningitis leaflet for the better awareness specifically of holiday camp staff.

I think that we have prepared and circulated the correct advice to professionals. The hon. Gentleman wondered how far that chain of information has gone. I assure him that, because of the circumstances of the case that he raises, I will take specific steps to ensure that districts have passed on the excellent Gloucester health leaflet to the staff of the larger camps.

I appreciate how difficult it is to accept the occurrence of such a sad event, but it should not cause parents to cancel or to postpone their arrangements for staying at holiday camps next summer. Holiday camps are no less safe than school playgrounds, and the sad truth is that that distressing affliction can in too many cases prove fatal, particularly among very young children. We are determined, through steps taken not only by the Department but in the regions and districts, and among general practitioners, to ensure that proper information is available and that the correct action is taken.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 30 October 1989

EMPLOYMENT

Businesses

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new businesses are being created every week; and what was the position in the same period 10 years ago.

Mr. Tim Eggar: In 1988, the latest year for which figures have been published, the net increase in the number of VAT-registered businesses was 64,000, an average of just over 1,200 per week. In 1980, the net increase was 16,000, an average of 300 per week.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for Great Britain and each standard Training Agency region, how many individual child care allowances are being received by lone parent employment training participants; and how many were granted or refused for each of the latest available three months.

Mr. Nicholls: The estimated proportions of trainees receiving child care allowances at the end of June, the latest date for which information is available, are given in the table. The latest in training figures, at 13 October 1989, has been provided for each region. Information is not available on the number of child care allowances granted or refused for each of the latest available three months.

Employment Training Trainees in receipt of Child Care Allowances

Region	*Per cent.*[1]	*Number*[2]
South East	3	14,900
London	4	20,500
South West	3	12,100
West Midlands	2	23,500
East Midlands and Eastern	2	16,900
Yorkshire and Humberside	2	25,200
North West	2	28,800
Northern	1	24,300
Wales	1	16,600
Scotland	2	25,300
Great Britain	2	209,000

[1] Proportion receiving child care allowances 30 June 1989.
[2] Numbers in training 13 October 1989.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for Great Britain and each standard Training Agency region, what are the monthly statistics for each month since January showing the results of new client adviser interviews with people who want to register as unemployed showing *(a)* the number of claims not pursued at the reception stage, *(b)* the number of clients who do not attend for interviews, *(c)* the number of claims not pursued at the interview broken down into the following categories: (i) those entering employment, (ii) those not available for work and not intending to claim an alternative benefit, (iii) those appropriate to alternative benefits and (iv) other, and *(d)* the number of submissions to vacancies, *(e)* the number of referrals to employment training, *(f)* the number of availability referrals, *(g)* the number of referrals to specialists, namely DRO, CA, *(h)* the number of referrals to job clubs and (i) the number of referrals to EAS.

Mr. Eggar: As the information requested is contained in a large number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member, and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Special Employment Measures (Swindon)

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of people benefiting from special employment measures at the latest available date in the Swindon constituency; and what is the average cost per person supported under each measure.

Mr. Eggar: The following programmes help to increase the opportunities available to unemployed people either to take up work or to start their own business. The figures indicate the number of people supported in the Gloucester and Wiltshire area, which includes Swindon, during August/September:

	Number
Enterprise allowance scheme	1,242
Job start	34
Job release scheme	80

The average cost per person on job start is £382. Average costs per person are not available for either the enterprise allowance scheme or the job release scheme. Job release pays people either £79·25 or £65·25 a week, depending on their circumstances, up to age 65. The net cost to the Exchequer of the enterprise allowance scheme is £1,846 per person taken off the unemployment count.

There are a number of other programmes available in Swindon which help unemployed people. These include the job club programme which provides training and support to help long-term unemployed with their job search activity. In September, 294 people were in a job club in the Gloucester and Wiltshire area.

Job Clubs

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how long a claimant must be out of work before being eligible to join a job club.

Mr. Eggar: Claimants should normally be out of work for six months before being eligible to join a job club. There are relaxations to the six month rule for people with disabilities, ex-offenders and people leaving YTS or employment training without a job to go to.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what facilities are available at his Department's job clubs to assist unemployed people trying to secure work.

Mr. Eggar: Every job club has telephones, paper, pens, typewriter or word processors, envelopes, stamps, photocopiers, newspapers and directories which members can use free of charge. A trained job club leader helps members draw up a curriculum vitae and shows them the best way to look for jobs, make job applications and prepare for interviews. Fares to attend the job club are reimbursed.

Job clubs continue to be very successful and provide valuable help to all those who join. Over 54,000 members have found work so far in 1989. Many others have gone on to training, self-employment or education. Overall, 69 per cent. of all job club members leave with a positive outcome.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will consider making job club facilities immediately available to unemployed people as soon as they become unemployed.

Mr. Eggar: Job club membership is generally available only to people who have been unemployed six months or longer. This is because long-term unemployed people are generally less well motivated and have greater difficulties in applying for and securing jobs than those recently unemployed.

However, there are some important exceptions to the six-month eligibility rule which are designed to help groups who do need extra help, including those with disabilities, ex-offenders and those leaving YTS or ET without a job. I have no plans to change the eligibility rules at present.

Job Interviews (Travel Costs)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost of travel warrants for unemployed people attending job interviews in 1988.

Mr. Eggar: The cost of travel warrants is not separately available. The cost to public funds of unemployed people attending job interviews under the travel-to-interview scheme in 1988 was £980,000.

Training Schemes

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many agreed action plans have been drawn up at employment training agents on a monthly basis *(a)* nationally and *(b)* by training agency area since May.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 23 October 1989]:* The figures are provided in the table.

Employment Training agreed action plans at training agents
May to September 1989

Area office	*May 1989*	*June 1989*	*July 1989*	*August 1989*	*September 1989*
South East Region[1]					
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	270	307	340	283	339
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	412	472	509	487	538
Essex	538	589	761	460	734
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	583	573	705	463	602
Kent	561	550	470	480	574
Surrey	154	247	186	197	248
Sussex	548	461	546	549	542
London Region					
Inner London North	1,595	1,632	1,477	1,545	1,510
Inner London South	420	684	648	618	748
London East	743	721	695	820	787
London North	726	749	584	700	962
London South	406	479	426	346	561
London West	365	428	388	417	431
South West Region					
Avon	432	440	342	378	764
Devon and Cornwall	861	1,003	918	877	1,238
Dorset and Somerset	307	344	231	226	296
Gloucester and Wiltshire	442	402	285	333	468
West Midlands Region					
Birmingham and Solihull	1,177	1,506	1,424	1,363	1,988
Coventry and Warwickshire	524	559	598	418	701
Dudley and Sandwell	631	684	688	619	755
Staffordshire	594	628	541	494	603
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	577	555	550	580	716
Wolverhampton and Walsall	463	587	715	466	532
East Midlands and Eastern Region					
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	317	289	260	249	396
Derbyshire	531	571	444	430	512
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	598	714	571	733	960

Area office	*May 1989*	*June 1989*	*July 1989*	*August 1989*	*September 1989*
Lincolnshire	240	282	271	334	196
Norfolk and Suffolk	530	466	526	393	540
Nottinghamshire	786	1,122	1,062	929	964
Yorkshire and Humberside Region					
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	914	981	930	905	1,002
Humberside	727	884	737	802	1,088
North Yorkshire and Leeds	1,245	993	1,012	1,052	1,137
Sheffield and Rotherham	994	959	888	802	1,308
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	1,144	1,019	1,083	1,019	1,741
North West Region					
Cheshire	574	854	679	519	689
Cumbria	182	181	287	190	259
Lancashire	899	937	907	936	1,130
Central Manchester	639	791	768	655	785
Greater Manchester North	685	856	839	849	700
Greater Manchester East	644	675	652	688	774
Merseyside	1,671	2,067	1,837	1,767	2,213
Northern Region					
Cleveland	1,222	1,352	893	1,170	1,356
County Durham	917	944	959	877	1,139
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	1,006	1,195	1,011	987	1,307
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	1,182	1,318	959	846	1,270
Wales					
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	855	912	774	556	889
Gwent	516	409	479	443	640
Gwynned, Clwyd and Powys	486	397	329	332	685
Mid and South Glamorgan	893	1,001	755	883	1,027
Scotland					
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	675	889	627	801	1,122
Central and Fife	567	693	388	644	887
Glasgow City	1,186	1,601	1,159	1,492	1,697
Grampian and Tayside	748	1,055	685	799	1,091
Highlands and Islands	190	238	240	230	262
Lanarkshire	567	840	727	821	781
Lothian and Borders	645	804	574	589	792
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	714	987	779	1,066	997
Great Britain Total	39,018	43,876	39,117	38,907	48,973

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[1] South East figures have been revised since this same information was given in a previous answer.

Accidents (Radiation)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what comprehensive plans have been made, and what programmes for implementation of procedures, for the fire service to deal with accidents on railway or road involving external emissions of gamma radiation, and for police officers and other workers immediately affected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply, and will write to the hon. Member.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"Today" Newspaper Story

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South, of 3 July, *Official Report*, column 14, what action he has now taken with regard to the *Today* newspaper for its front page story on 11 May headed, "Maggie IRA Bomb Squad Seized", concerning the arrest of three Irishmen who were later released without charge.

The Attorney-General: I have considered the matter, but have concluded that there is no realistic prospect that any prosecution would result in a conviction. Accordingly, I do not propose to take any further action.

Serious Fraud Office

Mr Shersby: To ask the Attorney-General whether he proposes any changes to the serious fraud offices cash and running cost limits for 1989-90.

The Attorney-General: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit on class XI, vote 12 will be increased by £250,000 from £5,514,000 to £5,764,000. Within this total the running costs limit will remain at £5,372,000. This change is to enable the serious fraud office to meet the costs of capital works relating to its new accommodation at Elm house, some of which although initially provided for in 1988-89 have, due to unexpected delays in completion of the work, now slipped into 1989-90. The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

PRIME MINISTER

Environmental Protection

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will set out the details of the policy options for global co-operation on environmental protection and environmental improvement she presented to the Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting on 6 September in London.

The Prime Minister: My speech to the Inter-Parliamentary Union last month set out the principles which I believe should govern our efforts to improve the environment. There are four: first, that proper protection for the environment is not possible without adequate growth; secondly, that we need a sound scientific base to enable us to adopt policies and remedies which will be effective; thirdly, that the demand for a better environment means accepting the costs involved and that action must work with the grain of the market and of human nature; and fourthly, that many of the key environmental problems cannot be addressed by one nation alone—they need international co-operation. The Government have followed these principles in the detailed actions it has taken to improve the environment domestically and to take the lead in international co-operation, notably in the London ozone layer conference earlier this year and in the proposal we have made in the United Nations for an international framework convention on global climate change.

Poverty

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister if she will now consider convening an inter-departmental ministerial committee to consider the problem of poverty in Great Britain.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so. The Government will continue to take account in all their policies of those with particular needs. The recent statement on benefits by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has directed further substantial help to the less well-off pensioners, the lower income families with children and the long-term sick and disabled.

Sir Alan Walters

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Prime Minister (1) whether Sir Alan Walters has signed the Official Secrets Act;

(2) whether Sir Alan Walters is subject to the same conditions of service as other special advisers; and if she will make a statement;

(3) whether Sir Alan Walters is subject to the same conditions of service as civil servants at a comparable grade; and if she will make a statement;

(4) whether Sir Alan Walters is subject to the same rules of conduct as civil servants at a comparable grade; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Sir Alan Walters was employed as a fee-paid consultant. His conditions of service were based on those of a special adviser which differ slightly from those of permanent civil servants. He is subject to the provisions of the Official Secrets Acts.

Council of Europe

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Prime Minister what changes have been made in the composition of the United Kingdom delegation to the consultative assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: I have appointed my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) as a substitute member in place of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), and I have appointed my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) as a substitute member in place of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart).

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes have been made in 1989-90 cash limits for expenditure by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mrs. Chalker: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit on the overseas aid vote (class II vote 5) will be increased by £74,613,000 to £1,365,579,000. The increase reflects adjustments to the aid programme during the year, including significant new commitments for Nigeria of £49,600,000—*Official Report* 6 December 1988 column *90* —and for the Commonwealth Development Corporation of £20,000,000—*Official Report*, 21 May 1989, column *38*. The increase also includes £2,500,000 for the estimated costs in 1989-90 of training and advice under the know-how fund for Poland—*Official Report* 18 October 1989, column *149*—originally to be incurred on class II vote 2, "Other External Relations". Pending approval of the supplementary estimate, urgent expenditure of £1,500,000 for this new service will be met by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund. The running costs cash limit for the ODA has also been increased by £300,000, from £43,831,000 to £44,131,000. The net effect of these changes has been charged to the reserve, and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of letters from hon. Members to his Department received a reply *(a)* in under four weeks, *(b)* within four to six weeks, *(c)* within six to eight weeks and *(d)* over eight weeks, in each of the last three years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not readily available in the form requested. The Department received 11,157 letters for ministerial reply between January and September this year; 4,798 were replied to within four weeks. Approximately two thirds of this correspondence was from hon. Members.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures to support the statement made by the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on 15 September, that teachers' pay has increased over the past three years by 40 per cent.

Mrs. Rumbold: Teachers have received the following pay increases since March 1986:

Date of settlement	*Increase Per cent.*
31 March 1986	1·6
1 April 1986	5·7
1 January 1987 and 1 October 1987	[1]16·4
1 April 1988	4·75
1 April 1989	6·3

[1] Paid in two instalments of 8·2 per cent.

The cumulative effect has been a rise in teachers' pay of some 40 per cent.

Mr. Raison: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the figures for average teachers' earnings for each year from 1981 to the latest year for which figures are available at 1985 prices.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is as follows:

Average teachers[1] salaries 1981-89

Year (April)	*Average salaries (Cash)* £	*Average salaries real terms[2] (1985 prices)* £
1981	8,031	10,275
1982	8,618	10,087
1983	9,119	10,255
1984	9,652	10,327
1985	10,391	10,391
1986	11,216	10,883
1987	13,100	12,200
1988	13,670	12,249
1989	14,762	12,244

[1] Teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales.

[2] Using the Retail Prices Index.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the referral of the interim pay award for teachers to the teachers' interim advisory committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received a substantial number of letters commenting on the remit given last month to the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions.

GCSE

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide details of what examination fees can be recovered by schools and colleges from pupils who fail to complete the course work requirements of the GCSE examination.

Mrs. Rumbold: If a pupil fails without good reason to complete the requirements, including coursework, for any public examination for which the LEA or school has paid an entry fee, it is open to the LEA under section 108 of the Education Reform Act 1988 to recover the fee from the parent or guardian.

Crack

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has distributed fact sheets on crack to teachers in Warrington.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Bulk copies of a fact sheet on crack were issued by the Department on 29 August to all drugs education co-ordinators in England. It is for each co-ordinator to decide how the fact sheet should be distributed locally.

National Curriculum (Special Needs)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has made any estimate of the extra resources needed to enable children with special needs to participate fully in the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The cost of implementing the national curriculum will be met from the redirection of existing resources. However, the Government are making specific grants available to local education authorities to support the introduction of the national curriculum. In this financial year, there will be support for over £100 million expenditure. It is for authorities to decide how much to spend within this total in order to enable children with special educational needs to participate fully in the national curriculum, where appropriate.

Local Authorities' Cash Plans

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), *Official Report*, 24 April, column *421*, why information on local education authorities' cash plans is not available for the years 1981 to 1984; and what relevant information is held by his Department.

Mr. MacGregor: Cash plans were not requested in the period 1981-84 and information comparable with that provided for later years could not be made available without disproportionate expense. For the period in question the Department sought estimates from local education authorities of the cost of certain elements of their capital programme, but not in respect of new places to meet basic need for areas of population growth. Where numbers were expected to increase pupil projections were converted to allocations by means of standard cost multipliers per pupil place.

Infertility Research

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give current Government funding into infertility research.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 26 October 1989]:* The Medical Research Council is the main agency through which the Government support medical research. The council spent £2·3 million on research specifically into infertility in the financial year 1988-89 and also supports a range of basic research which may be of relevance to infertility.

Additionally, research on infertility may be pursued by university departments and medical schools with support from UFC block grants, and by health authorities; information on this is not collected centrally.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list establishments where research into infertility is currently being carried out.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 26 October 1989]:* The Medical Research Council funds research into infertility at the following establishments:

I. *MRC Establishments*

1. Clinical Research Centre, Clinical Sciences Division, Harrow

Project Title

(i) Ultrasound and hormonal analysis of ovarian follicular growth in infertile women.
(ii) A population survey of ovarian morphology.
(iii) Urine Steroid profiling in patients with ovulatory dysfunction.

2. Clinical Research Centre, Division of Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Harrow

Project Title

Study of efficacy of antimicrobial therapy in male infertility.

3. MRC Human Genetics Unit, Edinburgh

Project Title

Cytogenetic and physiological aspects of meiosis in man and other mammals: male infertility; Spontaneous and mutagen—induced aneuploidy.

4. MRC [illegible]xperimental Embryology and Teratology Unit, London

Project Title

Factors affecting in-vitro fertilisation and embryo transfer in laboratory animals and man.

5. MRC Mammalian Development Unit, London

Project Title

Genetic, molecular and hormonal factors affecting gonadal differentiation in the mouse.

6. MRC Reproductive Biology Unit, Edinburgh

Project Title

(i) Role of neuropeptides, inhibin and gonadal steroids in the differential secretion of pituitary gonadogtrophins.
(ii) Lactational amenorrhoea in women. Implications for contraception and family planning.
(iii) Neural mechanisms governing the secretion of LHRH and functionally-related peptides.
(iv) Application of neuropeptide analogues and steroid antagonists in the regulation of the pituitary gland.
(v) Molecular analysis of sperm function in normal and infertile men. Effect of oral contraceptives and putative therapeutic agents.
(vi) Identification and characterization of gamete specific antigens. Immunological infertility and contraceptive vaccines.
(vii) Endocrine, paracrine and autocrine regulation of the ovary, with reference to physiology of the follicle and corpus luteum.
(viii) Prostaglandins in human semen. Role in sperm physiology and immunosuppression.
(ix) Endrocrine, paracrine and autocrine regulation of the testis. Application of chemotoxins in the study of hormone kinetics and gametogenesis.
(x) Neuroendocrine regulation of development, puberty and sexual behaviour.
(xi) Studies of physiological mechanisms controlling erection in primates.
(xii) Sexuality and well being of women. Relationship of the menstrual cycle, lactation, contraception and disorders thereof.
(xiii) Prostaglandin biosynthesis in the female reproductive tract. Interactions with steroid hormones and their antagonists.

7. MRC Biostatistics Unit—Cambridge

Project Title

Predictive indices of fertilization capacity.

II. *Grant-holders in University Departments, etc.*

(a) Dr. C. W. Coen, Department of Anatomy and Human Biology, King's College, London.
Biogenetic amines and the control of luteinizing hormone secretion.

(b) Professor A. P. M. Flint, Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London, London.
Development and reproductive physiology of mammals.

(c) Dr. H. D. M. Moore, MRC/AFRC Comparative Physiology Group, Zoological Society of London, London.
Effects of chemicals on reproduction: sperm function in the rat and rabbit following testicular insult.

(d) Dr. Dorothy C. Wathes, Department of Anatomy, Bristol University.
Control of peptide secretions by the ovary.

(e) Dr. M. J. Hunter, Department of Physiology, University of Edinburgh.
Development of activation of ionic permeability channels in mammalian oocytes.

(f) Professor D. T. Baird, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Edinburgh.
A study of the selection and maturation of the pre-ovulatory graafian follicle and oocyte.

(g) Professor B. T. Pickering, Department of Anatomy, University of Bristol.
(i) Testicular oxytocin: Investigations of its functions and possible role in fertility.
(ii) The control of testicular oxytocin and its influence on fertility.

(h) Dr. W. C. L. Ford, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Bristol.
The regulation of energy metabolism in human spermatozoa.

(i) Dr. N. L. Poyser, Department of Pharmacology, University of Edinburgh.
Investigations into the intracellular control of Prostaglandin synthesis in the endomentrium.

(j) Dr. Lynn R. Fraser, Department of Anatomy and Human Biology, King's College, London.
Adenosine and cyclic AMP regulation of mamalian sperm fertilising ability.

(k) Dr. L. Hall, Department of Biochemistry, University of Bristol.
An evaluation of hormonally-regulated, epididymal sequences as potential markers of infertility in human males.

(l) Dr. T. Poulton, Department of Pathology, University of Dundee.
Characterisation of spermatozoa autoantigens in male autoimmune infertility.

(m) Dr. S. R. Milligan, Department of Physiology, King's College, London.
The endocrine conditions limiting the establishment of pregnancy.

(n) Dr. A. E. Bolton, Department of Biomedical Sciences, Sheffield Polytechnic.
Characterisation and biological activities of immune cells in semen and cervical mucus in normal and infertile couples.

(o) Dr. R. J. Post, Department of Medical Entomology, School of Tropical Medicine, Liverpool.

Investigation of the effects of repeated doses of ivermectin on onchocera volvulus fertility in Sierra Leone.

Information is not gathered centrally about research into infertility supported by block grants from the Universities Funding Council, by health authorities, or by the private sector.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Advice Centres

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the Government have any plans to establish a national network of advice centres.

Mr. Forth: No. However my Department funds by means of grant-aid the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, and Citizens Advice Scotland which provide administrative, training and other services to the national network of over 1,000 citizens advice bureaux. This funding amounts to nearly £10 million per annum for England and Wales, and some £1 million for Scotland.

My Department has a network of 37 regional offices and sub-offices in England which give advice on its activities, and a number of other Government Departments also have regional networks.

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board; and what was discussed.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Trade last met the chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board on 24 October. They discussed a range of issues relating to the work of the board.

Labelling

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new plans for the labelling of consumer goods.

Mr. Forth: Additional labelling requirements will come into force over the next year for toys and all-terrain vehicles. The Government have made clear their support for the early introduction of a Community-wide voluntary eco-labelling scheme. In addition my Department is supporting work designed to establish a certification trademark which could be awarded to goods that consistently meet high specifications, although launch of such a scheme would depend on adequate support from industry.

Import Penetration Statistics

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the delay in publishing his Department's figures for import penetration.

Mr. Redwood: In 1988 a new commodity coding system was introduced by Customs and Excise resulting in a complete revision and renumbering of the existing Customs tariff codes.

Each of these new codes had to be allocated, whole or in part, to industries of the standard industrial classification before import penetration figures could be derived. The size and complexity of this task has resulted in an interruption to the normal publication timetable.

Pembridge Investments

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the implications for policy on takeovers of the financing arrangements of Pembridge Investments through short-term, high-interest borrowing, for the sale by auction of DRG businesses to market competitors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The proposed acquisition of DRG by Pembridge Investments is currently being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take his decision on the question of reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the light of the director general's advice and of his own consideration of all the relevant issues.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to announce his decision on whether or not to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the Pembridge Investments bid for DRG plc before the next closing date of the offer on Friday 3 November.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will announce his decision as soon as possible after he has considered the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading, as is usual.

Recycling

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives from the British Plastics Federation and when he next plans to meet the British Plastics Federation to discuss the implementation of recyclable plastic bottles and containers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Forth: I met representatives of the British Plastics Federation at the "Plastics Recycling—Future Challenges" conference dinner in September. However, the question of how to achieve optimum recycling levels of plastic bottles and containers is not a matter solely for the British Plastics Federation. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 17 October at column *12* which lists a number of inititatives that are relevant to increasing the proportion of these products which is recycled. The British Plastics Federation is a member of the advisory group referred to in the reply.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has made any recent study on the benefits to United Kingdom industry of raw materials recycling from commercial, domestic and industrial wastes; and if he will make a statement on the current status of the United Kingdom national recycling programme.

Mr. Forth: There has been no recent study, but it is estimated that last year our reclamation industries recovered about 27 million tonnes of recyclable materials worth about £2 billion. United Kingdom industry traditionally recycles about 95 per cent. of its process scrap, and we also recover more than 80 per cent. of the ferrous metal, 75 per cent. of the copper, 65 per cent. of the lead, and 60 per cent. of the aluminium from our scrap and waste resources. The Department has recently formed an advisory group of individuals with special expertise on, or responsibilities for, recycling, to assist in developing a national recycling strategy.

Marine Licensing

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will outline the latest procedures for the enforcement of VHF marine licences.

Mr. Forth: My Department's radio investigation service (RIS) responds to complaints of interference to marine radio channels. The RIS also randomly inspects marine licences and installations to ensure that licence conditions are met and that only approved equipment is used.

Coastal Waters (Digital Selective Calling)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set out the timetable for the introduction of digital selective calling for all United Kingdom coastal waters.

Mr. Forth: The Secretary of State for Transport, who is responsible for maritime distress and safety matters, has established an MF distress and safety digital selective calling (DSC) service at five stations in the United Kingdom. This service, operated by Her Majesty's Coastguard, provides coverage for most of the coastal waters around the United Kingdom. When two further stations are established in the Republic of Ireland in 1992, all United Kingdom coastal waters will be adequately covered by DSC for distress and safety purposes.

A DSC service for commercial purposes would be provided by British Telecom, but it has no plans at present to install either MF or VHF DSC equipment at its coast stations. However, it is evaluating automated MF and VHF radiotelephone systems which have various DSC-based facilities.

Marine Distress Service

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to ensure British manufacturers are ready to take advantage of the global marine distress service.

Mr. Forth: British manufacturers are aware of the requirements of the global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS) and the opportunities that it offers through their representation on a number of national and international committees.

Much of the radio equipment which will be needed to operate the GMDSS is already required to be fitted to merchant shipping under an international agreement known as the safety of life at sea convention (SOLAS). Already British industry plays an important role in supplying this equipment to the international shipping community.

For certain types of equipment there are still some technical and operational details to be finalised and international discussions are continuing on these outstanding topics. British manufacturers are fully involved in decision-making, through the appropriate committees such as the maritime radio technical committee.

Broadcasting

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what additional measures are being taken to reduce the burden of licensing requirements under the Wireless Telegraphy Acts.

Mr. Forth: My Department laid on 10 October 1989 a set of regulations under section 1 of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 which will further reduce licensing requirements in line with intentions expressed in the White Paper "Releasing Enterprise" (Cm. 512), published in November 1988.

The regulations will exempt the testing or development of radio devices on certain frequency bands under suppressed radiation conditions. This mainly affects those businesses which carry out the development of new radio devices and those that are involved with the servicing and repair of radio devices.

A requirement of the exemption is that no interference is caused to other authorised wireless telegraphy services by the exempted apparatus.

The regulations will affect over 400 current licensees. They are due to come into force on 1 November 1989.

Fan Clubs

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what regulations exist to cover the operation of fan clubs, and what action can be taken against the organisers of such bodies when they are found to be bogus.

Mr. Forth: There are no specific regulations that control the operation of fan clubs. The action that can be taken against the organisers of such bodies when they are found to be bogus would depend on the circumstances of each case.

Laboratory of the Government Chemist

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what will be the future status of the laboratory of the Government chemist.

Mr. Ridley: Today the laboratory of the Government chemist is being established as an executie agency of DTI. The freedom and flexibility that the laboratory is to gain will further improve its efficiency and help it to provide a better service to its customers. The LGC is the fourth agency to be created in the DTI under the next steps initiative.

The relationship between the LGC and the DTI will be governed by principles laid down in its policy and resources framework. Management of the agency will be the responsibility of the chief executive, Mr. Alex Williams, the Government chemist. The agency will operate within policies determined by DTI Ministers. It will recover its full economic cost from services rendered through arm's-length customer-contractor relationships with all its customers. From April 1990, the LGC will be exempted from gross cost control. These arrangements will ensure that there will be open competition for analytical services, that the size and shape of the laboratory will depend on the orders it can win from customers and that customers will achieve better value for money.

In my foreword to the agency framework document, a copy of which has been placed in the library of the House, I undertake as part of the corporate planning process, to set targets that will require the laboratory to achieve demanding incremental improvements in overall efficiency and quality of service.

The main link between the LGC and the DTI will be a steering board chaired by Dr. R. Coleman, the chief engineer and scientist of the DTI. In addition to Mr. Williams, the chief executive, the board will include the following members drawn from the private sector:

	Company
Mr. H. B. Berridge	Berridge Environmental Laboratories Ltd.
Dr. L. B. Davies	Lyndon Davies Associates
Dr. D. R. Williams	BOCM Silcock

New EC Regulations

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many European Community Commission 83/189 cases have been notified since 30 December 1988.

Mr. Redwood: A total of 257 notifications have been received between 1 January and 26 October 1989.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how long it takes Her Majesty's Government to respond to European Community Commission 83/189 cases on average; and what has been: *(a)* the shortest and *(b)* the longest time;

(2) how many European Community Commission 83/189 notification cases have been received in English; and how long it takes Her Majesty's Government to have those that were not, translated;

(3) how many times Her Majesty's Government have objected to European Community Commission 83/189 cases; from which countries, on which subjects and on which grounds;

(4) how many times Her Majesty's Government have used the Committee procedure provided for in the regulation to raise objections to European Community Commission 83/189 cases; and what was the reason.

Mr. Redwood: Notifications are received in the language of the notifying member state. The European Commission provides the translation. The other information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the mechanism for inter-departmental co-ordination in relation to European Community Commission 83/189 cases involving more than one Government Department.

Mr. Redwood: The Department with the primary interest in any particular notification is responsible for any necessary consultation and co-ordination with other Departments, using the usual formal and informal mechanisms.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who is responsible for receiving, processing and formally replying to notification by the Commission of 83/189 cases.

Mr. Redwood: My Department.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what procedure there is, in relation to European Community Commission 83/189 cases, for notifying and consulting the industries affected by these notifications; how it works; and how long it is reported to take a Department to notify the affected industry.

Mr. Redwood: My Department, as well as making summaries of notifications available through the Spearhead database, consults the interests falling within its sphere of responsibility that seem likely to be affected and circulates details to other Departments to enable them to do likewise. Information is not held centrally on the time taken to dissemminate that information, and could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

The Association of British Chambers of Commerce now prints summaries of notifications in its weekly publication "Business Briefing", as does the European Commission in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

Imports

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the current degree of import penetration and *(b)* that in December 1978 for (i) radios, (ii) black and white televisions, (iii) video recorders, (iv) colour televisions, (v) telephone receivers, (vi) refrigerators, (vii) passenger motor vehicles, (viii) microwave ovens, (ix) calculators, (x) desk top computers, (xi) computer printers, (xii) word processors, (xiii) microchips, (xiv) irons, (xv) commercial vehicles, (xvi) x-ray machines, (xvii) dental instruments and appliances, (xviii) shoes, (xix) sewing machines, (xx) excavators, (xxi) lawn mowers, (xxii) public transport type motor vehicles, (xxiii) burglar alarms, (xxiv) built-in-ovens, (xxv) hovercraft, (xxvi) lasers, (xxvii) vending machines, (xxviii) dishwashers, (xxix) medical instruments and appliances, (xxx) paper, (xxxi) wallpaper, (xxxii) printed matter and (xxxiii) furniture.

Mr. Redwood: The import penetration ratios given in the table refer to the activity heading to which the individual products are classified. Ratios for the individual products are either not available or not readily available.

Standard Industrial Classification

Activity Heading	*Product included in activity heading*	*Year to*		
		1978	*1988*[2]	*1989Q1*[3]
3166 Metal furniture and safes	Furniture	15	27	27
3254 Construction and earth moving equipment	Excavators	63	66	65
3286 Other industrial and Commercial machinery	Sewing machines	41	64	63
	Lawn mowers			
	Vending machines			
3301 Office machinery	Calculators	[1]120	[1]124	[1]122

Activity Heading	*Product included in activity heading*	*Year to*		
		1978	*1988*[1]	*1989Q1*[2]
3302 Electronic data processing equipment	Word processors Computer printers Dest top computers	88	90	93
3433 Alarms and signalling equipment	Burglar alarms	12	31	31
3441 Telegraph and telephone apparatus and equipment	Telephone receivers	10	28	28
3443 Radio and electronic capital goods	X-Ray apparatus	28	40	40
3453 Active components and electronic sub-assemblies	Microchips	76	118	119
3454 Electronic consumer goods and other electronic equipment	Video recorders Radios Black and white television Colour television	46	72	74
3460 Domestic-type electric appliances	Irons Microwave ovens Dishwashers Built-in ovens Refrigerators	30	42	43
3510 Motor vehicles and their parts	Public service Passenger cars Commercial vehicles	41	51	51
3540 Aerospace equipment manufacturing and repairing	Hovercraft	35	63	N/A
3720 Medical and surgical equipment and orthopaedic appliances	Dental instruments and appliances Medical instruments and appliances	59	83	82
3732 Optical precision instruments	Lasers	53	70	N/A
4510 Footwear	Shoes	30	48	49
4671 Wooden and upholstered furniture	Furniture	9	18	18
4710 Pulp, paper and board	Paper	53	63	64
4721 Wall coverings	Wallpaper	6	9	8
4750 Printing and Publishing	Printed matter	6	7	7

Source: Business Monitor MQ12

[1] Entrepot trade causes ratio to exceed 100.

[2] Provisional.

Monthly Digest of Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why the figures in table 15-10 of the monthly digest of statistics have not been updated with the 1988 figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 23 October 1989]:* The delay has been caused by the introduction in January 1988 of the new harmonised system for overseas transactions, entailing a thorough revision and renumbering of the Customs tariff headings.

All tariff codes had to be reassessed and reallocated, in whole or in part, to the industries of the standard industrial classification before the import penetration and export sales ratios presented in table 15.10 of the monthly digest of statistics could be derived.

This classification has proved to be more complex and to have taken longer than expected. The ratios for 1988 will be published in the next edition of the monthly digest of statistics.

ENERGY

Offshore Installations (Safety)

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to ensure that the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 will be applied to offshore installations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Requirements for the control of hazardous substances on offshore installations have been in force since 1976 under the Offshore Installations (Operational Safety, Health and Welfare) Regulations 1976. These requirements are to be supported by guidance notes which will be produced in 1990.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies have been made to test the effectiveness of comprehensive plans to ensure that experts with special knowledge of nuclear energy would be on the scene of an accident in adequate time to take preventive measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The operators of nuclear installations have on site at all times staff who are fully trained to take preventive action in the event of a nuclear emergency. The operators also have additional specialist staff who are always available on standby and would immediately go to the site. A deputy chief inspector of nuclear installations would also be appointed by the Government as a Government technical adviser to preside over the off-site centre. He would become the authoritative source of advice to the police, local authorities and central Government on the course of the accident and the need for countermeasures to protect the public. He would be assisted by experts with special knowledge including representatives from the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the National Radiological Protection Board and the operator. These arrangements are approved by the Health and

Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate and are regularly tested in exercises in order to ensure their effectiveness.

Coal Mining

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps the Government are taking to protect the indigenous coal mining industry; and if he will make a statement on the special report from the committee on the Associated British Ports No. 2 Bill, HC 258.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is not this Government's policy to restrict imports of coal. Restricting competition will not bring long-term security to the British coal industry. The best protection is to produce reliable supplies which are competitive on the world market.

It is not for Government to make a formal response to the special report but for the House to take it into account on Third Reading.

Severn Barrage

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a copy of the recent report of the Severn barrage study group.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Copies of the report summarising the work of the Severn Tidal Power Group, published by HMSO in the Department of Energy paper series, were placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament on 23 October.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the privatisation of the electricity industry; and if he will indicate when the flotation of the two Central Electricity Generating Board successor companies is to proceed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Both generating companies will be brought to the market in the first half of 1991. The precise timings are still to be decided.

Electricity Boards (Appointments)

Mr. Michael Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many individuals have been appointed to electricity boards over the last two years; and from what industries they came.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since 1 October 1987, a total of 57 individuals have been appointed to electricity boards in England and Wales. They have a wide range of backgrounds.

Electricity Industry (Capacity Deficiency Scheme)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out the terms of the new capacity deficiency scheme proposed for the electricity industry.

Mr. Wakeham: The rules on which the new electricity market will operate will be published in good time before vesting of the restructured industry.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans exist for fitting special filtered containment venting systems into the designs for the four pressurised-water reactors to be built by the Central Electricity Generating Board in England and Wales for the prevention of over-pressurising station containment buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Consent has been granted for only one new nuclear power station: Sizewell B. The design and construction of this station is a matter for the CEGB. I have therefore asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will constitute a planning inquiry commission, as specified in sections 47-49 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, to consider the possible construction of a nuclear power station at Wylfa.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As the Gwynedd county council and the Anglesey borough council have objected to the CEGB's applications for my right hon. Friend's consent to construct a PWR nuclear power station to be known as Wylfa B and to modify the transmission lines in the vicinity of the existing power station at Wylfa, he must now arrange for public inquiries to be held into the applications pursuant to section 34(1) of the Electricity Act 1957. My right hon. Friend will announce the arrangements for these inquiries in due course.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimates his Department has of the likely costs of decommissioning *(a)* AGR and *(b)* PWR nuclear power stations.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will indicate the present estimated cost of decommissioning each advanced gas-cooled nuclear reactor, indicating what cost is to be borne by National Power and what by the taxpayer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Decommissioning costs for AGRs and PWRs are matters for the CEGB or SSEB. The accounts of these bodies will include appropriate provisions for AGR decommissioning costs as presently estimated. The Government have taken powers, under schedule 12 to the Electricity Act 1989, to contribute towards decommissioning costs, and the way in which these powers will be used is under consideration.

Mr. Blair To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the cost per kwh, or on another basis of appropriate calculations, to be charged by National Power for electricity generated by the Sizewell B power station under the contracts negotiated with the distributors.

Mr. Wakeham: The contract for electricity from Sizewell B is currently under negotiation.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest calculation of his Department of the cost of electricity generated by Sizewell B.

Mr. Wakeham: This is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I shall ask the chairman of the CEGB to write to the hon. Member.

HEALTH

Coronary Heart Disease

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice has been given by his Department to health authorities about the development of strategies for the prevention of coronary heart disease.

Mr. Freeman: Planning circulars from the Department of Health to the NHS have repeatedly emphasised the importance the Government attach to the prevention of disease and the promotion of health. Authorities have been asked to identify needs and develop programmes to meet them and to focus on specific programmes on diet, smoking and exercise. Such work is central to coronary heart disease prevention. Furthermore, the joint Department of Health and Health Education Authority "Look After Your Heart" campaign is intended to provide links between national and local initiatives for health authorities to build on and the regional review and operational planning processes have emphasised that authorities should be developing programmes for prevention in line with the national campaign. This year's planning guidelines refer to the intention to issue general guidance on health promotion and disease prevention during the planning year. This will include specific references to coronary heart disease prevention. I hope that my hon. Friend will also not forget the important role played by the voluntary sector in this area.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give for each district health authority, regional health authority and special health authority the number of acute hospital beds and the total number of beds in each year since 1979;

(2) if he will give for each district health authority, the percentage decrease or increase in acute hospital beds between 1982 and the latest available date; and if he will rank the district health authorities according to the percentage change;

(3) if he will give for each district health authority, the percentage decrease or increase in the total number of hospital beds between 1982 and the latest available date; and if he will rank the district health authorities according to the percentage change;

(4) if he will give for each district health authority, the percentage increase or decrease in the number of deaths and discharges per annum between 1982 and the latest available year; and if he will rank the district health authorities according to the percentage change;

(5) if he will give for each district health authority, the total number of deaths and discharges in each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested has been placed in the Library and I have written to the hon. Member with a copy of such information.

Family Planning

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* National Health Service family planning clinics and *(b)* general practitioner health centres are designated as training centres for family planning in the United Kingdom for 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Freeman: The following information is recorded by the joint committee on contraception which is concerned with family planning training for doctors and on which the Department of Health is one of several bodies represented. The figures refer to the number of approved premises for family planning training.

United Kingdom Totals at 30 September

	1987	*1988*
Community and hospital clinics	1,065	1,092
General Practitioners' premises	32	32

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown of the numbers of individuals receiving contraceptive advice and treatment by contraceptive method *(a)* through National Health Service family planning clinics in England for the year 1987 and 1988 and *(b)* from general practitioners in England for the years 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is contained in the tables. Community and hospital clinic figures for 1988-89 are not yet available. A detailed analysis of contraceptive services provided by general medical practitioners is not held centrally.

Health authority family planning services—community and hospital clinics in England
Number of patients by primary birth control method chosen or in use at first visit in the year: 1987-88

Method	*Numbers (Thousands)*
Total	1,339·1
Oral contraceptives	677·1
IUD	168·9
Cap/Diaphragm	114·1
Sheath	208·7
Chemicals	9·6
Rhythm	0·3
Female sterilisation	2·1
Vasectomy	12·3
Other	21·0
None	125·0

End of year figures for contraceptive services provided by general medical practitioners in England

	1987	*1988*
Total number of patients	2,554,900	2,634,600
Fitting IUD	101,700	91,200
Other than IUD	2,453,200	2,543,400

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of family planning clinics and family planning clinic sessions in each regional health authority in England for 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available centrally in precisely the form requested. The number of premises in regular use for family planning sessions and the number of sessions, by regional health authority, are shown in the table. Figures for 1988-89 are not yet available.

Family Planning Clinic Services
Number of premises in regular use for family planning sessions

	Total premises 1987-88	*Number of sessions held 1987-88*
England	1.754	190,935
Northern	132	10,667
Yorkshire	149	11,952

	Total premises 1987-88	*Number of sessions held 1987-88*
Trent	129	14,019
East Anglia	51	5,428
North West Thames	145	17,704
North East Thames	197	21,962
South East Thames	129	17,994
South West Thames	118	15,154
Wessex	87	10,511
Oxford	59	8,357
South Western	113	10,036
West Midlands	172	21,135
Mersey	103	9,857
North Western	170	16,159

Infant Deaths

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for the latest year for which records exist and for each of the preceding three years, what was the number of infant deaths in the United Kingdom as a whole and the rate per 10,000.

Mr. Freeman: Infant mortality (deaths under one year), numbers and rates per 10,000 live births, in the United Kingdom, 1985-88, were

Year	*Number of Deaths*	*Rate*[1]
1985	7,030	93·6
1986	7,180	95·1
1987	7,077	91·2
[2]1988	7,061	89·7

[1] Per 10,000 live births.

[2] Provisional.

Abortion

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to review compliance with section 4 of the Abortion Act 1967.

Mr. Freeman: The Chief Medical Officer wrote on 11 October to remind health authorities in England about the national guidance issued in 1975 and 1979 about the appointment of hospital doctors to posts which involve termination of pregnancy or advice on termination. The Department will respond to any report of the Social Services Select Committee which is currently investigating this subject.

Medical Damage (Compensation)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list representations which he has received concerning the introduction of mechanisms for the payment of no-fault compensation to victims of medical damage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: A number of representations have been received. There are no plans to introduce any kind of no-fault compensation scheme. We consider that the basis for seeking compensation for injuries alleged to have been suffered as a result of medical negligence should continue to be through the courts, as recommended by the Pearson commission in 1978.

Irradiated Casualties

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the hospitals where training has been introduced for medical or nursing personnel in dealing with irradiated or contaminated casualties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Following is a list of hospitals which have been designated by the relevant regional health authority as being prepared to accept contaminated casualties and to advise on and assist with decontamination of personnel. The list is provisional and represents a preliminary compilation of responses to a health circular issued earlier this year giving guidance to the NHS on accidents involving radioactivity. I shall let the hon. Member have the definitive version as soon as possible.

Hospitals prepared to accept contaminated casualties and to advise on and assist with decontamination of personnel

Regional Health Authority and Hospital

East Anglia
- Addenbrooke's Hospital
- Norfolk and Norwich Hospital
- The Ipswich Hospital

Mersey
- Royal Liverpool Hospital

North East Thames
- The Middlesex Hospital
- North Middlesex Hospital
- St. Bartholomew's Hospital
- University College Hospital
- Oldchurch Hospital
- Essex County Hospital
- Southend General Hospital
- Royal Free Hospital
- Colchester General Hospital

Northern
- Royal Victoria Infirmary
- Cumberland Infirmary
- West Cumberland Hospital
- Newcastle General Hospital
- Freeman Hospital Unit
- South Cleveland Hospital
- North Tees District General Hospital
- Sunderland District General Hospital
- Dryburn Hospital
- Darlington Memorial Hospital

North Western
- Manchester Royal Infirmary
- Christie Hospital
- Hope Hospital
- Royal Lancaster Infirmary

North West Thames
- St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington
- Mount Vernon Hospital
- Westminster Hospital
- Charing Cross Hospital
- Hammersmith Hospital

Oxford
- John Radcliffe Hospital
- Northampton General Hospital
- Royal Berkshire Hospital

South East Thames
- Guy's Hospital
- Kent and Canterbury Hospital
- Royal Sussex County Hospital

South Western
- Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital

Bristol Radiotherapy Centre
Gloucester Royal Hospital
Derriford District General Hospital
Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton
Plymouth General Hospital
Cheltenham General Hospital
City Hospital, Truro

South West Thames
Royal Surrey County Hospital
St. George's Hospital, London
Royal Marsden Hospital, London
Royal Marsden Hospital, Sutton

Trent
Royal Hallamshire Hospital
Derbyshire Royal Infirmary
Leicester Royal Infirmary
County Hospital, Lincoln
University Hospital, Nottingham

Wessex
Southampton General Hospital
Queen Alexandra Hospital,
General Hospital, Poole

West Midlands
The Royal Hospital, Wolverhampton
North Staffordshire Royal Infirmary
Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham

Yorkshire
The General Infirmary, Leeds
The Princess Royal Hospital, Hull
Bradford Royal Infirmary

Substance Misuse Services

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the financial resources allocated for substance misuse services; if he will list priority issues in this field; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1984 the Department has committed nearly £65 million of new money to preventing drug misuse and providing services. This includes £17·5 million on pump priming, 188 local drug projects, over £35 million to HAs to develop and expand services, over £8 million on campaigns of information and education and £3 million on funding the headquarters costs of major voluntary organisations.

The Government's objectives have been to prevent, as far as possible, people from using drugs in the first place; to reduce the physical harm of those who do use drugs, and to provide users with advice and treatment services to help them live without drugs.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total amount of moneys paid out of the trust fund set up to assist those haemophiliacs infected with the HIV virus who are in the greatest need; how many such applications have been made to the fund and granted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that in the period to 31 August 1989 the trust made 1,600 single payments totalling around £0·9 million and 578 regular payments totalling around £1 million. The Macfarlane Trust is an independent charitable trust and it is a matter for the trustees to allocate funds in the way which they consider best meets the needs of those eligible for assistance within the provision of the trust deed.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which health authorities have so far been issued with writs by haemophiliacs infected with the HIV virus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: As health authorities are separately represented, the Department does not routinely receive this information. However, I understand that most regional and district health authorities and some special health authorities have been issued with writs.

Nuclear Flask Accidents

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans have been made by health authorities to deal with nuclear flask accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Arrangements for dealing with the response to an accident involving the transportation of irradiated fuel are set out in consignors' contingency plans and the irradiated fuel transport flask emergency plan, a copy of which is in the Library. Radiation protection advice would be provided by health physicists specified in the emergency plan, not by the NHS.

However, in the unlikely event of this advice not being available at the time, the police could invoke the national arrangements for incidents involving radioactivity (NAIR) scheme. This scheme is intended to ensure that, for accidents involving the transportation of radioactive materials, appropriate resources are available to the police for providing protection to the general public. The NAIR scheme is co-ordinated by the National Radiological Protection Board and its participants include appropriately staffed and equipped National Health Service hospitals that are designated for NAIR purposes.

In addition, Regional Health Authorities are required to designate hospitals within their regions which are equipped and staffed to provide treatment and decontamination facilities in the unlikely event of an incident leading to the release of radioactivity.

Benzodiazepine

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals there may be to monitor counselling given by pharmacists to patients on long-term and medium-term prescriptions for benzodiazepine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have no such proposals. This is a matter for the pharmaceutical profession.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is conducted into the effects on patients receiving medium or long-term prescriptions for benezodiazepine when sudden reduction or stoppage is made by general practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We are not aware of any such current research. It is now generally accepted that a sudden reduction or stoppage in taking benzodiazepines can have an undesirable effect on patients. The British National Formulary, which is supplied free of charge by the Department to all prescribing doctors, carries advice on benzodiazepine withdrawal.

National Tranquilliser Advice Centre

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to ensure the future of the national tranquilliser advice centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Etterick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 25 October.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will call for a report from the London ambulance service on what has been the average response time for a 999 call in its area by *(a)* London ambulance service vehicles, *(b)* police vehicles used as ambulances and *(c)* other voluntary ambulances per week since 1 September.

Mr. Freeman: During the period 1 September to 22 October the London ambulance service's average response time for 999 calls was 11·9 minutes from the receipt of the call by central ambulance control. The average time taken from the crew receiving the call to their arrival on the scene was nine minutes.

Similar information is not available in respect of Metropolitan police and British Red Cross vehicles deployed on 23 and 24 October. St. John ambulance service vehicles were also deployed on those dates and their average response time was 8·8 minutes from receipt of a call from control.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will call for a report from the London ambulance service on the number of ambulances that have been taken off the road by the London ambulance service management whilst crews were available to staff them during the current dispute.

Mr. Freeman: The details for the two days of the action are as follows:

	Early	*Middle*	*Night*
Monday 23 October 1989			
Manned[2]	127	110	67
Not used[3]	52	86	34

	Early	*Middle*[1]	
Tuesday 24 October 1989			
Manned[2]	122	113	—
Not used[3]	83	73	—

[1] Up to 1700 hours when an agreement was reached and front line vehicles went back "on the run".

[2] Manned = the number of fully staffed ambulances available.

[3] Not used = those ambulances not used due to the industrial action, as crews would not work to London ambulance service management requirements.

Care in the Community

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to include a code of conduct for the care of the elderly for residential care in private homes as part of the White Paper on care in the community.

Mr. Freeman: General guidance on the running of these homes is contained in "Home Life" a code of practice for residential care, endorsed by the Secretaries of State for Social Services and for Wales. This guidance remains valid.

Additionally, we have recently put in hand a three-year programme of development projects aimed at demonstrating how the quality of life for people in residential care can be improved.

Kidney Dialysis

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the present ratio of kidney dialysis machines to renal patients; and what is the ratio of renal units to patients.

Mr. Freeman: Information on the number of dialysis machines is not collected centrally.

According to data for 1988 reported to the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, the ratio of patients to renal units in the United Kingdom is 224 to one if those with a functioning transplant are included. The ratio is 108 to one if patients are defined to include only those receiving dialysis for example, either from dialysis machines or continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis.

WALES

EC Aid

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what agreement has been reached with the four county councils of south Wales for financial compensation to authorities who have lost eligibility for European regional development fund grant for major infrastructure projects due to delayed submission of integrated development operations to the European Commission.

Mr. Peter Walker: There was no such delay. The integrated development operations programme for industrial south Wales was submitted in advance of the date specified by the European Commission.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he held with the four county councils of industrial south Wales and the European Commission on the proposal for an integrated development operation.

Mr. Peter Walker: My officials held discussions during the summer of 1987 with the relevant local and public authorities following the European Commission's identification of industrial south Wales as a potential candidate for an integrated approach. The four county councils, along with the local authorities and interested bodies have been fully involved in the subsequent formulation of an integrated development operation programme which was submitted to the European Commission in May 1988. Against the background of the reform of the European structural funds the programme has since been the subject of discussions with the Commission which have involved representatives of the county councils.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he held with the four county councils of south Wales and the European Commission on the timing of submission of proposed integrated development operations to the European Commission.

Mr. Peter Walker: All the bodies involved in the formulation of the integrated development operations programme for industrial south Wales, including the four county councils, were fully aware that the European Commission required submission of the document by May 1988 and worked energetically to meet that requirement.

Roads

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, following the consultation undertaken by his Department on the impact of the A55 trunk road improvements programme on Gwynedd, whether any new policy initiatives are being taken by his Department.

Mr. Peter Walker: The continued fall in unemployment, spreading industrial investment and new job creation in north Wales all underline the effectiveness of the Government's policies in regenerating the area's local economy.

Following my statement to the Welsh Grand Committee in December 1988, my hon. Friend the Minister of State has sought views on how the opportunities afforded by the massive investment in the A55 improvements can best be used to the advantage of north Wales. I expect to make an announcement before the end of the year.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the original cost estimate of dualing the A55 trunk road between Conwy and Bangor, together with the original target completion date for this work; what is the latest cost estimate and latest estimated completion date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In "Roads in Wales 1980" the estimated cost was £166 million, including the cost of the Conwy crossing and the Bangor bypass. Estimated completion was towards the end of the decade. The cost estimated in "Roads in Wales" 1989 is £322 million. Completion is now expected in the early 1990s.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations have been received by the Welsh Office during the past six months calling for new legislation relating to the Welsh language.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Around 25 from individuals and organisations.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of letters from hon. Members to his Department received a reply *(a)* in under four weeks, *(b)* within four to six weeks, *(c)* within six to eight weeks and *(d)* over eight weeks, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is shown in the following table:

	1987 per cent.	*1988 per cent.*	*[1]1989 per cent.*
Under 4 weeks	89	91	92
Within 4 to 6 weeks	9	7	6
Within 6 to 8 weeks	1	1	1
Over 8 weeks	1	1	1

[1] To 27 October 1989.

Vicarages and Manses

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provisions will apply from April 1990 in respect of grants for home improvements for vicarages and manses in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Subject to parliamentary approval, the provisions of part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Bill will apply in respect of vicarages and manses in Wales.

Contraception

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a breakdown of the number of individuals receiving contraceptive advice and treatment by contraceptive method *(a)* through National Health Service family planning clinics in Wales for the years 1987 and 1988 and *(b)* from general practitioners in Wales for the years 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Grist: The information is shown in the following table:

Family planning clinic services

Method[1]	*Number of patients 1987*	*1988*
Oral contraceptives	36,324	34,545
IUD	9,138	7,936
Cap/Diaphragm	4,459	3,835
Sheath	14,075	12,589
Chemicals	589	645
Rhythm	9	38
Female sterilisation	76	47
Vasectomy	86	64
Other	2,910	2,794
None	4,753	5,019
Total	72,419	67,512

[1] If the patient was already using a birth control method the method in use at the time of the first visit during the year was recorded unless another method was chosen at the visit in which case the new method was recorded.

General medical practitioners contraceptive service

	[1]Number of patients 1987	*1988*
Intra-Uterine Devices	4,651	3,934
Other than Intra-Uterine Devices	120,887	131,015
Total	125,538	134,949

[1] Number of patients at 1 October for whom payment was due at the end of the quarter.

Family Planning

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total cost for 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988 in Wales for *(a)* general practitioner provision for family planning servies and *(b)* district health authority family planning clinic services.

Mr. Grist: The available information, shown in the following table, relates to *(a)* the contraceptive fees paid to general practitioners plus the estimated net ingredient cost of contraceptive drugs and appliances precribed by general practitioners and dispensed by retail pharmacists and appliance contractors, and *(b)* expenditure, including overheads, on family planning services provided through health authority community health services.

£ thousands

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
(a) Family Practitioner Services	2,175	2,443	2,575	3,429
(b) DHA Community Health Services [1] [2]	1,308	1,434	390	432

[1] The figures for 1985-86 and 1986-87 exclude Gwynedd Health Authority whose Community Health Services expenditure in those years is only available in total for all services.

[2] Due to restructuring of Health Authority accounts the figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89 include support service costs for clinics but exclude costs of drugs and medical supplies issued by nursing and medical staff.

Sources: Health Authority Annual Accounts; Family Practitioner Committee Annual Accounts; Prescription Pricing Division, Welsh Health Common Services Authority.

Regional Aid

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give *(a)* the number of applications for regional selective assistance received between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Peter Walker: A total of 417 applications for regional selective assistance grants were received by my Department between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989. In the same period, 310 offers of grant[1] were made to the value of £127 million.

Total expenditure[2] in 1988-89 was £42·5 million (£44·8 million at 1989-90 prices). I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 20 March 1989 for details of the vote provision for 1989-90 and planned provision for 1990-91 to 1991-92.

[1] RSA project and training grants.

[2] Gross expenditure comprises project and training grants, exchange risk losses on European loans and payments under the Business Improvements Service scheme.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications for regional development grants outstanding at 31 March 1988, *(b)* the total number of applications processed by 30 September 1989, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Peter Walker: A total of 1,911 of the 1,935 applications for regional development grants outstanding at 31 March 1988 had been processed by 30 September 1989, involving offers of grant to the value of £98·3 million. Total expenditure in 1988-89 was £58·6 million[1] (£61·8 million at 1989-90 prices). I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 20 March 1989 for details of the vote provision for 1989-90 and planned provision for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

[1] Gross expenditure on original (RDG I) and revised (RDG II) schemes.

Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications for investment grants and innovation grants from 1 April 1988 to 30 September 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for 1988-89 and 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Peter Walker: A total of 655 applications for regional enterprise (investment and innovation) grants were received by my Department between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989. Of these, 337 applications had been approved by 30 September involving grant offers of over £2·8 million.

Total expenditure in 1988-89 was £0·218 million (£0·230 million at 1989-90 prices). I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies I gave him on 20 March 1989 for details of the vote provision for 1989-90 and planned provision for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Severn Barrage

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact on the proposed Cardiff bay barrage of the Severn estuary barrage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Cardiff bay barrage will be designed to withstand the present full tidal range. A barrage across the Severn estuary would serve to reduce the tidal range and therefore result in a lower loading on the Cardiff bay barrage.

NHS Treatment Centres

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many patients he expects to use each National Health Service treatment centre for each of the first three years; what proportion of the total in-patient waiting list for each specialty this represents; and by what date he expects the current in-patient waiting lists to be cleared;

(2) what financial resources are to be allocated for treatment centres; and what proportion of that figure will be used for *(a)* administration, *(b)* wages and salaries and *(c)* clinical use.

Mr. Grist: Welsh Office staff are currently finalising the details of operation of treatment centres in discussion with managers and clinicians in the NHS. When these discussions are complete I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

NHS Reform

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional staffing requirements he anticipates due to the implementation of the proposals contained within the National Health Service White Paper.

Mr. Grist: A considerable amount of work is currently being undertaken within the NHS in Wales in the field of manpower planning and management. District health authorities have recently completed the second round of a continuing manpower resource planning exercise introduced last year to identify future manpower requirements in terms of numbers and skills. The manpower implications of a number of initiatives, including the proposals contained in the White Paper "Working for Patients", are being addressed as part of that ongoing process.

Hospital Admissions

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest available figures for each year and by Welsh health authority for the number of hospital admissions due to post-operative infections, for *(a)* general surgery, *(b)* orthopaedics, *(c)* ophthalmology and *(d)* all specialties.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not centrally available.

NHS Property (Maintenance)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost of backlog maintenance for National Health Service properties in Wales, and by health authority, for the latest available year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: This information is not held centrally. However, district health authorities in Wales are required to review the condition of their stock annually and for 1988-89, it was estimated that it would cost about £132·7 million to bring the whole of the NHS Estate in Wales to a standard where it was exhibiting only minor deterioration. This sum may be broken down by district health authority as follows:

DHA	*£ million*
Clwyd	19·2
East Dyfed	4·5
Gwent	14·6
Gwynedd	10·0
Mid Glamorgan	26·4
Pembrokeshire	0·7
Powys	1·2
South Glamorgan	45·0
West Glamorgan	11·1

HOME DEPARTMENT

Racial Harassment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many perpetrators of racial or anti-semitic harassment have been charged by the police under *(a)* section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 and *(b)* section 47 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 21 July 1989 at column *401*.

Malicious Communications

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have taken place under the Malicious Communications Act; and how many of those relate to racist and anti-semitic material.

Mr. John Patten: Data is not yet available on the number of offences committed under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, which did not come into force until September 1988. Information as to whether prosecutions specifically relate to racist and anti-semitic material is not being collected centrally.

Local Government Grants

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is his intention to implement the report entitled "A Scrutiny of Grants Under Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966" published on 3 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The report entitled "A Scrutiny of Grants Under Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966" has been welcomed by the Government for its thorough analysis of the problems surrounding section 11 grant. Ministers are presently considering the changes needed in order to improve the effectiveness of assistance provided for ethnic minorities by section 11 grant.

The Government hope that it will not be too long before an announcement can be made.

Mr. Lorrain Osman

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have been held on remand in Her Majesty's prisons for a period exceeding three and a half years; if he will list all such prisoners; what steps he proposes to take to bring to an end such extended remands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: On 31 August 1989 one unconvicted prisoner had been held in Pentonville prison for more than three and a half years. Mr. Lorrain Osman was committed to custody pending completion of extradition proceedings and remains in cutsody awaiting the final outcome of the succession of appeals that he has lodged. He may not be surrendered for extradition while appeal proceedings are pending. A judicial review and further habeas corpus proceedings began on 4 October. Extradition proceedings are not subject to the custody time limits contained in the regulations made under section 22 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available in the Library those communications he has had from the Governor of Hong Kong since May 1989 in relation to the case of Mr. Lorrain Osman; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has received none.

Fugitives

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the last five years he has used his discretion under the Fugitive Offenders Act *(a)* to order or *(b)* to refuse the return of a fugitive in extradition cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Secretary of State signed 28 surrender warrants in extradition cases under section 9(1) of the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967, during the period from 1 January 1984 until 26 September 1989, when the Act was replaced by the Extradition Act 1989. In the same period no requests were refused.

Arrest Warrants

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether deputy clerks in the magistrates courts have authority to issue arrest warrants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: In magistrates courts warrants of arrest may be issued only by magistrates.

Commonwealth Immigrants

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure in each of the last three years under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, as outlined in his Department circular 72/1986, relating to expenditure for Commonwealth immigrants by local authorities; and of those sums how much was spent on education.

Mr. John Patten: The amount of grant paid out under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 for the most recent three year period for which actual figures are available is as follows:

	£ million
1986-87	104
1987-88	93
1988-89	89

The figures represent 75 per cent. of total section 11 expenditure. The remaining 25 per cent. is a matter of local authority contribution.

In each of the three years education provision has accounted for approximately 80 per cent. of total grant.

Conservative Party Conference 1989

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Lancashire on the policing implications for the rest of Lancashire of police deployment during the Conservative party 1989 conference.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. This is a operational matter and, as such, the responsibility of the chief constable.

Civil Defence

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the provision of civil defence in Swindon.

Mr. John Patten: Responsibility for civil defence planning rests with county councils who are assisted by district councils. We are satisfied that Wiltshire county council, and the district councils within the county, are making good progress towards meeting their statutory obligations.

Wiltshire Constabulary

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the figures for the authorised establishment of the Wiltshire constabulary for the last 10 years for which figures are available; what was the actual strength of the force in post in each year; and if he will express both as a proportion of the population of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

Wiltshire constabulary

31 December	*Authorised establishment* Number	*Authorised establishment* As proportion of population of England and Wales (per cent.)	*Strength* Number	*Strength* As proportion of population of England and Wales (per cent.)	*England and Wales population figures*[1] *(thousands)*
1979	1,032	0·002	1,007	0·002	48,870
1980	1,033	0·002	1,032	0·002	49,162
1981	1,035	0·002	1,042	0·002	49,222
1982	1,042	0·002	1,031	0·002	49,573
1983	1,042	0·002	1,030	0·002	49,608
1984	1,042	0·002	1,029	0·002	49,657
1985	1,045	0·002	1,028	0·002	49,767
1986	1,049	0·002	1,037	0·002	49,923
1987	1,074	0·002	1,096	0·002	50,079
1988	1,074	0·002	1,093	0·002	50,244

[1] The population figures are mid-year figures and relate to the previous year in each instance.

Details of the police/population ratio for Wiltshire and for the other police force areas in England and Wales for the last 10 years can be found in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary (appendix 7) copies of which are lodged in the House of Commons Library.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of letters from hon. Members to his Department received a reply *(a)* in under four weeks, *(b)* within four to six weeks, *(c)* within six to eight weeks and *(d)* over eight weeks, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Waddington: The available figures relate to ministerial correspondence, the great majority of which represented correspondence with hon. Members, and are as follows:

Turn-round time in calendar days

	up to 30 days per cent.	*31-60 days per cent.*	*more than 60 days per cent.*
1986	14·5	46	39·5
1987	33	41	26
1988	35	47·5	17·5

Wymott Prison (Suicides)

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many suicides there have been at Wymott prison since 1 January 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since 1 January 1986 one verdict of suicide has been returned on an inmate who died at Wymott prison.

Fire and Police Services

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for the latest year for which records exist and for the preceding three years, what was the average length of involuntarily separated or unaccompanied tours of duty for personnel in *(a)* the fire service and *(b)* the police service.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not held centrally.

Gaelic Broadcasting

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of his consideration on television broadcasting in the gaelic language.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) on 26 October.

Deaths (Metropolitan Police)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the names, dates and circumstances of all deaths of persons in the custody of the Metropolitan police since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information about the deaths of persons in custody of the Metropolitan police, including the date, place and cause of death, and the circumstances surrounding the death, has been published, since 1980, in the annual report of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner. Information prior to 1980 is not available. To provide the names of the persons concerned could cause distress to their families.

Public House Bombings

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Surrey listing the Surrey police officers who visited Birmingham during the pub bombings investigation;

(2) what liaison took place between officers of the Surrey and West Midlands police forces during the Guildford and Birmingham pub bombings investigations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A full list of all Surrey police officers who visited Birmingham in the period referred to cannot be provided. Criminal and other records not part of a major inquiry are destroyed by the Surrey police after at most five years, and by the West Midlands police after seven years. Details of precise liaison between the two forces at that date are similarly unavailable, although there is no reason to think that normal liaison arrangements were not in force.

However, I understand that a team of nine Surrey officers was working in the west midlands area at the time of the Birmingham pub bombings investigation. As the hon. Member knows, the actions of the Surrey officers who investigated the Guildford bombings are the subject of inquiries by the Avon and Somerset police. It would be inappropriate for me to identify the individual officers.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from *(a)* the chief constable of Surrey and *(b)* the chief constable of the West Midlands as to whether Surrey police officers visited Queen's Road police station in Birmingham between 22 to 25 November 1974.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that according to the records of the investigation conducted on behalf of the West Midlands police by the Devon and Cornwall constabulary, no Surrey police officers visited Queen's Road police station on the dates in question.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to establish the whereabouts of the non-material evidence in the Birmingham pub bombings case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None. I understand that the Devon and Cornwall police attempted to find these documents at the time of their investigation in 1987 and were unable to do so. As far as they could establish, the documents had been destroyed.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what actions he has taken to provide compensation to Carol Richardson, Gerard Conlon, Patrick Armstrong and Paul Hill for their wrongful imprisonment; and if he will make an interim payment.

Mr. John Patten: The solicitors representing the four persons have been informed that interim payments will be made. The amount has been assessed by the independent assessor appointed under the provisions of section 133 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. We have also invited them to supply any information they would wish the assessor to take into account in assessing the total amount of compensation that should be paid.

Mr. Wisnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has had the views of Lord Denning on the convictions of those found guilty of the Birmingham pub bombings brought to his attention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We have considered a number of views, from Lord Denning and others, on the convictions of those found guilty of the Birmingham pub bombings. My right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) referred this case to the Court of Appeal on 20 January 1987 and after a thorough investigation by the Devon and Cornwall police the court heard the case in November and December 1987. In its judgment, announced in January 1988, the Court concluded that it had no doubt that the convictions were safe and satisfactory.

I am always ready to consider new evidence or other information which has not been before the courts and which appears to cast doubt on the safety of the conviction.

Computer Hacking

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking to make hacking, including the laying of viruses, a criminal offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have received a report from the Law Commission (Law Commission 186, Cm 819) recommending new criminal offences of unauthorised access to a computer and unauthorised modification of computer material. The Law Commission, the Home Office and the Department of Trade and Industry have all received various representations urging legislation on these lines. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has indicated that he is inclined to accept the Law Commission's recommendations, subject to comments from interested parties upon them.

Jamie Lloyd Stewart

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report on the death in custody of Jamie Lloyd Stewart who died at Holloway police station on 4 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The circumstances of Mr. Stewart's death are being investigated by the Metropolitan police under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority. An inquest has been opened and adjourned until January 1990. The case is therefore sub judice.

Shooting Clubs

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce regulations prohibiting the use in shooting clubs of targets depicting human beings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my hon. Friend the Minister of State gave him on 26 October at column *1031*. I recognise that some targets used in non-international disciplines may be regarded as being in poor taste, but I am not aware of any risk to public safety arising from their use. We have no plans, therefore, to prohibit their use.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce regulations to provide for vetting by the police of persons seeking temporary membership of shooting clubs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no statutory power under the Firearms Acts 1968 to 1988 to introduce regulations for this purpose. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State informed my hon. Friend on 26 October at column *1031* we are looking most closely at the issue of temporary membership of gun clubs to see whether further controls are necessary.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police vehicles were used during the current ambulance dispute in place of London ambulance service vehicles.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that, between 7 am on Monday 23 October and 9 pm on Tuesday 24 October, 104 Metropolitan police vehicles were used to provide emergency ambulance cover.

Serious Crime Squad (West Midlands)

Mr. Chris Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands as to how many officers were serving with the serious crime squad at the time it was disbanded.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 18 October 1989, c. 125]:* I greatly regret that the figure of 29 quoted therein is incorrect. The correct figure is 25.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Lord President of the Council what information he has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Cash Limits

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any changes to announce to the cash and gross running costs limits for the Privy Council Office for 1989-90.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XX vote 10 will be increased by £290,000 from £1,242,000 to £1,532,000. The Privy Council Office running cost limit will be increased by £290,000 from £1,262,000 to £1,552,000. This increase reflects additional expenditure being incurred by the Privy Council Office in respect of recommended security improvements and the acquisition of additional staff following changes in ministerial responsibilities. This increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Television

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Lord President of the Council what arrangements are being made for Members to have access to the signal from the television cameras in the Chamber before the end of Session.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Select Committee on televising have agreed that the "clean feed" from the Chamber, as it will be provided to the broadcasters after the State Opening, will be shown on two television sets in the Voting Lobbies between 2.30 and 10 pm on Mondays to Thursdays with effect from 1 November. Arrangements are also being made through the usual channels for access to taped material covering proceedings between 2.30 and 5.30 pm.

DEFENCE

Tours of Duty

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for the latest year for which records exist and for the preceding three years, what was the average length of involuntarily separated or unaccompanied tours of duty for service personnel in *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Air Force, *(c)* the Royal Navy, *(d)* the Royal Marines and *(e)* the women's services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Statistics on the average lengths of involuntarily unaccompanied tours of duty are not maintained. The practice in the Army and the Royal Air Force is that postings where personnel are required to serve unaccompanied should not normally exceed six months. For the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines, unaccompanied tours arise mainly when personnel are at sea. The average length of sea postings is about two years, although not all that time will be spent away from home.

Medical Services

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* consultant radiologists and *(b)* consultant paediatricians there are in each of the armed services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of service and civilian consultant radiologists and paediatricians in each of the three services, as at 30 September 1989, are as follows:

	Consultant radiologists	*Consultant paediatricians*
Royal Navy	3	1
Army	5	5
Royal Air Force	[1]3	1
TOTALS	[1]11	7

[1] Plus 1 part time.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average number of patients per military doctor *(a)* in the United Kingdom, *(b)* in the British Army of the Rhine and *(c)* elsewhere.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

Cambodian Guerrillas

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of British armed forces are engaged in training Cambodian guerrillas; where they are based; what is their rank; when the programme commenced; and what has been the cost to public funds.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to provide information of this nature.

EC Components Tariff

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards a European Community tariff on defence parts and components; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The European Commission last year published a proposal concerning the suspension of import duties on certain weapons and military equipment (European Community Document No. 8461/88, COM(88) 502). We are currently discussing this proposal with the Commission and with NATO Allies. An explanatory memorandum was submitted to the House on 2 December 1988.

Anti-submarine Weapons

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the development of a low-cost submarine weapon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Since existing anti-submarine weapons have an effective life extending into the next century, and since we have yet to be convinced that an effective low-cost anti-submarine weapon could be produced, we currently have no plans to develop such a weapon. We are, of course, keeping developments in this area under review.

Air-to-air Missiles

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the development of the advanced short-range air-to-air missile in the light of the decision of West Germany on 13 July to withdraw from the programme to develop it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The RAF has a requirement for an advanced short range air-to-air missile, and the United Kingdom remains committed to the four power family of weapons arrangements for the next generation of air-to-air missiles. Following the German withdrawal, we are considering with Norway and Canada revised proposals from the prime contractor, British Aerospace, for the next stage of the advanced short range air-to-air missile programme.

Anti-tank Ammunition

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the development of the Merlin anti-tank ammunition by British Aerospace; and what financial support has been given by his Department in every year since the project commenced.

Mr. Alan Clark: The MOD has, at present, no formal requirement for the Merlin anti-tank ammunition. It remains our policy to encourage United Kingdom companies to undertake private venture developments which may have relevance to our future requirements, and we are continuing to take a close interest in the completion of the development of Merlin. The MOD contributed £3·4 million in 1983-84 and £2·2 million in 1984-85 by way of financial support towards the feasibility and systems definition phases of the British Aerospace work.

NATO Air Base, Italy

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the funding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation air base at Crotore, Italy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO agreed last year to fund the construction of a new air base at Crotone, Italy, from the Alliance infrastructure budget. The United Kingdom fully supports this decision.

Modular Stand-off Weapon Programme

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the considerations which led to the withdrawal by the United Kingdom from the modular stand-off weapon programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United States and the United Kingdom jointly withdrew from this programme because the differing national requirements were considered to be too difficult to reconcile even within a modular programme. The United States wanted a short-range lightweight weapon for use primarily on F16 aircraft; we wanted a heavier longer-range weapon for use on Tornado.

Type 2057 Sonar

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to receive the results of the project definition studies for the type 2057 passive towed array sonar.

Mr. Neubert: Contracts for the competitive Sonar 2057 project definition phase have been let and results are expected by the end of 1990.

Cavalry Officers

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the importance of equestrian skills for cavalry officers in units which do not have a mounted ceremonial role; and if he will list those units which have such a role.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Cavalry officers in regiments which do not have a ceremonial role are not required to ride, although they are encouraged to do so. The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment and The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery have mounted ceremonial roles.

Sea Rescue Services

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to have overnight at RAF Chivenor a helicopter such as the Sea King with night radar capacity; and if he will list the number of incidents resulting in death by drowning off the north Devon coast during the current year to date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have no plans to alter the present arrangements for the provision of search and rescue cover at RAF Chivenor. I understand that three people have died through drowning off the north Devon coast this year.

Arms Treaties

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, during his discussions with United States Defence Secretary Cheney on 25 October in London, he raised the issues of *(a)* the implications for United Kingdom and United States commitments to article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty of new nuclear weapons systems deployments and *(b)* the status of the Fylingdales facility in Yorkshire in regard to the provisions of the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend discussed a range of matters of mutual interest when he met the United States Defence Secretary on 25 October, but it is not our practice to reveal the details of confidential bilateral discussions of this kind.

Procurement

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on procurement from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* European and *(c)* United States-owned defence industries.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on procurement from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* European and *(c)* United States-owned defence industries.

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on procurement from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* European and *(c)* United States-owned defence industries.

Mr. Neubert *[pursuant to the reply, 7 February 1989, col. 666]*: The following should have appeared in the *Official Report:*

Whilst we have regard for other factors including the location of the manufacturer and the ownership of suppliers, our prime consideration is to obtain the best value for money.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

European Agriculture Council

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Agriculture Council meeting of Ministers on 23-24 October in Luxembourg.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on 25 October 1989.

Organic Farming

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to evaluate the applicability to the United Kingdom of organic farming methods recommended in the report on alternative agriculture, released by the United States National Research Council in September.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 18 October 1989 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) at column *132* which outlined ways in which the Government are encouraging British farmers to respond to demand for organic produce. My Department will also consider the recent American report.

Less Favoured Areas

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the United Kingdom Government's response to the European Commission's proposal to limit the amount of total compensatory payment to individual farm holdings in lesss favoured areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Government remain strongly opposed to the principle of limits based on farm size. Such limits are particularly difficult to justify in less favoured areas, since there is no correlation between the size of a farm and the degree of severity of the permanent natural handicap. I have left the Agriculture Council in no doubt as to the strength of my views on the Commission's current proposals for hill livestock compensatory allowances.

Grant Claims

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what requirements are stipulated by his Department in respect of the submission of receipts and invoices accompanying claims for payment under agricultural grant schemes operated by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The principal farm capital grant schemes currently operated by my Department are the farm and conservation grant scheme and the farm diversification grant scheme. For both, claims for grant must be supported by appropriate documentation which normally consists of a properly receipted invoice. We reserve the right, however, to seek additional information where this is thought necessary to ensure that public money is being properly disbursed.

Food Safety Directorate

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many staff will be employed in his food safety directorate; how many of these will be food inspectors; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement about the remit of his food safety directorate;

(3) whether he intends to consult outside organisations on the establishment of a food safety directorate; and if he will make a statement;

(4) whether he will create any new posts in setting up his food safety directorate; and if he will make a statement;

(5) whom he will appoint as the director of his food safety directorate.

Mr. Gummer: I shall make a further announcement shortly.

Food Imports

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the countries from which the United Kingdom imports *(a)* coffee, *(b)* sugar, *(c)* bananas, *(d)* orange juice concentrate, and *(e)* African palm oil; and if he will give the amounts of each product imported in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: The quantities of each product imported are given in the following table:

Tonnes (except where shown)

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	[1]*1988*
Coffee	117,239	110,998	108,475	120,203	121,303
Sugar	1,410,291	1,330,614	1,309,997	1,254,863	1,290,446
Bananas	309,445	323,728	343,107	359,569	388,154
Orange juice concentrate[2]	102,510	102,342	125,095	139,487	137,007
African palm oil	162,608	217,823	276,730	288,935	286,443

Details from Overseas Trade Statistics.

[1] Provisional.

[2] '000 litres.

Details of the countries from which the United Kingdom imports these commodities are in a table which I will be depositing in the Library of the House as soon as it is available.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any meat for human consumption is currently being imported from the United States of America.

Mr. Curry: Imports of beef for human consumption from the United States of America since January 1989 have been as follows:

	Tonnes
January	147
February	46
March	59
April	0
May	12
June	6
July	6
August	13

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to publish the report on the work in 1988 of his advisory committee on pesticides.

Mr. Maclean: The 1988 report of the advisory committee on pesticides is expected to be published in the first quarter of 1990.

Potato Planting

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what safeguards there are to ensure that targeted potato acreage is actually planted.

Mr. Curry: The Potato Marketing Board is required, under the terms of its financial agreement with Government, to ensure that plantings by registered producers are as close as possible to the target area. It set quota area as a percentage of producers' basic area accordingly, and producers who underplant are penalised in subsequent years because their basic area is reduced.

Levy Schemes

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names of all the levy schemes which he operates and for each one the industry it is imposed upon, and the use to which the money levied is put and the amount collected for which most recent figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 24 October 1989]:* The list includes levy schemes for which I have statutory authority excluding marketing board levies. The organisation originating or operating these schemes is included in the list as I do not have responsibility for operating every scheme.

Organisation	*Levy*	*Industry*	*Purpose*	*Amount collected*	*Period*
European Community	Milk Co-responsibility Levy (EC)	Milk Producers	80 per cent. likely to go to market support measures, rest on promotion of dairy products and improvement of milk hygiene	£52·8 million	1988-89
European Community	Milk Supplementary Levy (EC)	Milk Producers	Levied on over-quota milk production proceeds used to finance disposal of EC dairy surplus	£15·6 million	1988-89
European Community	Cereals Co-responsibility Levy	Cereals Industry	Contributes to the costs involved in disposing of surplus production	£50·8 million	1988
European Community	Sugar Production Levies	Sugar Processors who pass back 60 per cent. to beet growers	Used to offset cost of export refunds on quota sugar	£31·65 million	1988-89
European Community	Storage Levy	First marketing of sugar by producers and merchants	Used to offset costs of storage refund scheme	£26·37 million	1988-89
MAFF	Sugar Beet (Research and Education) Fund	Growers and Processors of Home Grown Sugar Beet	Research and Education in matters affecting the growing of home grown sugar beet	£1·7 million	1987-88
Meat and Livestock Commission	Meat and Livestock Commission Levy General levy 3 species promotion levies on beef, sheep and pork	Slaughters and exporters of live animals. Slaughters recover ½ general levy and all promotion levy from seller	General activities on livestock, meat and meat production	£17·7 million	1987-88
Meat and Livestock Commission	Pig Industry Levy Scheme[1]	Pig Industry	Eradication of Aujeszky's disease	£4·3 million	1988-89
Home Grown Cereals Authority	Home Grown Cereals Authority Levy Scheme 1987	Cereals Industry	Market information service, R & D contribution to Food From Britain and promotion of British cereal exports	£3·58 million	1988-89
Horticultural Development Council	Horticultural R & D Levy	Horticulture Industry	To finance R & D levy is at the rate of ½ per cent. on sales	£1 million	
Apple and Pear Development Council	This body is being wound up; a successor body which will operate under new rules is planned				
Sea Fish Industry Authority	Sea Fish Industry Authority (Levy) Regulation 1988 Confirmatory Order 1989	Sea Fish Industry	Promotion of the efficiency of sea fish industry	£3·4 million	1988-89
MAFF Veterinary Medicines Directorate	Annual Fees for product licences for Animal Medicines	Animal Health Industry	Contributes to the cost of the licensing system for animal medicines	£442,000	1988-89
MAFF	Pesticides Levy Scheme	Pesticides Industry	Monitoring use and residues in foodstuffs, human tissues and the environment	£2·45 million	Beginning of 1989
International Cocoa Agreement	$30 per tonne	Cocoa importers	Finance price stabilising measures	$1·8 million	1 October 1988 to 30 September 1989

[1] Levy suspended on 2 October 1989.

Salmon

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the member states of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation which still allow monofilament drift net fishing in their waters, and those which do not, indicating in each of the latter cases, the date on which such nets were banned and the reasons given for the ban.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* We understand that of the nine contracting parties to the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation, drift netting for salmon takes place in the USSR, Finland, the European Community and Greenland (which is represented in the organisation by Denmark as a separate contracting party for this purpose). The remaining contracting parties (Canada, USA, Iceland, Sweden and Norway) have either not used drift nets or have ceased to do so. Drift nets can be made of monofilament, multi-monofilament, or multi-filament material; we do not have definite information as to which of these types of net are used in each of the contracting parties specified although I understand that monofilament netting is in use in Greenland as well as in parts of the European Community. NASCO has made no recommendations on drift netting for salmon. We have no comprehensive records of the dates when action was taken by some contracting parties or of the reasons advanced at the time. Both are clearly matters for the contracting parties themselves.

Food Irradiation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 27 June, *Official Report*, column *443*, how he intends to consult the public on his proposals to lift the ban on food irradiation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I intend that there will be ample opportunity for all those matters affected by proposed regulations on food. Under the proposals shoppers would of course be able to make up their minds on irradiation as it is intended that food which has been irradiated will be clearly labelled.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Personal Pensions

Mrs Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have taken out personal pension schemes; what is the estimated cost to the national insurance fund for 1989-90 and 1990-91; and how much of this cost is accounted for by the 2 per cent. inducement under section 1 of the Social Security Act 1986.

Mrs Gillian Shephard: A total of 3·5 million people have so far applied for an appropriate personal pension. The most recent estimate of the revenue forgone by the national insurance fund in respect of minimum contribution to personal pension schemes is £2,580 million in 1989-90 and £2,020 million in 1990-91. Of these amounts £720 million and £520 million respectively relate to the cost of the incentive.

Source: Government Actuary's Department.

Industrial Injury and Disease

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publicise fully in the media and by leaflets section 22 of the Social Security Act 1989 to avoid unnecessary hardship to claimants awaiting compensation for industrial injury or disease.

Mr. Scott: A fully comprehensive guide to recovery from compensation awards of amounts equivalent to benefit will be available early next year. It is intended for both those paying compensation and solicitors and others advising victims. Officials are in close touch with the insurance industry, The Law Society, The Law Society of Scotland and the TUC amongst others on both the content and distribution of the guide to ensure maximum coverage. A separate leaflet will be available in local offices to explain the scheme to claimants.

National Insurance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information his Department has with regard to problems arising on benefit claims due to failure to pay or late payment of national insurance contributions by employers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No records are kept of the number of persons whose employers have either failed to pay contributions or have paid them late. However, we have an established procedure which is used where benefit is claimed and the non-payment or late payment of contributions is caused through no fault of an employee. In such cases the employee's correct contribution position is urgently established and his record is credited with the relevant contributions, which in turn allows benefit to be paid. These contributions are treated as paid on time, and this ensures that individual benefit rights are not affected.

Crisis Loans

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of crisis loans are estimated to be paid out by his Department's officials to bridge the periods when claimants are left without money after transferring from sickness benefit to unemployment benefit; and if he will make a statement about the effect of benefits paid in arrears on crisis funds.

Mr. Scott: I regret that information relating to the situation described is not available. However £5 million, representing 3·5 per cent. of the loans budget was paid in 1988-89 in circumstances where payment of benefit in arrears was a factor.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will review the arrangements which leave claimants transferring from unemployment benefit to sickness benefit without any money for two weeks.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Unemployment benefit is paid fortnightly in arrears, and sickness benefit is paid weekly in arrears. There should therefore be no gap in payment when transferring from unemployment to sickness benefit.

Travel Warrants

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will review the regulations preventing his Department's officials from meeting the cost of travel warrants of claimants travelling for job interviews outside the area where they reside.

Mr. Scott: No. Where employers do not provide for such costs, the travel-to-interview scheme administered by the employment service is available. This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

War Widows

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each of the years 1973, 1976, 1979, 1982, 1985 and 1988 the number of women designated as war widows.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The numbers are as follows:

	Number
1973	96,181
1976	86,854
1979	78,621
1982	71,592
1985	64,859
1988	57,751

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the numbers by the last serving rank, for Army equivalent, of men who died or left the services before 31 March 1973 and whose widows are at present in receipt of the state war widow's pension.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information in the form requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. There are, however, 56,176 widows currently receiving war widow's pension (at quarter ending 30 September 1989) of whom it is estimated about 1,200 are the widows of men who served in the Armed Forces on or after 31 March 1973.

Cash Limits

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether there have been any changes to the cash limits or running costs limits of his Department for 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limit for class XV vote 6 (housing benefit administration) will be increased by £3,000,000 from £128,904,000 to £131,904,000. The revision provides for payments to local authorities towards the costs incurred in preparing to implement changes to the housing benefit scheme and the community charge rebate scheme which provides for new premiums for poorer pensioners, more generous rules for certain 16 and 17-year-old claimants and the inclusion of hostel dwellers in the housing benefit scheme.

The cash limit for class XV vote 7 (administration and miscellaneous services) will be increased by £13,770,000 from £1,581,348,000 to £1,595,118,000. The revision takes account of the abolition of the earnings rule and national insurance contribution changes announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement, namely £16,787,000, the ministerial decision to provide extra help to poorer pensioners, £7,800,000, an increase in the grant to the independent living fund who make payments to very severely disabled persons, £6,000,000, and a reassessment of requirements resulting from the division of the Departments of Social Security and of Health, £59,000. These additional requirements are partially offset by an increase in receipts of £16,876,000 to the vote. The balance of the increase apart from the £59,000 transferred from class XIV vote 3, will be charged to the Reserve and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure. As a result the running cost limit of the Department of Social Security is increased by £24,646,000 from £1,711,885,000 to £1,736,531,000.

Child Benefit

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is *(a)* the number of eligible claimants for child benefit in Wales and *(b)* the total child benefit paid in Wales for each of the last five years in (i) cash prices and (ii) constant prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available figure is for December 1988, when about 348,000 claimants in Wales were receiving child benefit in respect of some 623,000 children. The estimated proportion of child benefit expenditure for Wales in each year from 1984-85 was:

£ million

	Cash prices	*1988-89 prices*
1984-85	220·5	271·1
1985-86	230·6	268·8
1986-87	234·3	264·6
1987-88	238·3	255·7
1988-89	234·0	234·0

Computer Programme (Norcoss)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security from how many companies his Department intends inviting bids for the running of its ACC programme at Norcoss, Blackpool.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The arrangements for the running of the Department's area computer centre at Norcross will be announced in due course.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Stillborn Children

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will arrange for the regulations existing in England regarding the registration of stillborn children to be applied to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Since May last, the same arrangements as those existing in England in relation to still-birth registration have applied in Northern Ireland.

Hospital Cleaning

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the chairman of each area health and social services board as to *(a)* the number of staff in each board area who will be redundant after competitive tendering for hospital cleaning services has been completed, *(b)* the estimated number of man hours required in each area board to ensure high standards of cleaning following competitive tendering contracts for hospital cleaning, and *(c)* the estimated percentage of hospital cleaning which will be carried out by the private sector following acceptance of current tenders by each board stating the figures for each board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: No. The health and social services board will not be in a position to provide information on the implications for staff or the mix of public and private sector contracts for hospital cleaning services until after the competitive tendering exercise has been completed. No prior estimate is made of man hours required.

National Health Service (Competitive Tendering)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the progress of his plans to encourage competitive tendering in the National Health Service in Northern Ireland stating for each health and social services board in Northern Ireland the services which have been contracted out, together with the amounts of the tenders submitted and the savings to be achieved in each case; and if he will list the services which were tendered for by in-house teams and the outcome of such bids, together with reasons given by boards for accepting or rejecting such bids.

Mr. Needham: To date 12 per cent., by value, of domestic, catering and laundry services have been market tested and 10 contracts have been awarded (three contracted out and seven retained in-house). A further 22 per cent., by value, of these services are out to tender.

The services contracted out are as follows:

Board and service contracted out	*Amount of tender* £	*Net estimated savings* £
Eastern Board		
Domestic services—Lisburn unit of management		
Lagan Valley hospital	343,000	140,000
Community facilities	41,000	
Western Board		
Catering services—Londonderry, Limavady and Strabane unit of management	1,881,000	1,160,000

In-house teams have tendered for 11 contracts and have been successful in seven as follows:

Catering

Omagh and Fermanagh units of management

Domestic services

Antrim hospitals
Antrim—other facilities
Ballymena hospitals
Ballymena—other facilities
Magherafelt and Cookstown hospitals
Magherafelt and Cookstown—other facilities

The identity of tenderers for particular elements of their services is essentially a matter for the boards themselves. The reasons given by boards for accepting or rejecting such bids reflect the criteria set out by the Department, which emphasised the importance of maintaining a high-quality service.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has about penalty point systems for private contractors undertaking work in the National Health Service; and if he will call for a report from the area boards as to their policies in this respect.

Mr. Needham: No penalty point systems are in operation in any of the contracts awarded by the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland. However, contracts do contain default clauses that enable boards to take preventive measures if the contractor fails to meet the contracted standard. Boards will be establishing formal systems to monitor contract compliance and ensure a high-quality service is provided.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will call for a report from the chairman of the Eastern health and social services board as to his board's policies for consultation with the work force about competitive tendering issues.

Mr. Needham: No. We are confident that the board has consulted with representatives of the work force, in keeping with normal practice.

Contraception

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the breakdown of the number of individuals receiving contraceptive advice and treatment *(a)* by contraceptive method and *(b)* through health and social services boards or general practitioners in Northern Ireland in 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 23 October 1989]:* The information cannot be provided in precisely the form requested. The figures available are given in the table:

	1987	*1988*
Health and social services boards[1]	73,378	74,093
General practitioners[2]		
Oral contraceptives	47,820	51,673
Intrauterine devices	1,919	1,928
Total	49,739	53,601
TOTAL	123,117	127,694

[1] Numbers of individuals attending for advice and treatment.

[2] Numbers of individuals for whom contraceptives prescribed.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total cost of *(a)* general practitioner provision for family planning services and *(b)* family planning clinic services through health and social service boards in Northern Ireland for (i) 1985, (ii) 1986, (iii) 1987 and (iv) 1988, respectively.

Mr. Needham *(holding reply 23 October 1989):* The information requested is: *a.* The total cost of general practitioner provision for family planning services is as follows:

Year ended	£
31 March 1985	398,190
31 March 1986	454,674
31 March 1987	511,238
31 March 1988	587,189
31 March 1989	680,216

b. The total cost of family planning services through health and social services boards in Northern Ireland is as follows:

Year ended	£
31 March 1985	480,720
31 March 1986	566,102
31 March 1987	603,078
31 March 1988	721,664
31 March 1989	770,843

Secular Education

Mr. Graham Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made since July on the development of secular education in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: None. The law requires that religious instruction is given in all grant-aided schools other than nursery schools.

Education

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current pupil to teacher ratio in Northern Ireland; what it was five, 10 and 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The 1988 pupil-teacher ratio is 18·4:1 which is the lowest on record. The comparable figures for five, 10 and 15 years ago are 18·7, 19·5 and 22·4 respectively.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of letters from hon. Members to his Department received a reply *(a)* in under four weeks, *(b)* within four to six weeks, *(c)* within six to eight weeks and *(d)* over eight weeks, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is not held in this form and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, every effort is made to reply to letters from hon. Members as soon as possible.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Lorrain Osman

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he has received any representations from the Government of Malaysia since May concerning the case of Mr. Lorrain Osman; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what communications he has had with bodies and individuals in Hong Kong in relation to the case of Lorrain Osman, in the past 12 months; what was the substance of those communications; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what communications he has received from the Governor of Hong Kong in relation to representations on behalf of the Malaysian Government concerning the case of Lorrain Osman; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what communications his Department has had with the Government of Malaysia concerning Mr. Lorrain Osman, a remand prisoner in Pentonville prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Since this matter is currently sub judice, it would not be appropriate for us to comment.

Death Sentence (Hong Kong)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ensure that prisoners in Hong Kong gaols in 1997 will not be made subject to the death sentence for offences committed before the transfer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Persons imprisoned in Hong Kong will, in accordance with the provisions of the joint declaration relating to the continuity of laws, remain subject to Hong Kong law. The joint declaration also provides that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as applied to Hong Kong shall remain in force after 1997. In this connection it is noteworthy that article 15 of the covenant prohibits the imposition of a heavier penalty than that applicable when the offence was committed.

Hong Kong

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements he now proposes to enter into with the People's Republic of China in relation to his legal and treaty obligations to prisoners extradited to Hong Kong and in prison there in June 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The joint declaration makes provision for us and the Government of the People's Republic of China to ensure the continued application of international rights and obligations affecting Hong Kong. The Chinese authorities have agreed that before 1997 we should authorise Hong Kong to conclude its own extradition agreements, designed to continue in force after 30 June 1997. These agreements will contain traditional safeguards for fugitive criminals. In addition, Hong Kong's domestic law will continue to provide traditional safeguards for fugitive criminals.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific arrangements and safeguards have been agreed with the Peole's Republic of China in relation to prisoners in Hong Kong gaols at the time of the transfer of sovereignty in 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Persons in prisons will be the responsibility of the Hong Kong authorities then as they are now. The prisoners will continue to be treated in accordance with Hong Kong's own criminal laws and legal system. No specific arrangements have been agreed.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in the light of the provision in the law of the People's Republic of China that allows any person to call for the retrial of convicted persons, he has taken or proposes to take steps to protect prisoners in Hong Kong in 1997 from the use of this law against them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Under the provisions of the joint declaration and the draft Basic Law, Hong Kong will retain its own separate criminal laws and legal system after 1997. Annex III of the Basic Law specifies six Chinese national laws which will be extended to Hong Kong after 1997. The law mentioned in the question is not one of them.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to ensure that prisoners extradited from the United Kingdom to Hong Kong and in gaol at the time of the transfer to sovereignty, will be able to leave the colony at the end of their sentence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The freedom of all persons to leave the future special administrative region, if they have valid travel documents, is established by the joint declaration. The draft basic law reflects the joint declaration in this respect.

Hong Kong (Juries)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has taken any steps to examine the possible dangers of prejudice by juries in Hong Kong against non-local nationals facing trial in the Crown colony; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We are not aware of any complaints of this nature. In practice a considerable number of jurors are themselves non-local nationals.

Punjab

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what protests his Department has made about the renewal by the Indian Government of martial law in the Punjab.

Mr. Sainsbury: None. Martial law is not in force in the Punjab.

Nuclear Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received a copy of the report by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on the prevention of geographical proliferation of nuclear weapons; nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace in the southern hemisphere.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes.

"Science and Global Security"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that his departmental library subscribes to the journal "Science and Global Security".

Mr. Sainsbury: We understand that the journal "Science and Global Energy" will not be available for another four weeks. Issues of new journals are considered only after publication.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, of 17 October, *Official Report*, column 78, he will set out the names of all United Kingdom-based non-governmental organisations which have written to his Department on the non-proliferation treaty indicating those which have expressed concern over the United Kingdom's policy for the 1990 non-proliferation treaty fourth review conference.

Mr. Waldegrave: During the last six months, the only such organisation to have written in the terms described by the hon. Member is the European proliferation information centre.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what opportunity he took at the Commonwealth summit meeting in Kuala Lumpur to raise with the representatives of Guyana the matter of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and the NPT fourth review conference, to be held next August, and the possibility of Guyana joining the NPT;

(2) what opportunity he took at the Commonwealth summit meeting in Kuala Lumpur to raise with the representatives of Tanzania the matter of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and the NPT fourth review conference, to be held next August, and the possibility of Tanzania joining the NPT;

(3) what opportunity he took at the Commonwealth summit meeting in Kuala Lumpur to raise with the representatives of Zambia the matter of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and the NPT fourth review conference, to be held next August, and the possibility of Zambia joining the NPT;

(4) what opportunity he took at the Commonwealth summit meeting in Kuala Lumpur to raise with the representatives of Vanuatu the matter of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and the NPT fourth review conference, to be held next August, and the possibility of Vanuatu joining the NPT.

Mr. Waldegrave: This subject was not discussed.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether during his recent visit to Washington DC, he raised with his American counterpart joint strategies to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and increase membership.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. But such matters are regularly discussed bilaterally in appropriate fora, most recently in the margins of the second preparatory committee, which took place on 11-15 September.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he raised at the Commonwealth summit meeting in Kuala Lumpur the matter of the Nuclear non-proliferation treaty and the possibility of *(a)* Pakistan, *(b)* India and *(c)* Zimbabwe signing the treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Science and Peace

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what Her Majesty's Government's policy is towards the Costa Rican resolution and proposal at the United Nations for a Government-sponsored and supported international week of science and peace each November.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no wish to obstruct the measures envisaged in the resolution concerned, but doubt their value. We do not intend to allocate to them resources better employed elsewhere.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to encourage universities and other institutions of advanced studies, scientific academies and institutes, professional associations and individuals in the scientific community to hold during the week 11 to 17 November lectures, seminars, special debates and other activities conducive to the study and dissemination of information on the links between science and technology and the maintenance of peace and security, as agreed upon in United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/43/61.

Mr. Sainsbury: Initiatives of this sort at the United Nations are no substitute for the serious endeavours in which Britain plays a leading part. We therefore see no advantage in taking specific steps to encourage institutions to participate in these initiatives.

Derek Smith

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he possesses concerning the arrest in Athens on 11 October of Derek Smith, a United Kingdom citizen, on charges of trying to sell uranium to a Greek nuclear research centre.

Mr. Sainsbury: Mr. Smith was arrested in Athens on 10 October 1989. He was subsequently charged with possession of radioactive material and smuggling and is remanded in custody. The case is under investigation by the Greek authorities. Mr. Smith is legally represented. Consular access has been granted.

General Affairs Council

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed at the Meeting of European Community Foreign Ministers on 14 and 15 October; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting.

Mr. Maude: There were informal discussions on a range of Community and European political co-operation issues, including eastern Europe.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he took to ensure the factual accuracy of information released by the United Kingdom embassy in Oslo in regard to the proposals to examine the off-shore sub-seabed disposal of radioactive wastes off Sellafield and Dounreay.

Mr. Waldegrave: Her Majesty's embassy in Oslo was fully briefed on this matter by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of the Environment.

Global Resource Information Database

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support the United Kingdom has given or offered towards the establishment by the United Nations of a global resource information database.

Mr. Sainsbury: The global resource information database is a powerful computer-based system designed to present a variety of natural resources information in a way that planners can easily use. It is based in Switzerland and funded by the United Nations environmental programme (UNEP). Britain has not only supported UNEP from its inception under the usual UN budgetary formula, but this year made a substantial voluntary donation which more than doubled our contribution to £3 million.

Hong Kong Register of Shipping

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the transitional arrangements for shipping on the Hong Kong register.

Mr. Maude: Section VIII of annex I to the Sino-British joint declaration provides for the HKSAR to maintain Hong Kong's previous systems of shipping management and regulation and to continue to maintain a shipping register. Work is well advanced on the introduction of the new Hong Kong register which will remain in place after 1997. On its introduction, as a transitional arrangement, vessels then registered in Hong Kong will have the right to transfer to the new register.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the sale of Government houses in the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Executive Council decided on 15 August 1989 to sell a number of its 164 houses and flats because it wanted to encourage owner occupation, and because shortage of manpower made maintenance of Government houses difficult. The proceeds of the sales would be used to help finance new projects designed to reduce Stanley's housing shortage.

Offers to purchase these houses were made to 59 sitting tenants on 15 September.

A general election was held in the Falklands on 11 October and the newly-elected councillors are currently reviewing FIG's housing policy including the disposal programme.

Cambodia

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the proposal for an international mission to visit Cambodia to verify the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our objective remains a comprehensive political settlement in Cambodia. An effective international control mechanism to verify Vietnamese troop withdrawal would be an important element of such a settlement.

Leonid Stonov

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Russian authorities about the case of Leonid Stonov of Moscow.

Mr. Waldegrave: Leonid Stonov is among those cases on which we press the Soviet authorities. Most recently my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised this case among others with Mr. Shevardnadze in New York on 29 September. We will not let up until Leonid Stonov is given permission to leave the USSR.

Kelman Family

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Russian authorities about the case of Boris and Alla Kelman and their sons Efim and Maxim of Leningrad.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have raised this case frequently with the Soviet authorities, most recently when my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met Mr. Shevardnadze in New York on 29 September. We understand that Boris Kelman's secrecy restrictions have now been removed and the family should be free to emigrate. We will maintain our pressure until they actually leave the USSR.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the management of hazardous, toxic and industrial wastes in Gibraltar has been in full compliance with the 1980 Athens protocol to the Barcelona convention for the protection of the Mediterranean.

Mr. Maude: The information required is not immediately available. A reply to the hon. Member's question will be sent to him in due course.

Iraq (Aircraft Sales)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to his colleagues in the European Community over the sale of jet aircraft to Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: None. We keep in close contact with our European partners over the situation in the Gulf. But policies on defence sales are a matter for the judgment of individual Governments.

Kurds

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports Her Majesty's Government have received on the conference on Kurdish culture held in Paris on 14 and 15 October; and if he will make a statement on recognition of Kurdish national claims.

Mr. Maude: We have received a number of reports about this conference and the attitude towards it of the Turkish and Iraqi Governments. The Government do not recognise any claim to an independent Kurdish state, although we acknowledge the Kurds' cultural identity.

Defence and Disarmament Talks

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the non-governmental organisations present at the meeting on defence and disarmament developments held at the Foreign Office on 18 October; and if he will set out the main areas of non-governmental organisation concerns and disagreements with his Department's policies.

Mr. Waldegrave: I held a meeting with non-governmental organisations interested in arms control and disarmament issues on 18 October. The major topics discussed at the meeting, held under Chatham house rules, were nuclear non-proliferation, START, the partial test ban treaty, conventional arms control, chemical weapons, international arms transfers, and East-West relations.

The following organisations took part:

The Council for Education in World Citizenship, Church of England Board for Social Responsibility, the European Atlantic movement, the National Peace Council, Peace Through NATO, Quaker Peace and Service, Scientists Against Nuclear Arms, the United Nations Association, Verification Technology Information Centre, the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, World Disarmament Campaign, International Peace Bureau, European Proliferation Information Centre, British Atlantic Committee, British Council of Churches, Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Centre for International Peace Building Studies, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Coalition for Peace Through Security, Committee for International Justice and Peace, Council for Arms Control, Families for Defence, Greenpeace International, British Pugwash Group, Programme for Promoting Nuclear Non Proliferation Safer World Project, Institute for European Defence and Security Studies.

Regular bi-annual meetings between Foreign Office Ministers and non-governmental organisations on arms control and disarmament issues began in 1983 and are continuing.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information was given to the group of non-governmental organisations specialising in defence and disarmament issues in the meeting held on 18 October at the Foreign Office on the subjects of *(a)* Her Majesty's Government's policies and initiatives for the fourth review conference of the 1970 nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and *(b)* the forthcoming amendment conference for the 1963 partial test ban treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: There was a general discussion of both subjects at the meeting which was one of a regular series held under Chatham house rules.

Export Controls

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting in Paris on 25 October of the Co-ordinating Committee on Multilateral Export Controls.

Mr. Maude: The co-ordinating committee (COCOM) held its annual high level meeting in Paris on 25 and 26 October. The meeting reviewed progress in COCOM's work and reached agreement on a work programme for the coming year.

Against the background of current international and industrial developments, partners recognised the need to maintain the process of streamlining COCOM controls whilst protecting their fundamental strategic security interests. The next high level meeting will be held in 1990.

British Citizens (Detention Overseas)

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens are in detention overseas; how many of these are on drugs charges; what were the comparable figures last year; what action Her Majesty's Government is taking on this problem; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: A total of 1,318 British citizens were in detention overseas on 30 June 1989, the latest complete figures available; 592 (45 per cent.) were on drugs charges. On 30 June 1988 the figures were 1,175 with 521 (44 per cent.) on drugs charges. Penalties for drug trafficking are becoming more severe—a number of countries now impose the death penalty. We have already taken measures to draw attention to the dangers of carrying and using drugs overseas in consular advice leaflets issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Short films have been distributed to television stations, tour operators and other outlets, each carrying a consular message. The drugs film has been widely broadcast. In addition drugs warnings are given in pamphlets issued with all passports and British visitors passports. The Department has engaged a firm of consultants to advise on carrying forward our consular information campaign, including the drug message. We continue to seize every opportunity to obtain free publicity for the dangers of carrying and using drugs abroad.

Cash Limits

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he proposes to make any changes to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office diplomatic wing cash limits and running costs limit for 1989-90.

Mr. Sainsbury: The cash limit and running costs limit for class II, vote 1 (overseas representation) will be reduced by £85,000. The cash limit will be reduced from £453,855,000 to £453,770,000 and the Department's running costs limit will be reduced from £434,606,000 to £434,521,000. These reductions reflect a transfer of FCO payroll costs to Her Majesty's Treasury.

The cash limit for class II, vote 2, (other external relations) will be decreased by £500,000 from £171,998,000 to £171,499,000 which also reflects a token increase in provision of £1,000. The token supplementary allows for the transfer of savings to the Overseas Development Administration to finance aid to Poland, partly offset by an increase to finance the United Kingdom's assistance to Colombia in the fight against drugs.

Ivory

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has happened to the 58·9 kg. of ivory tusks seized by the Hong Kong authorities as detailed in his reply of 27 July, *Official Report*, column *861*, and what information he has on the second case referred to therein.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 18 October 1989]:* The 58·9 kg. of ivory tusks were confiscated and retained in safe custody by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department, the CITES management authority in Hong Kong. In the second case, in accordance with legal advice, no prosecution was initiated, but the owner voluntarily surrendered the 15 kg. into the custody of the Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants (Overseas Service)

51. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants are currently serving overseas; in what categories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: At 1 April 1989 there were some 6,200 civil servants serving overseas, of whom about 2,700 were members of Her Majesty's diplomatic service. Additionally, there were some 700 contract technical co-operation officers employed by the Overseas Development Administration.

CIVIL SERVICE

Cash Limits

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if there are any proposals to change the 1989-90 cash limit for the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (class XX, vote 1) will be increased by £1,370,000 from £33,819,000 to £35,189,000. The increase will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The increase is required to cover the additional cost of making physical security improvements to the Downing street complex and other buildings; the cost of further refurbishment and maintenance in 10 Downing street (this cost is partially offset by appropriations in aid from the Property Services Agency); the cost of expanding the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel as recommended in Sir Robert Andrew's review of the Government legal services; and the initial cost of improving the accommodation at the Civil Service college, Sunningdale park. The supplementary estimate also includes a transfer of provision between the Central Office of Information and the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service to reflect the transfer of responsibility for the information officers management unit to the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service along with an increase in provision to cover the cost of expanding the unit. In addition the supplementary estimate takes account of a reduction in provision as a result of transferring responsibility for conducting language allowance examinations to the Home Office and a reclassification of certain receipts.

Some of the increases have a consequent effect on the Department's running costs limit which will increase by £898,000 from £30,350,000 to £31,248,000.

Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee

76. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service which reports of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, relating to the Civil Service, have been the subject of a Government response during the current session; and what further responses to such reports he expects will be published in the near future.

Mr. Luce: The Government have made one such reply relating to the "Next Steps" initiative, published today (Cm. 841). The reply reports good progress in implementing "Next Steps". A total of ten agencies have been established and some 40 further activities have been announced by Departments as candidates for agency status, with more to come. I am grateful to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee for the positive and helpful interest which it has taken in this most important initiative.

SCOTLAND

Rents into Mortgages Scheme

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any information of the number of tenants who may wish to participate in his rents into mortages scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since my announcement of the outline of the scheme earlier this year, there have been several hundred inquiries from people interested in purchasing under the scheme. We expect up to 5,000 participants during the three-year pilot scheme announced today.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the operation of his proposed rents into mortgages scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland today announced the issue by Scottish Homes of an explanatory leaflet which gives details of the rents to mortgages scheme and advises tenants how to apply. Copies of this leaflet have been placed in the Libraries of the House of Lords and of the House of Commons.

Factory Accommodation

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assistance the Government propose to give in order to ease the demand for affordable factory accommodation in the Borders region in the light of the decision by the Scottish Development Agency that it could not develop prize sites due to a shortage of finances.

Mr. Rifkind: The Scottish Development Agency has not decided to curtail its involvement in the development of factory sites in Borders region. The agency is actively involved in targeting its resources to meet the requirements of industry in the area. This year, the agency has completed a 12,000 square foot block at Tweedbank industrial estate near Galashiels at a cost of £250,000. A further block of similar size is under construction and the agency has plans to develop another 15,500 sq ft of accommodation on this site. Other developments for specific companies are underway and the agency, in partnership with the regional council, is committed to considering the potential for developing a number of sites within Borders region.

Protected Birds

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state for each of the last five years, and for 1989 to date *(a)* the number and locations of special protection areas designated under European Community directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds and *(b)* the amount of public money in constant 1989 prices spent in each of the last five years on meeting the United Kingdom's responsibilities and obligations in Scotland under that directive; and if he will make a statement on the further implementation of the directive.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The following special protection areas in Scotland have been designated since 1984:

Site	*District*	*Date designated*
Priest Island (Summer Isles)	Ross and Cromarty	1 October 1986
Loch of Skene	Gordon	1 October 1986
Loch Eye	Ross and Cromarty	1 October 1986
Gruinart Flats	Argyll and Bute	14 July 1988
Eilean Na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss)	Argyll and Bute	14 July 1988
Bridgend Flats	Argyll and Bute	14 July 1988
Laggan Peninsula	Argyll and Bute	14 July 1988
Gladhouse Reservoir	Midlothian	14 July 1988
Din Moss—Hoselaw Loch	Roxburgh	14 July 1988

The information sought in part *(b)* of the question is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The Government hope to be able to announce further designations soon.

Listed Buildings (Orkney)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the principal inspector of historic buildings last visited Orkney to view listed buildings in the islands area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On 14 and 15 August 1989.

Contraception

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the breakdown of numbers of individuals receiving contraceptive advice and treatment by *(a)* contraceptive method and *(b)* source of treatment, clinic or general practitioner, in Scotland for the years 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available is as follows:

	1987	*1988*
Family planning (clinic services) [1] [2]		
People attending	126,955	117,118
Contraceptive method chosen		
Oral contraceptive	68,222	64,342
IUD	16,099	14,268
Cap/diaphragm	8,911	7,597
Condom	15,622	13,077
Other/not known/not applicable	11,755	11,458
None	6,346	6,376
Family planning (domiciliary) services		
Women seen	2,994	2,651
General practitioner contraceptive services (as at 31 December)		
Women registered with a GP for ordinary contraceptive services or IUD fitting[3]	272,598	276,232

[1] Includes all clinic services provided including hospital, and including any provided on an agency basis. Excludes any non-clinic services which might be given to hospital inpatients or day patients.

[2] Excludes data from 1 December 1987 for Fife Health Board where the relevant information is not available.

[3] Excludes temporary residents.

Family Planning

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total cost for 1987 and 1988 in Scotland of *(a)* general practitioner provision for National Health Service family planning services and *(b)* family planning clinic provision by area health boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the years ended 31 March 1988 and 31 March 1989 the cost of fees to general medical practitioners for family planning services was £2,915,401 and £3,325,000 respectively. The level of provison of family planning clinics (and the cost of this provision) is a matter for individual health boards to determine within the resources available to them. Information about expenditure by boards on these clinics is not held centrally.

Correspondence

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how quickly his Department aims to reply to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department aims to reply as soon as possible to all correspondence from hon. Members and others.

Regional Aid

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give *(a)* the number of applications for regional selective assistance received between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Lang: The figures requested for regional selective assistance are as follows:

	Number
Applications received between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989:	430
Offers made between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989:	346
Total value of these offers	£117 million

Total gross expenditure on regional selective assistance (RSA) in Scotland in 1988-89 was £38 million (equivalent to around £40 million at estimated constant 1989-90 prices). Gross provision for 1989-90 is £52 million. Planned net provision for regional selective assistance and related schemes (including regional enterprise grants) consistent with figures given in "Public Expenditure to 1991-92, A Commentary on The Scotland Programme" for each of the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 is approximately £80 million. Actual expenditure, both this year and in these future years, will depend on the extent to which companies come forward with good projects and also on the extent to which they submit claims on existing offers. We shall continue to encourage Scottish businesses to take full advantage of the provision available.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications for regional development grants outstanding at 31 March 1988, *(b)* the total number of applications processed by 30 September 1989, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 in cash at constant prices.

Mr. Lang: The figures are for the revised regional development grant (RDG2) scheme.

	Number
Number of applications outstanding at 31 March 1988:	5,117
Number of these processed by 30 September 1989:	5,117
Total value of approvals on these applications	£189 million

Total gross expenditure on the RDG2 scheme in 1988-89 was £51 million (equivalent to around £54 million at estimated constant 1989-90 prices). Estimated gross expenditure on the RDG2 scheme in 1989-90 is expected to be around £53 million. Planned net provision for both the old and revised regional development grant schemes consistent with figures given in "Public Expenditure to 1991-92, A Commentary on The Scotland Programme" for each of the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 is approximately £30 million.

Development Agencies

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give *(a)* the total income and expenditure of the Scottish Development Agency, *(b)* the total public expenditure contribution to the Scottish Development Agency and *(c)* the total expenditure and the number of staff of Locate in Scotland for each of the years 1979-80 to 1988-89 inclusive and in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Lang: The information on Scottish Development Agency income and expenditure is set out in the table.

	Total expenditure		*Total income*		*Total expenditure contribution*	
	Cash	*1988-89 prices*	*Cash*	*1988-89 prices*	*Cash*	*1988-89 prices*
1979-80	80·7	151·6	15·8	29·7	65·0	122·1
1980-81	97·7	154·8	17·8	28·2	79·9	126·6
1981-82	97·6	140·9	21·4	30·9	76·2	110·0
1982-83	122·7	165·4	21·8	29·4	100·9	136·0
1983-84	115·9	149·4	27·4	35·3	88·5	114·0
1984-85	117·8	144·7	38·7	47·5	79·0	97·0
1985-86	131·1	152·6	36·5	42·5	94·6	110·1
1986-87	130·9	147·4	41·7	47·0	89·2	100·5
1987-88	135·4	145·2	41·5	44·5	93·9	100·7
1988-89	142·7	142·7	51·6	51·6	91·1	91·1

The agency's outturn of expenditure (as distinct from budgeted provision) is based on the net presentation employed in public expenditure White Papers, which excludes the agency's expenditure of income received on its investment function. Such income has been more substantial in recent years.

I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible in response to his questions about expenditure by Locate in Scotland and its staff numbers.

Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications received for investment grants and innovation grants from 1 April 1988 to 30 September 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 in cash at constant prices.

Mr. Lang: The figures requested for investment grants and innovation grants, within the regional enterprise grant scheme, are as follows:

	Number
Number of applications received between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989	797
Number of offers made between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989	445
Total value of these offers	£4 million

Total gross expenditure on regional enterprise grants in 1988-89 was £282,000 (equivalent to around £300,000 at estimated constant 1988-89 prices). Gross provision for 1989-90 is £6 million although we do not expect this to be fully taken up. Planned net provision for regional selective assistance and related schemes (including regional enterprise grants) consistent with figures given in "Public Expenditure to 1991-92, A Commentary on The Scotland Programme" for each of the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 is approximately £80 million.

Hospitals (Self-governing Status)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the timetable for implementing his plans for self-governing status; and if he has a particular date by which expressions of interest have to be registered.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1989]:* If the hon. Gentleman studies the White Paper he will find that on page 79 we indicated that we aim to establish at least two National Health Service trusts in Scotland by 1992. No deadline has been set for the receipt of expressions of interest in self-governing status.

Salmon

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he is giving to the implementation of the recommendations of the Nature Conservancy Council's report of August on the genetic impact of farmed Atlantic salmon on wild salmon stocks.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* The Nature Conservancy Council's report is a valuable contribution to the increasing body of work on the genetics of farmed and wild salmon.

DAFS fisheries scientists are already studying various aspects of the genetic relationships in farmed and wild salmon populations in Scotland. Scottish fisheries research report No. 42, "Genetic Protein Variation in Farmed Atlantic Salmon in Scotland: Comparison of Farmed Strains with their Wild Source of Populations" was published in August. Further studies on both wild and farmed populations of salmon have been completed. Others are in progress. The results of these studies will be made available as soon as possible. The suggestions in the Nature Conservancy Council report and elsewhere for future research will be taken into account in planning the Department's programme of scientific work in this field.

It is too early to predict what generally accepted scientific conclusions might emerge from current studies. At an international level, there have been discussions in both the International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO). Further discussions are planned and scientists from DAFS and MAFF will continue to contribute to these.

THE ARTS

Regional Arts

55. **Mr. Cormack:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last discussed regional priorities with the chairman of the Arts Council.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) earlier today.

P. G. Wodehouse

56. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received seeking recognition of P. G. Wodehouse's contribution to the literary heritage of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Luce: I have not received any such representations, although I am of course aware of P. G. Wodehouse's immense contribution to the literature of this country.

Museums (Grants)

58. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what grants are available to museums during the current year; and what were available five, 10 and 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Over the last 15 years central Government expenditure on museums and galleries has risen as follows:

1974-75, £17 million; 1979-80, £54 million; 1984-85, £98 million; 1989-90, £158 million. (All figures except 1974-75 include building expenditure.) The real terms increase since 1979-80 is 25 per cent.

British Library

59. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what discussions he has had with the director of the British library with regard to its future as a copyright library.

Mr. Luce: I last met the chief executive of the British Library on 14 March 1989 to discuss the Library's strategic plan for 1989-94, "Gateway to Knowledge." I shall be meeting the British Library board on 1 November.

Museums (Fire Precautions)

60. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what fire precautions have been taken at national museums and their stores.

Mr. Luce: The reviewing and upgrading of fire precautions at national museum and gallery premises is a continuous process.

Following untying from the Property Services Agency in April 1988 this work is now being undertaken by the institutions with the advice of local fire authorities. Several institutions are working towards the introduction of new fire alarm systems. These include the Tate gallery, the National gallery and the British museum.

Greater London Arts

61. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of Greater London Arts to discuss the level of arts funding in London.

Mr. Luce: I have not done so recently.

Business Sponsorship

62. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the budget commitment for the Office of Arts and Libraries for the business sponsorship incentive scheme for the current financial year and what sum is yet to be awarded.

Mr. Luce: The budget for the business sponsorship incentive scheme for 1989-90 is £3 million to which I have allocated an extra £½ million to meet an increased demand for awards.

Commitments have now used up all the available funds and I have reluctantly suspended the scheme until April 1990 when it will be resumed.

Leicester Theatre

63. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next proposes to pay an official visit to the city of Leicester to inspect the work of its theatre.

Mr. Luce: I have no present plans to do so. I last visited arts organisations in Leicester in September 1988.

National Museums

64. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the level of maintenance and staffing in the national museums.

Mr. Luce: The current year's provision for the national museums and galleries building and maintenance programme is £48 million. The number of staff in post at these museums and galleries was 5,399 on 1 April 1989.

Business Sponsorship

65. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the progress of the business sponsorship incentive scheme in the north-west.

Mr. Luce: The business sponsorship incentive scheme continues to be highly successful. In the north-west over £1 million of new money has been brought to the arts since the scheme's inception in 1984. Forty-eight arts organisations have won awards and 51 first-time and 20 existing sponsors have supported the arts.

66. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how much has been raised by the Government's business sponsorship incentive scheme in the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Over the last two years the business sponsorship incentive scheme has raised £13·34 million new money for the arts. Nearly £9 million has come from new sponsorship and over £4·3 million in awards has been added by the Government.

The demand for awards under the scheme has been such that I have increased the budget by an extra £250,000 to £3·25 million this year.

Museums (Funding)

67. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has recently met the chairman of the Museums and Galleries Commission to discuss the future funding of museums.

Mr. Luce: I meet the chairman of the Museum and Galleries Commission quite frequently and discuss a wide range of subjects, which have included museum and gallery funding.

Yorkshire Arts Association

68. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of Yorkshire Arts Association to discuss the future of arts funding and administration in the region.

Mr. Luce: I have not done so.

Local Museums and Galleries

69. **Dr. Blackburn:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many local museums and galleries there are currently in the United Kingdom; and how many there were in 1983, differentiating between publicly and privately funded institutions.

Mr. Luce: The Museum Association database indicated that of the 1,750 museums and galleries in 1984, 116 were national and Government Department-funded museums, 717 were in the charge of local authorities and 917 were privately funded. I understand that the Museums and Galleries Commission presently estimates that the number of institutions has risen to 2,500 in 1989.

South Bank Centre

70. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he will next meet the directors of the South Bank centre.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so. However, I meet the chairman of the South Bank centre regularly.

Royal Festival Hall

71. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received concerning the future of the Royal Festival hall and the South Bank.

Mr. Luce: I have received a number of representations about the future of the South Bank centre which I have drawn to the attention of the Arts Council as the body responsible for allocating Government funding to the centre.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total spending and the total number of full-time equivalent staff employed by *(a)* all local authorities in England and *(b)* all local authorities within the counties of Somerset, Avon and Gloucestershire, taken together, for the years 1971-72, 1972-73, 1973-74, 1974-75 and 1988-89, respectively.

Mr. Chope: The available information is as follows:

a. All local authorities in England (thousands)

	Expenditure[1] £ million	Total f.t.e.	Staffing position in June Total no	Full-time no	Part-time no
1971-72	3,123	n.a.	2,103	1,411	692
1972-73	3,661	n.a.	2,205	1,472	733
1973-74	4,218	n.a.	2,310	1,526	784
1974-75[2]	5,531	n.a.	2,299	1,493	806
1988-89[3,4]		1,862	2,440	1,486	954
1988-89[4,5]	25,403	1,930	2,514	1,548	966

b. All local authorities within the counties of Avon, Somerset and Gloucestershire[6] (thousands)

	Expenditure[1] £ million	Total f.t.e.	Staffing position at June Total no	Full-time no	Part-time no
1974-75[2]	188	n.a.	n.a	n.a.	n.a.
1988-89[3,4]		n.a.	94	54	39
1988-89[4,5]	909	n.a.	95	55	39

n.a. = Not available.

[1] Available information about net spending in 1974-75 and earlier is defined as Rate Fund Revenue Account service expenditure on employees and running expenses, less sales, fees, charges, specific grants and other income. Other income excludes rate support grant and rate/precept income. The information for 1988-89 is, as far as possible, on the same basis as earlier years.

[2] Local authority responsibility for water, sewerage and health were transferred to regional water and regional health authorities. An estimated 90,000 employees were transferred to these authorities and to passenger transport executives.

[3] For comparability with data for earlier years (where available) these staffing figures cover local authority general services and police; all other law and order staff and agency staff are excluded since these figures were not collected before 1975.

[4] During 1986 and 1987 approximately 21,000 employees were transferred out of the local authority sector following the abolition of the metropolitan county councils and the GLC, and the change in status of local authority bus and municipal airport staff.

[5] Includes all local authority services.

[6] Expenditure information is not readily available for individual authorities before 1974-75 and staffing information for individual authorities is not available centrally prior to 1979. Comprehensive full time equivalent figures for individual authorities are not held locally.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what is his estimate of *(a)* the cost and *(b)* the number of the extra staff and other expenditure arising from the changes to the community charge announced in October.

Mr. David Hunt: My officials are in discussions with the local authority associations about the costs of preparing for transitional relief and about the costs of administration. In addition we are commissioning a study by consultants of these costs. Estimates of the costs will be made in the light of the discussions with the associations and the findings of the study. It is the Goverment's intention that a reasonable level of costs will be met in full.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide updates of tables J. 5 to J. 9 on pages 124 to 127 of Cmnd. 9714 "Paying for Local Government", for England only, incorporating the latest announcements on safety nets and transitional relief.

Mr. Chris Patten: Updated estimates of the distributional impact of the new system of local government finance will be provided next month after I have announced my proposals on the distribution of standard spending grant for 1990-91. These will include the impact of safety nets and transitional relief.

ENVIRONMENT

Skillnet Courses

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of trainees on skillnet courses in London Docklands achieved recognised qualifications.

Mr. Moynihan: Skillnet is an independent charity largely funded by the London Docklands Development Corporation. I understand that it has not been the practice to analyse the success rate of students sponsored by skillnet with reference to their achievement of recognised qualifications.

Skillnet provides a wide range of training and counselling services aimed at helping some 5,000 local people each year to find work. Information about individuals accepted into all forms of training and counselling is routinely collected.

As part of these activities skillnet funded 1,370 formal training places in the last financial year, almost entirely through other institutions. These courses are as much directed at securing training leading to early employment, or at basic foundation level, or in preparation for further education, as at obtaining recognised qualifications.

In common with other funders of training, skillnet experience difficulty in regularly monitoring the results of such training courses for individuals, but a survey was undertaken recently. I am arranging for copies of the results to be placed in the Library of the House. Procedures for monitoring the performance of skillnet-assisted trainees are currently under review.

Unlicensed Moneylenders

Mr. David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to increase funding to local authority trading standards departments, so as to enable them to combat unlicensed moneylenders.

Mr. Christopher Patten: The main avenue for Government support for local authority services will be revenue support grant, which is in aid of services generally. It is for local authorities to decide how much to spend on any particular activity.

Birchfield Estate, Birmingham

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department expects to make a decision on the request by Birmingham city council for grant aid for the Birchfield estate security project.

Mr. Moynihan: The scheme has been approved for funding under this year's Birmingham inner city partnership programme.

Housing Action Trusts (Lambeth)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, as part of his consultation process, he has taken note of the recent public opinion poll on proposed housing action trust estates in the London borough of Lambeth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Yes. I hope to discuss the proposals for the two estates comprising the proposed housing action trust with tenant and borough representatives soon. It is important that the proposals for the housing action trust should be fully understood.

Housing Completions

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the numbers of houses completed *(a)* in Burnley and *(b)* in each region in England by (i) local authorities, (ii) housing associations, (iii) private sector and (iv) housing co-operatives in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope: Numbers of new housebuilding completions by local authorities, housing associations and the private sector in standard statistical regions in England, appear in table 6.4b, of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1978-1988". Figures reported by Burnley district council appear in table 1 of "Housebuilding in England by local authority areas 1980 to 1987", with figures for 1979 and 1988 being published in tables 4(b) and 1(b) of volumes 59 and 90, respectively, of "Local Housing Statistics".

Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Information separately distinguishing completions by housing co-operatives is not available.

Green Belt, Bramley

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations about encroachment on green belt for housing development at Bramley, Surrey; and if he will make a statement of Government policy towards such development.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend is considering representations from the Surrey Society asking him to call in for his own decision a planning application for residential and other development on a site at Bramley, Surrey. The Government's policies on development in the Green Belt and on the provision of low cost housing in the Green Belt are set out respectively in planning policy guidance note No. 2 and in the reply which my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning gave to the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) on 9 June at col. *259*.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of letters from hon. Members to his Department received a reply *(a)* in under four weeks, *(b)* within four to six weeks, *(c)* within six to eight weeks and *(d)* over eight weeks, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is not available for the last three years. Since last October, my Department has replied to some 24,000 letters from right hon. and hon. Members, of these 64 per cent. were sent within four weeks of receiving the letter, 21 per cent. within four to six weeks, 8 per cent. within six to eight weeks and 7 per cent. in over eight weeks.

EHOs

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to visit any local authority environmental health departments to familiarise himself with the extent and nature of the work and difficulties currently facing environmental health officers.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. and hon. Friends and I are made well aware of the work, achievements and problems of environmental health departments—as of all other local authority departments—in the course of our many visits to local authorities.

Unleaded Petrol

50. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many petrol stations in the United Kingdom are selling unleaded petrol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Unleaded petrol is now widely available. More than 16,000 outlets stock the fuel.

Rent Arrears

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures available for the amount of rent arrears and the number of people with arrears for each local authority in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

Mr. Chope: A list of local authorities showing reported cumulative rent arrears at 31 March 1988 was placed in the Library on 1 March 1989. Information about the number of tenants in arrears with rent, rates or other charges (where reported) is contained in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy publication "Housing Rents Statistics at April 1988", a copy of which is in the Library.

Nuclear Accidents (Water Contamination)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list what representations he has received concerning adequate information within the water industry with respect to water resource consequences of a nuclear event; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have received no such representations.

Ashford Great Park

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the result of the public inquiry into the NEDA planning application for Ashford Great park.

Mr. Moynihan: Shortly.

Litter

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further action he will undertake to reduce the problems posed by litter.

Mr. Trippier: Our aim is uncompromising—to eradicate the litter problem once and for all. In order to achieve this we propose to take action against those who drop litter and ensure that any litter which is dropped is speedily cleared up.

Our proposals include an increase in the maximum fine for littering from £400 to £1,000, an extension to all district and borough councils of the power to operate a fixed penalty scheme for littering, and the placing upon local authorities, some statutory undertakers and certain owners of other land, of a duty to keep their land clear of litter. We also propose to give aggrieved citizens the right to seek redress in the magistrates court if a body under the duty fails to discharge it. However, we realise that, ultimately, the only lasting solution to the problem lies in changing the attitudes of those who persist with their inconsiderate and dirty habits.

Radon Gas

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is his intention to publish full details of the distribution incidence and precise locations in relation to emissions of naturally occurring radon gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The results of the survey of radon in houses, which is currently being carried out for the Department by the National Radiological Protection board, will be published in summary form on completion. Results for individual dwellings are confidential to the householder.

London Pensions Fund Authority

Sir Rhodes Boyson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to establish the London Pensions Fund Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The London Pensions Fund Authority—the "London Pensions Fund"—will be formally established tomorrow by an order made under sections 67 and 101 of the Local Government Act 1985. The order transfers to the London Pensions Fund on 1 April 1990 the superannuation fund and associated functions, rights and liabilities which the London Residuary Body inherited on the abolition of the former Greater London Council.

The establishment of this independent superannuation administering body is based on proposals received from the LRB under section 67 of the 1985 act and follows extensive consultations with the London boroughs and other interested parties over the future of the former GLC fund. The fund is the second largest in England operating under the local government superannuation scheme, with assets of some £1·5 billion at the end of 1988-89. The LRB has successfully managed and administered the fund since abolition, and the establishment of this new body will continue to safeguard the interests of contributors and pensioners alike.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today made the following appointments to the board members of the London Pensions Fund after consultations with organisations representing London local government:

Sir George Blunden (Chairman)
Mr. Michael Roberts (Deputy Chairman)
Sir Nigel Althaus
Councillor E. D. Barkway, OBE
Professor R. N. Franklin
Councillor A. King, JP
Councillor A. S. Lourie
Mr. C. J. Messer

One further appointment will be made as soon as possible which will represent local London government.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research is sponsored by his Department at Cambridge university, in conjunction with the United States National Science Foundation, into the soil mechanics and stability of geological sites to assess the migration possibilities from toxic waste disposal sites.

Mr. Trippier: The Department is currently sponsoring research on radiochemical waste disposal at the University of Cambridge. It is understood that the United States army corps of engineers has sponsored research in the area described by the hon. Member.

Development (Road Access)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants or other financial assistance developers may apply for to pay for providing road access to residential development sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 26 October 1989]:* No such grants are generally available. In the 57 urban priority areas, however, city grant may be paid to assist developers with residential projects, and this may include the provision of access roads.

EC Drinking Water Directive

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the timetable for ensuring Britain's compliance with the European drinking water directive.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 25 October 1989]:* The Government are wholeheartedly committed to complying with the requirements of the Water Supply

(Water Quality) Regulations as quickly as possible, having regard to practicalities. Those regulations incorporate the standards of the EC drinking water directive. Most supplies already comply with the requirements and the water companies in England and Wales will be spending £1,400 million over the next five years alone for dealing with current failures. Those water supplies which currently fail to comply with the directive's standards are nevertheless of a quality suitable for drinking. If this were not so, water companies would take remedial action immediately. It is widely accepted that full compliance with the directive is extremely difficult to achieve and we believe that in some respects the directive itself requires amendment. We understand that no other member state has complied fully with the directive or drawn up comprehensive compliance programmes in the way that we have.

Water supplies which at present regularly exceed the requirements of the regulations will be brought progressively into compliance by the end of 1995. It may take longer to achieve full compliance for some other supplies which marginally fail to meet those requirements. For example, a longer period will be needed in some places to achieve full compliance with the standards on pesticides while water companies investigate the opportunity for reducing pesticide usage in their catchments and develop appropriate technology for pesticide removal. Current pesticide levels represent minute exposures, far lower than any which would be likely to present a threat to health.

National Rivers Authority

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the memorandum of understanding with regard to the working relationship between Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 25 October 1989]:* Details of the working relationship between Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the National Rivers Authority will be published when the memorandum of understanding has been completed.

Water (Disconnections)

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing how many people were disconnected from their water supplies for each year between 1978-79 and the latest date available.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 23 October 1989]:* The number of household supplies disconnected for non-payment of charges by the nine English water authorities since 1984-85 is shown in the following table. Information on the number of disconnections by water authorities made prior to 1984-85 and those to household supplies by statutory water companies is not held centrally.

	Total for England
1984-85	2,052
1985-86	4,212
1986-87	6,450
1987-88	7,120
1988-89	8,091

I believe that in the great majority of cases reconnections are made within 48 hours.

Cash Limits

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits for 1989-90.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes. I propose the following changes subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates.

The cash limit for class X, vote 2 (central environmental services, etc.) will be increased by £32,174,000 from £280,423,000 to £312,597,000 principally to cover additional grant in aid to the National Rivers Authority of £30,325,000, increased funding for the United Nations environment programme of £1,750,000, and increased grant in aid to the Sports Council of £600,000 in respect of take up of entitlement to carry forward underspending in 1988-89 under the end year flexibility scheme for capital expenditure.

The cash limit for class X, vote 4 (royal palaces, royal parks, historic buildings, ancient monuments and the national heritage) will be increased by £430,000 from £103,437,000 to £103,867,000 towards a compensation payment by the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission to the developers of the Rose theatre site, to enable preservation of the site for the public.

The cash limit for class X, vote 5 (Department of the Environment: administration) will be increased by £5,995,000 from £153,864,000 to £159,859,000 to provide for public information on lead-free petrol and further public information to increase awareness of the community charge system, in particular eligibility for community charge benefits and transitional relief.

The non-voted cash limit for DOE/UA1 (urban aid and derelict land reclamation) will be increased by £72,800,000 from £650,454,000 to £723,254,000 to cover increased grant-in-aid to London Docklands Development Corporation of £79,000,000 (of which £11,000,000 reflects the take up of entitlement to carry forward underspending in 1988-89 under the end year flexibility scheme for capital expenditure). The cash limit increase includes £4,000,000 covering the transfer of responsibility for city action teams from the Department of Trade and Industry to my Department. This has been offset by an equal reduction in the cash limits for class V, vote 2. There are some offsetting savings within the cash block.

The non-voted cash limit for DOE/NT1 (new towns) has been increased by £14,889,000 from minus £435,535,000 to minus £420,646,000 reflecting take up of entitlement to carry forward underspending in 1988-89 under the end year flexibility scheme for capital expenditure.

The above increases will be partly offset by decreases in cash limits.

The cash limit for class IX, vote 2, (miscellaneous housing administration and grants) will be reduced by £5,535,000 from £84,952,000 to £79,417,000 reflecting principally reduced expenditure on housing action trusts and grant to the Housing Corporation for the reclamation of land in Merseyside.

The cash limit for DOE/HC1 (capital expenditure by the Housing Corporation) will be reduced by £6,750,000 from £701,000,000 to £694,250,000. This includes full take up of entitlement to carry forward underspending in 1988-89 of £3,250,000 under the end year flexibility scheme for capital expenditure offset by a £10,000,000 reduction reflecting the fact that certain receipts formerly surrendered to the Consolidated Fund will now be retained by the Housing Corporation. The cash limit reduction does not imply a reduction in planned gross expenditure.

The increases above will also be partly offset by decreases in non-cash-limited expenditure. The net increase in my Department's programmes will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

I have also to announce on behalf of the director general of the Office of Water Services that the cash limit for class X, vote 10 (Office of Water Services) will be increased by £1,105,000 from £2,334,000 to £3,439,000, and the running costs limit for the Office of Water Services will be increased by £575,000 from £2,200,000 to £2,775,000. The increases will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

TRANSPORT

Roads (London)

13. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a statement on the London road assessment studies.

Mr. Parkinson: I expect the results of the consultants' work to be published in early December and I aim to make a statement at that time.

Leicester Bypass

15. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the proposed construction of a western bypass for the city of Leicester.

Mr. Atkins: The public inquiry into the orders for this scheme was held in May 1988. The inspector's report was received on 1 February. The Secretaries of State for the Environment and Transport are considering it and hope to announce their decision as soon as possible.

Air Traffic Control

16. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many instances of industrial action there have been amongst air traffic control officers during the current year.

Mr. McLoughlin: There has been none in the United Kingdom during the current year. We do not collect data on industrial action in other countries.

British Rail

14. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what subjects he expects to discuss with him.

Mr. Parkinson: I shall be meeting the chairman of British Rail tomorrow to discuss the board's future plans.

17. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he has met the chair of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I last met the chairman of British Rail on 17 October when we discussed a variety of railway matters.

27. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chair of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

28. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chair of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

29. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend regularly meets the chairman of British Rail to discuss a variety of railway issues. The last such meeting took place on 17 October.

42. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on proposals to denationalise British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: Studies are continuing but it will be some time before any decisions are taken.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) earlier today.

Channel Tunnel

18. **Mr. Gerard Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and if they discussed the Channel tunnel high-speed rail link.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend and I last met the chairman on 17 October when we discussed a variety of railway issues including the proposed Channel tunnel rail link.

31. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the Channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has continued to receive a large number of representations about the proposed rail link.

Inner City Transport

20. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are being taken to improve transport infrastructure in inner city areas.

Mr. Atkins: We are improving trunk roads and helping local road improvements financially. I have today announced an Industrial Development Act grant of up to £1·77 million towards a road scheme in Rotherham, which will open up land for development, providing a boost for the area and reducing local unemployment. We are also improving public transport infrastructure in London's docklands. We have approved grant towards phase 1 of Manchester's metrolink and are helping the development costs of a proposed light rail scheme in Sheffield.

Roads (London)

21. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the London road assessment studies; and if he will make a statement.

38. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the London road assessment studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: There have been numerous representations from Hon. Members, local councillors, interested groups, and members of the public. All views expressed will be taken into account.

Road Works (Leeds)

22. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many calls have been received at the Leeds road works information telephone number of his Department in each of the last four months.

Mr. Atkins: The number of callers to the road works information telephone service for the A1 in Yorkshire has been:

	Number
June	264
July	406
August	353
September	358

Bus Deregulation

23. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the working of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Portillo: I have no plans to amend the 1985 Act. Bus deregulation has encouraged a greater diversity of services, with more bus miles being provided by more operators at lower cost to local authorities.

45. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to review the workings of the Transport Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I have no plans to review the working of the Transport Act 1985. Bus deregulation has encouraged a greater diversity of services, with more bus miles being provided by more operators at lower cost to local authorities.

Dartford Bridge

24. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the privately financed Dartford bridge will be opened.

Mr. Atkins: The new crossing, and the improvements to the approach roads, are expected to be open by early summer 1991.

Road Safety Schemes

25. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by how much spending on local road safety schemes has increased in 1989-90.

Mr. Atkins: Over £10·5 million is being spent on local safety schemes on the Department's trunk roads this year compared with nearly £5 million in 1988-89.

Our information about local authority expenditure on such schemes is not comprehensive. Information from the latest transport policy and programme submissions suggests that authorities plan to spend just over £10 million this year which is about the same as they did in 1988-89.

North Devon Trunk Road

26. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list *(a)* the dates and number of fatal accidents along the route of the north Devon trunk road from Tiverton to Bideford bridge, indicating the number of prosecutions relating to these accidents and *(b)* the reported number of speeding incidents and prosecutions since its opening date.

Mr. Atkins: Four accidents, each resulting in one death, have occurred on the road since the first section was opened in November 1988. These were on 11 January, 5 May and 7 July, all in the Loxbeare area, west of Tiverton, and on 16 August at Bish Mill, east of South Molton. I understand that no prosecutions are pending in relation to these accidents.

Up to 1 September 1989, over 1,000 traffic offences have been reported by the police, which have resulted in either the issue of fixed penalties or prosecutions in the courts.

Bypasses

30. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses are included in the new road programme.

Mr. Atkins: A total of 173 schemes in the expanded trunk road programme are designated as bypasses or relief roads. A large number of other schemes, although not designated as bypasses, also help to take through traffic away from unsuitable roads.

Disqualified Drivers

32. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decisions have been reached regarding the recommendation in the North report that disqualified drivers should be retested.

Mr. Atkins: The Government's response to Dr. North's recommendations was set out in the White Paper "The Road User and the Law" (Cm. 576). It is proposed that certain road traffic offenders should be required to take an extended driving test before their licences are restored. The views of interested organisations are being sought on the details of the proposals. A copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Library.

Severn Crossing

33. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the county councils in south Wales concerning the Severn crossing.

Mr. Atkins: Meetings of the Severn Bridge Consultative Committee take place every six months, while the Severn crossing traffic management liaison committee meets every two months. Representatives of Gwent county council attend both sets of meetings, while South Glamorgan and Mid-Glamorgan attend the former. The most recent meetings took place on 1 June and 20 September respectively.

Buses (Deregulation)

34. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many areas are now served by minibuses following the deregulation of buses.

Mr. Portillo: The latest research shows that at the end of 1988 there were over 7,000 minibuses serving bus users in over 600 places.

47. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many new operators have resulted from the deregulation of buses.

Mr. Portillo: It is estimated that by 1 May 1988, there has been a net increase of 465 operators running local bus services since deregulation.

Women and Transport

35. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has undertaken or plans to undertake into women and transport; and if he will make a statement.

41. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has undertaken or plans to undertake into women and transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) earlier today.

New Roads

36. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many responses he has received to the Green Paper "New Roads by New Means".

Mr. Portillo: Over 160.

Road Maintenance

37. **Mr. Ames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to reduce delays to road users caused by maintenance work.

Mr. Atkins: Existing measures include programming of roadworks to avoid where possible having works too close together, or during peak traffic periods; improved contraflow layouts and video monitoring to enable prompt responses to traffic incidents at road works; the use of mobile lane closures for some works, in which a convoy of specially marked vehicles protect workmen instead of static lines of cones; and the use of lane rental contracts. Since these contracts were introduced in 1984, they are estimated to have saved over 2,000 days of lane closures worth around £40 million in avoided delays to road users.

New traffic management arrangements to increase vehicle flows past contraflow sites are being tested; these include the use of narrower traffic lanes to enable more lanes to be provided, and tidal flow systems in which the number of lanes available in each direction changes to match traffic demand. The Department is also developing a computer system to assist in optimising the planning and scheduling of maintenance and improvement works on trunk roads, including motorways, to minimise disruption to road users.

Docklands

39. **Mr. Neil Thorne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are being taken to improve transport in docklands.

Mr. Portillo: London Regional Transport is planning to double the capacity of the Docklands light railway from Tower Gateway early next year by the introduction of two-unit trains, which will be followed by further new sets in 1991, raising the capacity of the Tower Gateway service from the present 1,750 passengers to 6,500 passengers per hour. Completion of the first tunnel to the Bank is now scheduled for late 1990, with the second one to follow in late 1991, and I have asked LRT to do everything it can to advance the opening dates for the new services through them. We have also enabled LRT to let the first contracts for the DLR extension to Beckton, and in the meantime the reliability of the existing railway is being improved by an urgent programme of remedial measures.

The British Railways Board has this month introduced improved services and rolling stock on its North London line service to North Woolwich, and has commenced work on a new station at Silvertown, which will give easier access to the London City airport. I hope to make an announcement shortly on the recommendation arising from the east London rail study as to an extension of the Jubilee line to Stratford.

Docklands minibus have introduced a fifth service, and an improved LRT bus network is in place to serve the docklands. The riverbus now provides a weekend service and runs through to Greenwich, and is installing monitors on piers so as to improve passenger information.

The London Docklands Development Corporation has a programme for the construction of a development road network through Limehouse, the Isle of Dogs and the royal docks. Work is well advanced and expected to be completed in 1993. As part of this, a £171 million contract has just been let for construction of the Limehouse link, a 1·8 km dual two-lane cut and cover tunnel from the highway to Westferry Circus and Poplar, which is due for completion by the autumn of 1993. Construction work should start on the Limehouse link by the end of this year. Work should also start on the proposed Lower Lea crossing by the spring of 1990. The Eastern Gateway access road was opened on 3 October. The opening of an extension to Aspen Way by the end of this year will provide a third major access to the Isle of Dogs from the A13, serving the island's eastern side.

The Department has a complementary programme to improve the A13 in Tower Hamlets and Newham by the mid-1990s. Three interim schemes for the Isle of Dogs are scheduled to start in 1990, two for completion in 1991 and one for 1992.

Final schemes at these locations and Cotton street are scheduled to start in 1993. At that time work should begin on the widening of the Ironbridge, including a connection of LDDC's proposed East India Dock link.

An exhibition of our proposals to replace the Beckton flyover and improve the A13-A117 junction during

1992-93 was held at Brampton Road Manor school, East Ham on 27-28 October. Improvements to the A13 junction with the A112 are scheduled for 1994-95

We have announced reopening of the inquiry into the design of the east London river crossing bridge. The reopened inquiry will clearly have to take account of the inter-relationship with the proposed future development of the London City airport, on which a planning application has now been made.

We have rationalised waiting and loading restrictions on the A13 trunk road in Tower Hamlets, and have let a contract for provision of a new east London traffic control system. We have invited tenders for the renovation of the northbound Blackwall tunnel. LDDC has in hand a study on the extension of the controlled parking zone to the Isle of Dogs. The Department and the other highway authorities have reached an understanding with the statutory undertakers on the conduct of highway works in Docklands.

Rail Investment (North-West)

40. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has received concerning rail investment in the north-west of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: In July approval was given to BR's proposals to invest £26 million in a new Manchester airport rail link. BR is already spending a total of nearly £50 million on new locomotives and driving van trailers on the west coast main line, and another £35 million on the Windsor link and the resignalling and remodelling of Piccadilly station in Manchester. The area is also benefiting from BR's substantial rolling stock investment.

A41 Bypass

43. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of the A41 bypass inquiry.

Mr. Atkins: Public inquiries into the A41 Berkhamsted and King's Langley bypasses finished in September 1988 after 48 sitting days. The considerable volume of evidence put forward is being carefully considered in the light of the independent inspector's report and recommendations. The Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport will announce their joint decision as soon as possible.

Aviation (Single Market)

44. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made towards completing the single market in aviation.

Mr. McLoughlin: A first stage of aviation liberalisation was agreed in December 1987. The EC Commission has recently made proposals for a second major package, which would encourage greater competition and should bring down fares. The Council is due to decide on these proposals by the end of June 1990. Particularly bearing in mind the interests of consumers, my right hon. Friend has pressed hard for further liberalisation. I am glad that the commission has taken up the United Kingdom's ideas in framing its proposals. We will continue to press for measures based on these proposals to be adopted by the Council.

Glasgow Abbotsinch Airport

46. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to give Glasgow Abbotsinch airport gateway status before 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend announced on 13 September that he was to review Scottish lowland airports policy. A consultation document was issued on 27 September and respondents have until 29 November to comment. All views put forward will be considered carefully.

Manchester Airport

48. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to visit Manchester airport.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so. I visited the airport myself on 23 October.

London Underground

49. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what extensions of the current London Underground have been agreed but not completed; and what schemes have been submitted but still await approval.

Mr. Portillo: There are no outstanding proposals for extensions to the Underground which have been approved but not built. We are considering with the operators the new lines proposed in the central and east London rail studies.

Road Signs

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take additional steps to *(a)* improve the standard of road signs, *(b)* ensure speedier repair of damaged and faded road signs and *(c)* ensure road signs are not obscured on motorways and trunk roads.

Mr. Atkins: Yes.

British Rail and Scotrail

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress towards the privatisation of British Rail and Scotrail.

Mr. Portillo: Studies into the possible privatisation of British Rail, including Scotrail which is one of British Rail's six regions, are continuing.

Municipal Ports

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any information on the management costs expressed per ton at municipal ports.

Mr. McLoughlin: Regulations under section 42 of the Harbours Act 1964 require all statutory ports whose turnover is £250,000 or more to send their annual accounts to this Department, which also collects data on the trade which passes through ports. Because of the wide variety of goods handled, comparisons of costs per ton would not be meaningful.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will carry out a financial and managerial appraisal of all municipal ports.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. Any such appraisal would be the responsibility of the local authorities concerned or for the Audit Commission, in the case of a broader comparative survey.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those ports together with their tonnage for the last five years operated by municipal management.

Mr. McLoughlin: Freight tonnage handled over the last five years by those ports in Great Britain where the local authority is the harbour authority, and where traffic exceeded 100,000 tonnes a year, is given in the following table.

There are another 14 ports in Great Britain where the local authority is the harbour authority but traffic was less than 100,000 tonnes per year.

Million tonnes

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Anglesey Marine Terminal (closed March 1988)	6·5	7·8	7·4	7·7	1·1
Boston	1·4	1·4	1·5	1·5	1·4
Bridgwater	0·5	0·4	0·4	0·4	0·2
Bristol	3·8	3·8	4·1	4·0	4·5
Colchester	1·5	1·2	1·1	1·0	1·0
Orkney	16·1	16·1	15·8	17·1	8·0
Perth	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Portsmouth	1·6	2·0	2·0	2·4	2·8
Ramsgate	1·2	1·3	1·3	1·6	1·9
Sullom Voe (Shetlands)	59·7	59·0	57·2	50·0	50·6
Sunderland	1·2	2·5	2·3	1·8	2·0
Watchet	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1
Whitby and Scarborough	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2
Whitstable	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·4
Wisbech	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·1
Workington	0·6	0·6	0·5	0·4	0·7

Statistics of freight tonnage through British ports are published in an annual report "Port Statistics", published jointly by the Department of Transport and the British Ports Federation. "Ports Statistics 1988" was published on 27 October and a copy has been placed in the House Library.

Marine Rescue Services

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has had any representation on the cost of switching from Decca to Loran C for the marine rescue services;

(2) if he will list the representations he has had about Loran C;

(3) if he will publish his response to the paper submitted by Racal Decca on the Loran C proposals;

(4) if he will publish the basis for his costings for updating the Decca transmitters.

Mr. McLoughlin: Representations about the future choice of marine radionavigation system have been received from the following:

Andrew Weir Shipping
Brightlingsea and District Fishermen's and Boatmen's Association
British Marine Industries Federation
British Motorship Owners Association Ltd
British Offshore Support Vessels Association
British Ports Federation
British Shippers' Council
British Telecom (Marine) Ltd
Brooks and Gatehouse Ltd
Caledonian MacBrayne
Coe Metcalf Shipping
Comite International Radio Maritime
Commissioners of Irish Lights
Cruising Association
Department of Agriculture for Scotland
Department of the Environment
Department of Trade and Industry
Electronics and Business Equipment Association
Federatie Van Visserijverenigingen
Federation of Highlands and Islands Fishermen
General Council of British Shipping
Highlands and Islands Fishermens Association
Honourable Company of Master Mariners
Humberside International Fisheries Institute
International Association of Lighthouse Authorities
International Chamber of Shipping
International Hydrographic Bureau
Kelvin Hughes Ltd
Lights Advisory Committee
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food
MOD Hydrographer
National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations
Navigation Management Ltd
NAVSTAR (Polytechnics Electronics)
Nautical Institute
Northern Ireland Fish Producers' Organisation Ltd
Northern Lighthouse Board
North Shields Fishermen's Association
NUMAST
Racal Decca Marine Navigation Ltd.
Royal Institute of Navigation
Royal National Lifeboat Institution
Royal Yachting Association
Royal Yachting Association for Scotland
Scottish Development Department
Scottish Fishermans Federation
Sea Fish Industry Authority
Shell UK Exploration and Production
STC Defence Systems
Trinity House
United Marine Aggregates Limited
Wild Goose Association

Some 12 individuals have also made representations.

The RNLI has drawn attention to the cost of re-training marine rescue personnel and of re-equipping with receivers if a changeover were to be made to Loran C.

These representations are all now being considered, and the Department proposes to publish a response in due course to the paper submitted by Racal Decca Marine Navigation Ltd. The costings for updating the existing Decca transmitters are based on an offer made by RDMNL to the general lighthouse authorities in November 1988, under which the company would finance the work in return for an extension of their contract with the authorities to the year 2004.

Ships Officer Manning Levels

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those countries that propose a reduction in ships officer manning levels, including radio operators, in the next 12 months; and if he will list and tabulate the United Kingdom's manning levels as against those of other EEC countries.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department has no information that other countries propose to reduce ships officer manning levels, including radio operators, in the next 12 months. The United Kingdom's manning levels are assessed on an individual ship basis in accordance with the principles of safe manning established by the International Maritime Organisation. The Department has not attempted to tabulate manning levels but a record of the safe manning certificates issued is maintained.

Short Sea Prospects

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the estimated short sea prospects for the next two years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department does not forecast prospects for the shipping industry, but I have noted that British ship operators in the short sea sector have recently been more confident about future prospects, reflected in improved freight rates and some increased investment in new tonnage. British operators are among the most entrepreneurial and cost-effective and I will continue to argue vigorously in the Community for the liberalisation of cabotage markets and for the elimination of subsidies which distort competition and put British interests at a competitive disadvantage.

Shipping Tonnage

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current percentage reduction of United Kingdom registered shipping tonnage over the same figure in 1988.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of vessels registered at ports in the United Kingdom and their deadweight are given in the table.

All United Kingdom registered vessels of 100 grt and over

	Number of vessels	*Deadweight tonnage ('000 tonnes)*	*Percentage reduction in total deadweight*
September 1988	2,030	7,253	—
September 1989	1,929	6,544	9·8

Seafarers

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated reduction in the number of seafarers in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of seafarers on the General Council of British Shipping register at 31 December 1988 and at 30 June 1989 was as follows:

	Officers	*Ratings*	*Cadets*	*Total*
31 December 1988	9,322	12,860	447	22,629
30 June 1989	8,989	12,593	411	21,993
Per cent. reduction	−3·6	−2·1	−8·1	−2·8

Port State Control

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that the memorandum of understanding on port state control is strictly enforced to a uniform and high level throughout the EEC.

Mr. McLoughlin: Each signatory country of the memorandum of understanding should achieve an annual total of inspections corresponding to 25 per cent. of the estimated number of individual foreign merchant ships which enter its ports during a 12-month period. The United Kingdom has always exceeded the 25 per cent. figure of inspection of foreign flag vessels since the memorandum became operational. United Kingdom representatives have always endorsed the efforts of the secretariat of the port state control committee to encourage signatories of the memorandum, which include all littoral EEC countries, to achieve the 25 per cent. inspection rate.

Cycling

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from cycling organisations in England and Wales regarding *(a)* full provision for cyclists in new road schemes, *(b)* increases in local authorities' cycle budgets, *(c)* promotion of traffic-calming measures and *(d)* special funding for British Rail for cycle provision on trains; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Cyclists' Touring Club wrote in July proposing a series of measures including the four included in the question. I have replied pointing out that cycling does not need to be stimulated by public funding. Interest in cycling is high. Sales of new machines have been buoyant. Unfortunately cycling is one of the least safe means of transport, so the emphasis of the Government's work must be on making it safer. Cycle provision on trains is a matter for British Rail.

Council of Ministers

Sir Jim Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the outcome of the recent European Council of Transport Ministers meeting in Luxembourg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: I was pleased that the Council reached agreement on a new directive to ban the addition of certain types of older, and noisier, jet aircraft to Community fleets. This is a useful step in the process of moving towards an era of quieter aircraft.

The Council also agreed, subject to receiving the opinion of the European Parliament, to a regulation removing recommended road haulage tariffs between member states. We welcome this as part of the process of abolishing tariffs and reducing bureaucracy across the Community.

There was discussion but no agreement on the Commission's proposals for shipping "positive measures"; a proposed short-term road haulage cabotage experiment; a draft directive on training for drivers of dangerous goods vehicles; a proposal by the Commission for a programme of transport infrastructure funding; and fiscal harmonisation in road haulage. The Commission reported the current position in the Community's negotiations with Austria, Switzerland and Yugoslavia. Notes by the Presidency presented proposals on road safety, and on the development of railways in the Community.

I also attended an informal meeting of the Council in Paris on 6 October which was mainly devoted to a discussion of the Commission's recent proposals in the field of aviation.

"The Road User and the Law"

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in implementing proposals contained in the White Paper "The Road User and the Law".

Mr. Atkins: Many of the proposals announced on 7 February in the White Paper "The Road User and the Law" (CMD 576) will require legislation.

The further consultation outlined in the White Paper on the details of the legislative changes and administrative arrangements for key proposals is well advanced. Copies of the papers on driver retesting, vehicle prohibition and the use of technology for enforcement have been placed in the Library.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the total cost of the east London river crossing taking into account the changes in bridge design and the widening of the road to dual three lanes between the A13 and the Thamesmead spine road.

Mr. Portillo: The latest estimate of the total cost of the scheme at average 1984 prices is approximately £195 million. When converted to mid-1989 prices the estimate becomes £300 million.

Motorcycle Tests

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the budget allocated by his Department for the current financial year for motor cycle tests; whether that budget figure has been reached; and what arrangements are being made to ensure satisfactory delivery of the service for the remainder of the financial year.

Mr. Atkins: The new part 2 motorcycle test was estimated to cost £644,000 in 1989-90 (starting 2 October) on the assumption of 26,850 tests to be conducted and an average waiting time of four weeks. This remains our forecast. Following the pre-September surge to avoid the fee increase (to £24), both the new arrangements and demand are now settling down as forecast.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current waiting time for a motorcycle riding test in Leicestershire; what is the existing waiting list; and what action is taken to ensure that applicants are tested before their provisional licences expire after two years.

Mr. Atkins: Six weeks planned to reduce to four weeks by the end of the financial year. There are 300 tests at present booked for dates up to 15 December. Waiting times of this order should not present difficulties for motorcycle riders seeking test within the two years' term of their provisional licence; applicants with specific needs may ask to be given priority bookings.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of test inspectors for motorcycle tests in Leicestershire; how many tests they have carried out since the new test was introduced on 2 October; and what arrangements will be made to hold tests in venues other than the city of Leicester.

Mr. Atkins: Two examiners are available to conduct part 2 motorcycle tests in Leicestershire; 45 tests have been conducted in the county since 2 October and 50 tests a week have been booked to be conducted in November and into December. Additionally, it is proposed to conduct tests at Melton Mowbray from December and at Hinckley in the new year.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what type and cubic capacity of motorcycle is made available to test examiners of his Department; what is the approximate purchase price of these machines; and what steps have been taken to ensure public economy in this regard.

Mr. Atkins: 450cc to 800cc. The machines are lease hired at an average annual cost of £1,816 per machine following competitive tender.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what type of one-way radio equipment has been provided to motorcycle test examiners of his Department; what is the approximate purchase price of this equipment; and what steps have been taken to ensure public economy in this regard.

Mr. Atkins: Examiners have been provided with UHF FM 1·5 watt single-channel portable radios and ancillary equipment. Following extensive trials to identify the most suitable and cost-effective equipment these were purchased at a cost of £2,106 per set following competitive tenders.

Nuclear Fuel Train Journeys

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many waste nuclear fuel train journeys have been completed *(a)* with no accidents involved, and *(b)* with accidents involved, for each year since 1982 in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: There are at present about 350 loaded fuel flask movements per year. It is not practical for British Rail to provide statistics of all movements since 1982, but in that period there have been eight incidents during transport, all of which were minor.

In more than 25 years of nuclear fuel flask movements, not one incident has occurred which led to a release of even the smallest quantity of radioactivity, or to injury to any person caused by the nature of the contents.

Road Standards

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on his plans to put on a sound, long-term basis expenditure on maintenance and minor improvements to bring classified roads up to reasonably modern standards over the next decade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We are catching up with the backlogs of maintenance on motorways and other trunk roads as quickly as programming and traffic management considerations allow and in line with the targets announced in April. Once the backlogs have been eliminated, a steady programme of major maintenance will be required to keep pace with ongoing deterioration. We have greatly improved the strength of motorways and other trunk roads built in recent years to increase their life before reconstruction becomes necessary.

Other classified roads are the responsibility of local highway authorities, who determine their own maintenance priorities.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what support he is giving to research about aircraft noise reduction, and what financial support is available for the implementation of measures aimed at reducing the level of aircraft noise *(a)* near the main Scottish airports and *(b)* generally.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry expects to spend some £1·8 million in the current financial year on research on reducing aircraft noise at source. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has made schemes for Heathrow and Gatwick airports under section 79 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 whereby the airport company makes grants for noise insulation of dwellings; it is also intended to make a scheme for Stansted. At other airports, not designated under section 79, such measures are for the airport management.

Public Transport Proposals

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the public transport proposals currently under consideration by his Department for grant or investment approval in London and the south-east.

Mr. Portillo: The majority of investment decisions are taken by the public transport operators, the passenger transport authorities and executives, and county councils.

The Department of Transport is considering the case for new rail lines identified by the central and east London Rail studies; for an extension of the docklands light railway to Greenwich and Lewisham; and for the investment required to improve the existing BR rail lines and to buy new rolling stock to carry Channel Tunnel traffic in 1993. Channel-tunnel-related investment is not eligible for grant.

London Assessment Studies

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has received the consultants' reports on stage 2b of the London assessment studies;

(2) when he intends to publish the results of stage 26 of the London assessment studies.

Mr. Atkins: We expect to receive reports from the consultants for all four London assessment studies in the next month or so. Arrangements for printing will be put in hand as soon as possible for publication early in December. The reports will be available for purchase and there will be free summaries. Displays will be offered at town halls and public libraries throughout the study areas.

In order to reduce uncertainty, we intend to announce at the time the reports are published which options will not be considered further. We shall be inviting comments from local authorities, other organisations and members of the public before reaching firm decisions on the remaining options.

Public Transport Fares (EC)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the comparative fares for a standard public transport journey in each of the European Community capital cities.

Mr. Portillo: There is no agreed definition of a "standard public transport journey", and the nature and circumstances of public transport in European Community capital cities vary.

Injuries and Deaths (Trunk Roads)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department has for use on trunk roads in order to prevent injuries or deaths to pedestrians; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government attach great importance to making trunk and local roads safer for pedestrians. In April 1989 following a thorough review of pedestrian safety on all roads we published a leaflet entitled "Pedestrian Safety" which outlined a number of initiatives aimed at making walking safer. The implementation of the proposals on local roads, where the great majority of pedestrian casualties occur, is primarily for the local authorities. The proposals also apply as appropriate to trunk roads, standards for which already incorporate requirements to protect pedestrians. In addition, the trunk road construction programme will continue to take traffic away from roads in towns and villages which are heavily used by pedestrians, thus making a significant contribution to safety.

M1

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the terminal date for completion of the road works near junction 12 on the north-bound carriageway of the M1; what financial incentive has been provided to the contractor to complete the work ahead of schedule; and what quantification he has made in financial terms of the cost to business and industry from the daily congestion and delay there.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* The works are likely to finish in mid-November, about a month ahead of the original programme. The contract was let on a lane-rental basis with the contractor paying a fee to the Department related to the amount of carriageway space he uses. The fee in this case is a maximum of £25,000 per day. This provides considerable incentive to complete the works early. The lane rental fee is based on the estimated cost of delays to the travelling public. Calculations take into account the range of vehicles and whether business or leisure use is involved.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will specify any action taken by his Department to minimise the delay and inconvenience caused to road users by the major road works near junction 12 on the north-bound carriageway of the M1 since July; and why there has been no use of contraflow techniques.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* Lane rental has been used to encourage the contractor to complete the works in the shortest possible time consistent with quality and price. The traffic management arrangements use the minimum road space necessary for safe and efficient working on the site. In the current phase of lane closures the cones are removed during peak hours to enable three lanes to be open. Contraflow has, where appropriate, been used throughout the contract.

A1

19. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to extend dual carriageway on the A1 north of the Morpeth bypass.

Mr. Atkins: An improvement scheme for dualling a section of the A1 at Cawledge, south of Alnwick, commenced on 10 April 1989 and is expected to be completed early 1990.

Other dual carriageway proposals in the road programme for the A1 north of Morpeth are the Brownieside improvement and Marshall Meadows to the Scottish Border improvement. On current planning the start of works on these schemes is scheduled for the spring 1991.

A56-M63

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will review urgently the road safety position with respect to the A56 Chester road, between the intersection with the M63 motorway and Warwick road north;

(2) what information he has about the number of accidents involving motor vehicles and pedestrians on the A56 Chester road between the intersection with the M63 motorway and Warwick road north which resulted in *(a)* fatalities, *(b)* serious injury, *(c)* minor injury and *(d)* other over the last three years.

Mr. Atkins: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern in the light of the recent tragic accident there. However, these are matters for Trafford metropolitan borough council as highway authority for that stretch of the A56.

Search and Rescue (North Devon)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will accept the invitation of the hon. Member for Devon, North to visit the north Devon coastline and the Swansea coastguard station in order to assess the efficiency of the emergency services concerned with search and rescue.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend thanks the hon. Member for his invitation. He is, however, content that there is adequate provision of services for maritime search and rescue in the area and has no immediate plans for any such visit.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 31 October 1989

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Industrial Location

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to change the current arrangements for encouraging the location of industry across the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Where industry locates in the United Kingdom is a matter for commercial decision. Regional industrial policy provides incentives to encourage industry to invest in the assisted areas of the country. There are at present no plans to change this policy.

I am however considering the possibilities for realising the property assets of the English Industrial Estates Corporation. Jointly with the board of the corporation, I have commissioned a study to advise on this and also to report on the most effective mechanisms for promoting private sector investment in speculative industrial and commercial space in the assisted areas. This is consistent with our policy that English Estates' first priority is to encourage and facilitate greater private sector activity while focusing its own direct provision in areas where, for the time being, that cannot be achieved.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on payments made to those affected by the collapse of Barlow Clowes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I refer my hon. Friend to my letters of 16 August and 30 October to all Members, copies of which are placed in the Library.

Chemical Exports

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what volumes of *(a)* chloroethanol, *(b)* dimethylamine, *(c)* potassium fluoride and *(d)* dymethylamine hydrochloride have been exported, and to which respective countries, since May 1979; when exports of each respective chemical were halted; and for what reasons.

Mr. Redwood: Statistics on the export of these chemicals are not available.

A licence has been required to export chloroethanol, dimethylamine and potassium fluoride to Iran and Iraq since 12 April 1984 when these items became subject to control under the Export of Goods (Control) Order. The Export of Goods (Control) (Amendment No. 4) Order 1989 which came into force on 31 July 1989 extended the control on exports of these chemicals to Libya and Syria. It also brought the export of dimethylamine hydrochloride under control to Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria.

Controls on the exports of these chemicals have been introduced because of the Government's concerns about the proliferation of the capability for producing chemical weapons. Applications for a licence to export these chemicals to the destinations for which they are controlled are considered on a case-by-case basis in the light of stringent criteria.

Marine Licensing

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which EEC countries charge a fee for a VHF marine licence for private pleasure craft.

Mr. Forth: Details of EEC countries' radio licence fees are not collected centrally. Inquiries made to a number of administrations indicate that fees are charged for the use of maritime radio by private pleasure craft.

Measurement Accreditation

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to ensure that other EEC countries are complying with the Euro-norm agreement on measurement accreditation.

Mr. Forth: The United Kingdom's national measurement accreditation service (NAMAS) is co-operating with other Community member states to ensure the implementation of the European standards, the EN 45000 series, which define the criteria for laboratories, the accreditation of laboratories and for the accreditation bodies. These standards are expected to be increasingly used by the Commission in new approach directives and each member state will be responsible to ensure that the requirements of the directives are fully met.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which EEC countries have a national measurement accreditation service to the same standard as the United Kingdom.

Mr. Forth: The EEC Commission has placed a contract with the French Reseau National d'Essais (RNE) to carry out a study of accreditation systems operated by member states with the aim of establishing their compliances with international codes of practice and in particular the European standards for accreditation based on the EN 45000 series standards. It is expected that this report will be available in December 1989 and the national measurement accreditation service (NAMAS) will examine the report in detail.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which EEC countries have sought the advice of his Department on measurement accreditation.

Mr. Forth: Many of the EEC countries have discussed with the Department's national measurement accreditation service (NAMAS) the development of their own accreditation systems. Additionally representatives of seven member states have attended the NAMAS assessor training course to gain experience of assessment techniques and to assist in setting up their own training courses.

Consumer Goods (Imports)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the principal categories of consumer goods imported into the United Kingdom, by value, for the years 1986, 1987, 1988 and the first half of 1989.

Mr. Redwood: The figures are as follows:

United Kingdom Imports (£ million)

SITC Description	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*January—June 1989*
122 Tobacco, Manufactured	120	115	109	50
553 Perfumes, Cosmetics and Toiletries	233	258	282	145
554 Soap, Detergents and Polishes	143	181	210	98
642 Paper and Board Products	449	519	590	341
658 Made-up Textiles	196	211	238	132
659 Floorcoverings	337	393	432	222
665 Glassware	185	173	206	101
666 Pottery	96	105	117	63
696 Cutlery	61	76	83	43
697 Household Equipment of Metal	196	189	201	106
76 TV, Radio, Hi-Fi and Telecom Equipment	2,402	2,801	3,177	1,680
775 Domestic Appliances	905	917	989	430
781 Motor Cars	4,809	5,024	6,752	3,871
785 Motorcycles and cycles	150	181	226	133
82 Furniture and Bedding	776	878	989	577
83 Travel Goods, Handbags	200	231	251	135
84 Clothing	2,386	2,778	3,108	1,643
85 Footwear	734	799	908	489
885 Watches and Clocks	268	286	340	155
892 Printed Matter	585	659	795	400
894 Toys, Games and Sporting Goods	536	662	686	359
897 Jewellery	414	421	506	279
898 Musical Instruments	625	729	803	434

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics

Notes:

1. Full descriptions of the SITC trade classification headings are contained in Business Monitor MA21: Guide to the classifications for Overseas Trade Statistics.
2. Figures for food and drink are not included as they are the responsibility of MAFF.

Takeover Bids

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what procedure is followed by the Office of Fair Trading in its examination of takeover bids.

Mr. Redwood: The procedures are conveniently set out in a booklet produced by the Office of Fair Trading entitled "MERGERS—a guide to the procedures under the Fair Trading Act 1973". I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Beer

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what decisions he has reached in the light of representations on the draft orders on the supply of beer.

Mr. Ridley: I have received representations from a wide range of parties including large and small brewers, tenants' associations, and wholesale and consumer organisations. All representations have been given careful consideration.

I have now reached final decisions on the orders. The main changes I have decided to make are as follows. First, I have decided that national brewers who are required to free a proportion of their properties from product ties should be able to sell such properties without disadvantage provided they are sold free of ties. This amendment will encourage a more diverse pattern of ownership. I have also decided that in view of the substantial changes brewers will be required to make to a large number of tenancy agreements to free part of their estates the period for such adjustment will run to November 1992.

Secondly, many representations have emphasised the importance of ensuring that tenants of the national brewers should not be subject to pressures to discourage them from exercising their freedom to choose to supply a guest beer. Accordingly, I have amended the guest beer provisions to block a number of possible loopholes that brewers might have used to deter tenants from exercising their choice, and to make it clearer that tenants should be entirely free to choose their supplier.

Thirdly, the position in respect of those companies, mainly small brewers, who are not subsidiaries but nevertheless fell to be regarded as parts of large brewery groups by virtue of minority shareholdings in them is amended. It will now be provided that no obligations will fall on a company solely because a member of a large brewery group has a minority interest in it. The tied estates of such companies will, however, still count towards the brewery group's limit on tied houses if more than 15 per cent. of the voting rights of the company are held, though account is now due to be taken of the extent to which control of shares is diluted through intermediary companies, if the group owns less than 50 per cent. of the voting rights. The 15 per cent. rule remains, as I believe that a group can exercise a substantial influence at this level of shareholding. The rule will act as some deterrent to further concentration in the industry.

Finally, the definition of licensed premises has been changed so that the limits on the numbers of tied houses held by national brewers will no longer bite on premises with restricted licences, such as restaurants, where the supply of beer is not a significant part of the business.

The Office of Fair Trading will be making arrangements to monitor compliance with the orders. The director general will need to collect information for this purpose, and a further order will be made shortly to cover this.

As was made clear in my right hon. and noble Friend's statement of 10 July the director general will be assessing the effectiveness of the measures in addressing the market detriments found by the MMC once the orders have had time to take effect. The Government will consider the need for further measures in the light of the director general's conclusions. If in the meantime, however, it becomes clear that further steps are necessary either to ensure compliance with the intentions behind the order, or to deal with other anti-competitive or undesirable practices, I will not hesitate to act as necessary.

In this connection, I shall be keeping under review the position of tenants in advance of enactment of legislation to put their security of tenure on the same basis as that of other business tenants. If necessary, I will consider making an interim order to protect their position. I have also asked the director general to keep under review any anti-competitive moves to limit access to the market by independent manufacturers of beer or other drinks who are without tied estates, or by wholesalers. The Government intend separately to legislate to give tenants protection under the landlord and tenant legislation as soon as parliamentary time permits.

The changes I have outlined, and other technical points raised in representations, have required a significant number of changes to the orders. Copies of the orders have today been placed in the Libraries of both House and sent to the principal interested parties.

Any representations on technical drafting points that arise from the revised texts should be submitted to my Department by 10 November. The Loan Ties, Licensed Premises and Wholesale Prices Order will then be made, and the draft Tied Estate Order, which requires resolutions of both Houses, will be laid shortly afterwards.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on proposals by certain breweries to permit tenants to sell a guest beer but to replace any sales lost to the landlord brewery by higher rent.

Mr. Redwood: I have received representations from the National Licensed Victuallers Association and others that this might occur. It is being made clear in a separate statement made today that the brewer cannot discriminate against a tenant exercising this right.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has had since the publication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission Report on the supply of beer specifically supporting the introduction of a sliding scale of duty; whether he now favours such a proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Well over 2,000 written representations have been received. An analysis of each one to determine whether a particular point had been made would be possible only at disproportionate cost. Officials of Customs and Excise are in the process of informally consulting with the trade on the possibility of changing to a method of charging duty based on the beer that is actually produced. The final decision is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has had since the publication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer which regret the absence from its report of recommendations to reduce regional and subregional monopolies; whether he will extend the guest ale provision to public houses owned by regional brewers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Well over 2,000 written representations have been received. An analysis of each one to determine whether a particular point had been made would be possible only at disproportionate cost. It has been made clear that the requirement to allow tied tenants to choose a guest beer will apply only to the national brewers.

House of Fraser

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the serious fraud squad has completed its inquiries into the issues raised in the report of inspectors into the acquisition of House of Fraser; and when he now expects to publish the report.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* I cannot comment on the state of the inquiries to which my hon. Friend refers. Questions relating to the operation of the serious fraud office are for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. It remains the intention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to publish the report at the earliest possible moment consistent with the even-handed administration of justice.

CFCs

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what facilities exist for the recycling of chlorofluorocarbons from the foam in refrigerators; what percentage is currently recycled; and what steps he is taking to increase this percentage.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* Recovery of chlorofluorocarbons from the insulating foam in refrigerators is technically very difficult, and I know of no facilities operating successfully at the moment in the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend has commissioned a wide-ranging study into the recovery, recycling and destruction of CFCs; the Government will take its finding into account when considering if any action is called for on this issue. The results of the study are expected early next year.

Jaguar plc

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on Jaguar plc.

Mr. Ridley: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that I made in the House earlier today.

Professional Liability

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will publish the report of the studies on professional liability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The report of the three study teams on professional liability under the overall chairmanship of Professor Andrew Likierman is published today. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

The Government set up these studies last year because of the concern expressed by many professionals about the extent of claims for professional negligence and the cost and availability of professional indemnity insurance. This is an area in which there was a wealth of anecdote, but little hard fact. The studies acknowledge that there are difficulties in obtaining comprehensive information, but have none the less brought together much useful material.

The report finds that the same underlying changes in insurance and law have affected all three groups of professions, but that the effects of the changes on these groups have been different. The study teams have therefore recommended a different package of proposals for each profession.

We accept the broad conclusions of the report, that professionals have been faced with an increasing exposure to negligence claims, and that the cyclical nature of the insurance market means that at times costs of insurance increase sharply. The report finds that so far the changing position of professionals is having only limited effects on the quality or cost of the service they are providing to consumers. We are conscious of the need to balance the potential adverse effects on consumers against the right of consumers who are victims of negligence to recover damages to the extent possible.

The construction professionals and the surveyors study teams recommend steps which professionals, their institutions and the associations representing all parties could take to improve standards, practice and collaboration. The Government welcome these recommendations.

Several of the recommendations addressed to Government are very wide-ranging, including proposals for reform relating to joint and several liability, legal aid and time limitation periods for claims. It is recommended for example that the Law Commission should be asked to consider the case for changes in the law of joint and several liability in commercial cases. While the Government recognise the strongly held feelings that the current arrangements in these areas can in some circumstances operate unfairly against the professions, the changes suggested would have important effects well beyond the immediate context of professional liability. They will require fuller consideration before the Government can form a view.

Other proposals will be looked at as legislative opportunities become available. The current Companies Bill has already provided an opportunity to pursue two of the recommendations of the auditors study team. We accepted the proposal that the law on directors' insurance should be clarified so that a company can reimburse a director for his liability insurance. We decided against the proposal that an auditor should be able to limit his liability by agreement with the company. Consultation revealed that non-auditors were generally opposed to the idea because it could limit legal redress in the rare cases of poor audits. Some recommendations, however, can already be seen to raise practical difficulties which are such as to preclude further investigation.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Trade and Industry and other colleagues as appropriate will be considering the outstanding points.

We are very grateful to Professor Likierman, to the chairmen of the three study teams, William Morrison, Professor Donald Bishop and Ian Oddy, and to the study team members, all of whom have voluntarily put so much work into this review. We are also grateful to all those who provided evidence for the studies.

WALES

Forestry

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has considered establishing a separate forestry body for Wales, in line with his proposals to create a unified Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have seen no need to consider such a change.

Swansea Downs (Nuclear Submarines)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will commission a study on the effects on tourism in Swansea bay and the Gower peninsula of plans to create a reserve Z berth for nuclear-powered submarines at Swansea downs; and what communications he has received from Swansea leisure centre over the Z berth plans.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Department has no plans to commission such a study and I have received no communication from Swansea leisure centre about the proposal.

Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue a detailed consultation paper setting out the structure of the proposed merged body of the Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission for Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Department has no plans to do so. Full consultation is already taking place between Government Departments and the statutory agencies on this and other pertinent issues.

Welsh Language

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many requests for exemptions from the requirement to teach Welsh as part of the core curriculum have been received from schools in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* each local education authority and *(c)* Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have received requests for exemption from teaching Welsh in the national curriculum from 11 schools in Wales. These include four in Gwent; three in Clwyd; two each in West Glamorgan and Dyfed, both in Pembrokeshire.

National Health Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by what date the current maintenance backlog on National Health Service properties will be cleared on current and planned capital spending for the National Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Backlog maintenance is a term generally used to describe the work necessary to bring National

Health Service property up to a standard of full life expectancy where no expenditure except for routine maintenance is required. District health authorities' programmes to achieve this include investment in the maintenance of buildings which are to be retained, the rationalisation of services to release accommodation which is no longer practicably suitable and the construction of new facilities. They are encouraged to give a high priority to these activities and their performance is monitored by the Department as part of its annual review process. However, in view of progressive improvements in the standards of accommodation required, the continuing need for maintenance investment and the long-term nature of some of the measures to improve the conditions of the estate, it is not possible to estimate when the current maintenance backlog will be substantially eliminated.

NHS White Paper

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money he has currently allocated for the implementation of the White Paper; what proportion of the sums allocated will be used to fund *(a)* information technology, *(b)* medical audit, *(c)* the Welsh Office value for money unit, *(d)* training, *(e)* family practitioner committees, *(f)* health authority costs, and *(g)* treatment centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Department has provided an additional £5 million toward the cost of implementing the White Paper proposals in the current financial year. This has been allocated as follows:

	£ million
(a) information technology (including the resource management initiative)	2·34
(b) medical audit	0·11
(c) Value for Money Unit	0·18
(d) training	0·14
(e) family practitioner committees	0·11
(f) health authorities's discretionary use	1·62
(g) treatment centres	0·50
	5·00

The provision of these additional resources reflect the importance that the Government give to the major programme of improvement now being undertaken within the NHS and their recognition of the need for adequate investment. Provision for 1990-91 and subsequent years is currently under consideration as part of the annual review of public expenditure and will be announced in due course.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of *(a)* the total cost of implementation of the proposals contained within the National Health Service White Paper in Wales, *(b)* the manpower implications for nurse staffing and *(c)* the manpower implications for financial, management, administrative and clerical staffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Government's broad estimates of the financial and manpower implications of implementing the White Paper will be given in the financial and explanatory memorandum of the NHS reform Bill. These estimates will relate to the NHS generally and will apply equally to Wales as to other parts of the United Kingdom. The more detailed manpower implications of the proposals are being addressed as part of the ongoing manpower planning activities being undertaken within the NHS in Wales.

Teachers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the extent of local education authority schools using *(a)* changes to school timetables to cover vacancies and *(b)* non-specialists to teach subjects for which they have minimal qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information concerning the extent to which changes to school timetables are made to cover staff vacancies or other unforeseen circumstances is not held by the Department. The results of the secondary school staffing survey undertaken this year will provide information on the teaching staff employed, their qualifications and the teaching they undertook. The results will be available towards the end of the year.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what studies he has undertaken on the size and characteristics of the pool of inactive teachers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There have been no recent surveys on out-of-service teachers in England and Wales although we are currently considering whether a survey would be beneficial and how best it should be undertaken. In the meantime the education support grant programme for 1990-91 provides funding for LEA pilot projects designed to encourage LEAs to maintain contact with teachers who leave the service and to attract back into the service people in their areas who left the profession some years ago.

Welsh-medium Teachers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the number of Welsh-medium teachers needed to staff the national curriculum; what is the current number of Welsh language teachers employed by local education authorities in Wales; and what is the number of students currently training as Welsh-medium teachers.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The national curriculum is not expected to create a need for more Welsh-medium teachers overall in the short term. However its introduction will increase the number of secondary Welsh-medium teachers required for some subjects while decreasing the number required for others. Some retraining of secondary teachers may therefore be necessary to provide for the change in subject mix.

The numbers of teachers required to teach Welsh as a language will increase as a result of the introduction of the national curriculum. The future numbers are currently being discussed with LEAs. The results of these discussions will enable us to judge the scale and shape of the retraining and recruitment programmes for the years ahead.

Welsh language specialists tend to be concentrated in the secondary sector. Current information on the number of Welsh language teachers employed by LEAs in Wales will not be available until the results of the 1989 secondary school staffing survey are to hand later this year. There are 358 students currently training as Welsh-medium teachers at initial teacher training institutions in Wales.

Teacher Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of students who have received bursaries for initial teacher training in Wales; what is the total value of those bursaries; and what is the numbers of students by teaching speciality.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Between 1986-87 and 1988-89 a total of 379 students have received £526,000 from the bursary scheme as shown in the following table:

Subject	*Total students*
Mathematics	153
Physics	119
CDT[1]	107
	379

[1] An additional equipment allowance of £200 is paid to CDT students.

NHS Capital Expenditure

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what will be the capital expenditure at each National Health Service treatment centre site, on *(a)* new buildings and *(b)* alterations to existing buildings; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he intends to make any financial provision for the travel costs of patients using the new National Health Service treatment centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on Monday 30 October 1989.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the number of beds in Welsh hospitals in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* the current year with the annual rate of decline in the periods 1974 to 1979 and 1979 to 1989;

(2) what was the average bed occupancy in National Health Service hospitals in Wales in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* the current year.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 24 October 1989]*: The information requested is shown in the following table:

	1974	*1979*	*1st quarter 1989*	*Per cent change per annum*	
Average daily available beds:				1974-79	1979-89
Acute[1]	12,190·8	11,302·7	10,350·4	−1·5	−0·9
Long stay	12,516·7	12,153·4	9,938·0	−0·6	2·0
Percentage Occupancy:					
Acute	68·4	68·3	70·4		
Long stay	89·9	86·7	84·2		

[1] Excludes geriatrics, younger disabled, mental illness and mental handicap.

My hon. Friend will wish to note that the rate of change of bed numbers in the long-stay sector has increased since 1979 in line with the policy of caring for such patients in the community where possible. Over the same period the increase in percentage occupancy of acute beds had been accompanied by an increase in the number of acute in-patients treated of 85,193 or 26·9 per cent., which represents an increase of 2·6 per cent. a year. The equivalent figures for 1974 to 1979 were an increase of 14,458, representing 4·8 per cent. or 0·9 per cent. a year.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

GCSE

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what level of failure to complete the GCSE examination is expected now that GCSE has been introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The most recent figures show that of the 5·23 million entries for the 1988 summer GCSE examinations, 4·6 per cent. were recorded as absent. A further 3·4 per cent. were ungraded.

National Curriculum

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance has been issued on the national curriculum in relation to special schools for children with learning difficulties.

Mrs. Rumbold: The National Curriculum Council has recently published a booklet entitled "A Curriculum For All" which gives guidance on ensuring access to the national curriculum for all pupils with special educational needs, whether in maintained special schools or mainstream schools. I have placed a copy in the Library. The Department has also recently issued a joint circular with the Department of Health on assessments and statements of special educational needs which also includes guidance on the national curriculum. Departmental circulars on various other aspects of the national curriculum also include guidance on their application to pupils with special educational needs.

Leicester Polytechnic

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement of the finance available from public funds for Leicester polytechnic; and what special provision will be made *(a)* to re-open a building which has had to be closed on grounds of safety; *(b)* to prevent further closures on such grounds; to bring the general stock of buildings into a reasonable state of repair.

Mr. Jackson: The allocation of public funds to Leicester polytechnic is the responsibility of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC). I understand that the Cumberland street annexe building, which was closed on safety grounds in June 1989, has been replaced by accommodation in a larger and more suitable building with the aid of a specific allocation of £700,000 from the PCFC's contingency fund. The safety and state of repair of the buildings is essentially the responsibility of the polytechnic itself.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will express the additional sum of £600 million for teachers' pay 1990-91, stated in his remit to the interim advisory committee, in terms of percentage increases in the inter-quartile range of private sector pay settlements for the latest available 12-month period; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The interim advisory committee's remit represents an increase of some 7·6 per cent. on the 1990-91 teachers' pay bill. the inter-quartile range of private sector non-manual basic pay movements for the 12 months ending in June 1989 was 6·3 per cent. to 8·5 per cent, with a median of 7·3 per cent.

Statemented Children

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish a table showing, for local education authorities in England in each of the last three years for which records exist *(a)* how many children and what proportion of children of school age have been statemented as having special educational needs and *(b)* what extra resources in terms of teacher-hours per statemented pupil per year have been made available by each local education authority in England, respectively.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information on teacher resources in special education is not available centrally. Information on numbers of pupils with statements will be provided as soon as possible.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Remand

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to take steps to bring remand limits in line with the Scottish limit of 110 days.

Mr. John Patten: No. Custody time limits are now in force in England and Wales, except in London and the south-east, where we plan to introduce them in 1990. The limits in England and Wales are 56 days to summary trial or 70 days to committal in magistrates' courts; and 112 days from committal to arraignment in the Crown court. In Scotland, the limits are 40 days to trial for summary offences and 110 days from commitment to trial for indictment cases. The different limits in England and Wales reflect the diferences in pre-trial procedures and the amount of business.

Trials

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends to take to bring the United Kingdom in line with the prompt trial requirement of the European convention on human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The United Kingdom complies with the European convention on human rights requirements for trial for any criminal charge against a person within a reasonable time.

Crime (Investigations)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to setting up a national criminal intelligence unit along the lines of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States and as to what purposes it would have which are not adequately covered by existing policing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The developing challenge of serious criminal activity across local, regional and national borders requires effective enforcement counter-measures, based on the best intelligence. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) said in his speech to the Police Superintendents Association annual conference on 26 September, we need to make sure that these new needs are met. We have therefore initiated consultations with the Association of Chief Police Officers who have accordingly set up a working party on our criminal intelligence arrangements to assess the case for a national criminal intelligence unit, as part of the strengthening of police co-operation at home and internationally to deal with serious cross-border crime.

Any such unit will be necessarily different from that of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States of America, and will need to take account both of existing national intelligence arrangements for specific kinds of crime, notably drugs, and our system of locally based police forces and regional crime squads.

Immigration

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the scale of the abuse of immigration laws by people obtaining false birth certificates; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Detailed information is not available, but there is some evidence of abuse in individual cases, which are under consideration. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health published a Green Paper entitled "Registration: a modern service" (Cm. 531) in December 1988. The Green Paper contained proposals to limit the issue of certificates from the more recent records of the registration of births, marriages and deaths to those who have a legitimate interest in them. My right hon. Friend is considering possible restrictions on the issue of certificates in the light of responses received.

Trial by Jury

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to restrict the right of an accused person to opt for trial by jury.

Mr. John Patten: We have no present plans to do so.

Hunt Saboteurs

Mr. Ames: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will undertake a review of the law with a view to extending the criminal law to cover trespass on land in cases involving the activities of hunt saboteurs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to undertake such a review. Trespass on land is in general a matter for the civil law. There are powers to deal with those who commit criminal acts such as criminal damage, assault or causing harassment, alarm or distress while trespassing.

Guildford Four

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to write to Patrick Armstrong, Gerard Conlon, Carole Richardson and Paul Hill expressing apologies on behalf of Her Majesty's Government for the injustice they suffered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) expressed regret at this serious miscarriage of justice in his statement to the House on 19 October at columns 271-73.

Football (Arrests)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to analyse the arrests made at Football League matches in London *(a)* outside the ground, *(b)* inside the ground and *(c)* by the nature of the alleged offence in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: During the 1988-89 season at Football League matches in London there were 649 arrests inside grounds and 724 outside directly related to the matches. Figures showing the nature of the alleged offences or the outcome of these arrests are not collated centrally by the Metropolitan police or the Association of Chief Police Officers, and we have no plans to ask that this work should be undertaken.

Television Licence Fees

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet able to announce the level of the television licence fees to take effect from 1 April 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: On 27 October 1987, at column *204*, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) announced that the licence fees for the three years starting from 1 April 1988 would be calculated in accordance with changes in the retail prices index, which determines the rate of increase of pensions and other state benefits. The RPI figure for September published on 13 October showed a year-on-year increase of 7·6 per cent. I have accordingly decided that from 1 April 1990 the colour licence fee should be £71 and the monochrome fee £24. The necessary regulations will be laid before the House in due course.

As was made clear in last year's White Paper on "Broadcasting in the '90s" (Cm 517), fee increases from 1 April 1991 onwards may be set at less than RPI in a way which takes account of the BBC's capacity to generate income from subscription.

Vulnerable Prisoners (Report)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has yet received the report of the working group on the management of vulnerable prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I have received this helpful and thorough report, copies of which are being placed in the Library. The study focused particularly on the arrangements concerning prisoners segregated for their own protection. The main improvements recommended, all of which I have accepted, with a procedural modification in respect of one, are:

(a) Rule 43 of the prison rules to be amended (i) to allow authoritative directions on its interpretation to be given by the Secretary of State; (ii) to allow governors to authorise segregation for up to three days; and (iii) to remove an anomaly affecting young persons under 21 held in prisons and remand centres Young offender institution rule 46 also to be amended as at (i) and (ii). The aim of (i) is to be achieved by administrative guidance rather than by amendment of the rules;

(b) a board of visitors, on a proposal of the governor, to be able to decide, in the light of facilities available, to dispense with rule 43 controls for a particular group of vulnerable prisoners;

(c) present guidance on the personal legal liability of individual officers to be revised in supportive terms;

(d) certain training prisons to be re-organised to take rule 43—own protection—prisoners, so that they can be allocated from local prisons in the normal way;

(e) creation of a further vulnerable prisoner unit for about 100 category B prisoners;

(f) improvements in regimes and implementation of proposed guidelines on best practice to be carried forward through governors' annual contracts for 1990-91 (earlier wherever possible), under the functional responsibility of a senior member of the management.

While certain recommendations requiring resources may take some time to implement fully, most of the 35 recommendations are resource-neutral and work on bringing them into effect has been put in hand.

Metropolitan Police Operations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has regarding the number of occasions in the past 12 months when the Metropolitan police have invited representatives of the media to accompany police officers on major operations; at what command level decisions are taken to invite a media presence; and what criteria are used in such cases.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 18 October 1989]*: I understand from the Commissioner that the position is as follows. Media representatives accompany police officers on a wide variety of operations about which it is not possible to generalise. Arrangements are made centrally or locally by invitation from the police or on request from the media. Figures are not collated centrally, but the number of such arrangements exceeds 750 a year.

Decisions to invite media representatives to witness raids are made by officers of chief superintendent rank or above, in consultation with the Metropolitan police directorate of public affairs.

Invitations to the media are an important part of the Commissioner's policy of encouraging greater public understanding of police operations; are part of his policy of openness; and are an example of the accountability of the police to the public, on whose behalf they operate. The resulting news coverage may act as a deterrent to criminals, and provides independent reporting of events which might, otherwise, attract false and malicious allegations.

ENVIRONMENT

Rural Development Commission

99. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many marketing consultancy grants have been made by the Rural Development Commission in the past year.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Rural Development Commission made 71 marketing consultancy grants in the year ended 31 March 1989, the latest period for which figures are readily available.

Housing Expenditure (Lambeth)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the housing capital expenditure which Lambeth council is permitted to undertake from capital receipts in addition to the approved housing investment programme of £30·6 million.

Mr. Chope: No such estimate has been made. It would be possible to construct a theoretical estimate based on information reported by Lambeth council, but as authorities are free to vire receipts and borrowing between services in 1988-89, and to use receipts for non-prescribed capital expenditure, such a theoretical estimate would be of limited value.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Nature Conservancy Council takes non-scientific criteria into account when declaring, confirming or revoking sites of special scientific interest under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Nature Conservancy Council's "Guidelines for Selection of Biological SSSIs" gives details of the scientific guidelines currently in use. The NCC proposes also to publish guidelines in respect of geological and physiographical SSSIs in the context of its geological conservation review. In the exercise of its duty, under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the council has a duty under section 37 of the Countryside Act 1968 to have regard to the needs of agriculture, forestry and the economic and social interests of rural areas.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on initiatives he plans to promote in response to the conclusions of the Commonwealth expert group on climate change and sea level rise, in respect of Her Majesty's Government's policies on mitigation of the greenhouse effect;

(2) if he, or any other Minister or official of his Department, was present at, or presented a paper to, the seminar on the greenhouse effect at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers on 29 September;

(3) what departmental representation there was, and what departmental papers were presented, at the global conference on the greenhouse effect, co-sponsored by the United Nations environment programme, held in Japan in September.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We welcome the contribution that the report of the Commonwealth expert group makes to the debate on climate change, and we recognise the particular concern of some Commonwealth countries about a potential rise in sea-levels. The Langkawi declaration on the environment which followed the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting supported the work of the intergovernmental panel on climate change and endorsed the United Kingdom's call for an international convention on climate change. We are fully committed to the work of the IPCC, in which the United Kingdom is playing a leading role, and we will continue to press the case for a framework convention on climate change.

There was no ministerial representation at the IME seminar on 29 September. An official from the Building Research Establishment presented a paper entitled "Energy Efficiency in Buildings and the Greenhouse Effect."

There was no departmental representation at the conference on the global environment and human response held in Tokyo on 11 to 13 September 1989.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department differentiates between global warming caused by *(a)* natural and *(b)* man-made changes; what information he has on the reasons for global temperature rises before chlorofluorocarbons; and if his Department has made an appraisal of the thesis on global warming of Doctor Bruce Denness of the Bureau of Applied Sciences.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There is a "natural" greenhouse effect caused by the earth's atmosphere without which the earth would not be habitable. Current concerns arise from the increase in the concentration of anthropogenic greenhouse gases including carbon dioxide and the chlorofluorocarbons. The impact of those increases, and the effects which will flow from them, are the subject of intensive scientific review within the intergovernmental panel on climate change which is due to report next summer. I understand that report is unlikely to endorse the views of Dr. Denness.

Trades Union Congress (Charter for the Environment)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent meetings he has had with representatives of the Trades Union Congress over its charter for the environment, adopted in September.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not met representatives of the Trades Union Congress to discuss its charter, but he has recently accepted an invitation from the general secretary to do so.

Pesticides

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the report on pesticide use in the United Kingdom, sent to him on 7 August by the Green Alliance and the British Agrochemicals Association.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has replied to these organisations on behalf of all the Ministers responsible for the control of pesticides in a letter dated 26 September. A copy of the letter has been deposited today in the Library of the House.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the performance assessment of geological isolation systems for radioactive waste programmes sponsored by the Commission of the European Communities; and what are the implications of the PAGIS programme for future nuclear waste disposal in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: PAGIS (Performance Assessment of Geological Isolation Systems), a six-year multinational research project on the safety assessment of high-level waste (HLW) disposal, was launched in 1982 as part of the Community plan of action in the field of radioactive waste management. Reports of the PAGIS project have been published by the European Commission. PAGIS reinforces the Government view that all categories of radioactive waste can in principle be safely disposed of in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received a copy of the report from the European Commission on the evaluation of the third Community programme on radioactive waste management and storage, 1985-1989, published in July as document EUR 12264 EN; and what are the implications for the United Kingdom of this programme for the United Kingdom's radioactive waste inventory.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department received a copy of the executive summary of document EUR 12264 EN in July. The programme has no implications for the United Kingdom's radioactive waste inventory.

Milton Keynes Year of the Environment

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what support he has given to the Milton Keynes Year of the Environment project launched on 19 September; and when he plans to visit Milton Keynes to promote environmental initiatives in the city.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) sent a message of support to the organisers of the Milton Keynes Year of the Environment. I endorse that message, and will follow the year's progress with interest.

Air Pollution

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are to be taken to ensure that local authority environmental health departments have sufficient resources and information available to implement effectively the proposed changes to controls over air pollution from industrial sources.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A joint committee to provide a forum for discussion between Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and local authority environmental health departments was set up at the end of 1988. The secretariat is provided by HMIP's local authority unit which has already begun to consider draft guidance notes on some 20 of the processes to be scheduled for local authority air pollution control. Information exchange on such matters as training is also being developed in the same forum.

As the new system represents a rationalisation and streamlining of local authorities' existing air pollution controls the Government estimated that it would add only £0·5 million to their current expenditure.

Ivory

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what agreements were made regarding the release of the ivory stockpile in Hong Kong with the European Environment Council during October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: None; the last meeting of the European Environment Council was held on 19 September. The issue of the stockpile of ivory in Hong Kong was not discussed.

Homelessness

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will arrange a meeting with building societies to discuss additional measures to reduce homelessness.

Mr. Chope: Regular meetings are held with representatives of building societies. These cover a wide range of housing issues including homelessness.

Rivers

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentages of United Kingdom rivers are classed as being of good or fair quality by the European Community; and what is the European Community average.

Mr. Howard: There is no river quality classification scheme laid down by the European Community. Each member state uses different systems, criteria and class boundaries for categorising rivers which makes assessments at Community level difficult. However, a review of classification schemes across member states published in 1988 by the Water Research Centre showed that on the basis of comparisons with the river classification scheme used in this country, an average of 83 per cent. of EC rivers were of good or fair quality compared with 95 per cent. in the United Kingdom. No other member state had a higher proportion of good or fair quality rivers than the United Kingdom, although our position was equalled by the Netherlands.

Local Government Bill

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is intended that the new ceiling in the Local Government Bill for involvement in political activity be index-linked.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The salary level of £19,500 specified in the Bill is not a "ceiling on political activity". It is simply a dividing line in the machinery for determining which posts in local government service should be politically restricted. Above that level posts are restricted unless specifically exempted. Below that level they are free unless they are specifically restricted.

My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has indicated that the Government propose to use the regulation-making power in the Bill to replace the reference to £19,500 with a reference to point 44 on the national joint council's recommended pay scale, as it is for the time being. The specified salary will thus change in accordance with national pay agreements.

Residuary Bodies

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to lay before Parliament the 1988-89 annual reports and accounts of the London and metropolitan residuary bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The 1988-89 annual reports and statements of accounts of the London and metropolitan residuary bodies were laid before Parliament today. A copy of the Secretary of State's direction under section 78(2) of the Local Government Act 1985 as to the content and structure of the accounts has been placed in the Library of the House.

The residuary bodies' reports provide continuing evidence of the considerable progress which they have made in discharging the responsibilities they inherited from the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils. Among other achievements in 1988-89, over £314 million in capital receipts were realised from sales of surplus property, the benefits of which are being distributed to the local authorities.

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Greater Manchester residuary body will complete its work and be wound up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Greater Manchester residuary body was formally dissolved today. During the three and a half years since abolition the record of the residuary body has been impressive. It has sold or transferred to the successor dstrict authorities 10,650 former county council property interests and distributed £12·25 million of capital receipts to the local authorities.

There will be further amounts to come from sales which have not yet reached completion. This is in addition to the distribution of some £55 million in revenue balances.

The Greater Manchester residuary body is the third of the seven residuary bodies to wind up. The RB inherited a very considerable number of property interests, rights and liabilities from the former Greater Manchester county council, not least those in respect of the Greater Manchester exhibition centre (GMEX). That these have been disposed of with the full co-operation of all the successor authorities is a credit to all concerned.

The order under section 67 of the Local Government Act 1985 transferred the remainder of the residuary body's property functions, rights and liabilities to the city of Manchester and the metropolitan boroughs and districts of Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, and Wigan on 31 August 1989.

The Greater Manchester residuary body inherited a particularly wide and complex range of tasks. I am grateful to the chairman, board and staff for discharging this task of winding up the affairs of the former Greater Manchester metropolitan county council with such efficiency and dispatch. Their final report is being laid before Parliament today.

Unified Business Rate

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any special provisions are to be made to mitigate the impact of the unified business rate on small businesses initially.

Mr. Chope: Yes. There will be transitional protection for businesses facing large increases as a result of the combined effects of the 1990 revaluation and the introduction on 1 April 1990 of a uniform national business rate. There will be a ceiling of 20 per cent. on the amount by which any rate bill can rise in any one year in real terms for properties with a rateable value of £10,000 in the new rating list (£15,000 in London) or more. But for properties with a rateable value between £500 and £10,000 (£15,000 in London)—which will include 75 per cent. of all business premises—the annual ceiling will be 15 per cent. in real. terms.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each year since 1981 *(a)* the applications received by his Department from the Nature Conservancy Council for orders under section 29 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and *(b)* those applications which resulted in such an order being made.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 17 October 1989]:* The number of orders made or rejected in England is as follows:

	Made	*Rejected*
1981	—	—
1982	2	—
1983	3	1
1984	4	1
1985	5	2
1986	1	—
1987	2	—
1988	—	—
1989	5	—

In addition it has been unnecessary for the Secretary of State to make an order on around six occasions because agreement was reached with the owner/occupier of the land concerned or the threat to the land did not materialise.

The responsibility for making orders in Wales and Scotland rests with the respective Secretaries of State.

Photochemical Smog

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total number of photochemical smog events which have occurred during the last year in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* Photochemical smog, consisting of ozone and other ingredients, is a result of the reaction between oxides of nitrogen and gaseous hydrocarbons in the presence of sunlight. In the United Kingdom a network of 17 sites monitors ozone levels. There is always some ozone in the lower atmosphere, and the definition of an "event" is inevitably arbitary. However, in August my Department announced that it would issue daily summaries of ozone concentrations for periods when several network sites recorded an hourly average of 60 parts per billion or more. Since then there have been three such periods. The record for the period before August shows a further five periods during the last year.

Nuclear Accidents (Water Contamination)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any comprehensive studies have been made to ensure the effectiveness of treatment methods for removing radionuclides typically released from accidents involving nuclear reactors into the water supply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 30 October 1989]*: A report that the Department commissioned last year concluded that most forms of water treatment would remove the major part of radioactivity from water supplies in the event of an accidental release of radioactivity. However, it is most unlikely that emergency reference levels would be reached in such circumstances even before water supplies are treated, except possibly in the immediate locality of a catastrophic release of radioactivity.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how it is intended that the community charge will be collected from itinerants.

Mr. David Hunt: People with no fixed abode are exempt from the community charge, and the question of collection does not, therefore, arise. Travellers who are solely resident in caravans or boats will be liable to pay a personal charge in the area where they last become subject to a community charge on a particular day. It is for registration officers and charging authorities to make suitable arrangements for registration for, and collection of, the community charge in the light of local circumstances.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to prevent community charge registration officers disclosing anonymous personal information to credit companies, mail order companies or police forces.

Mr. Chope: No such legislation is necessary. Community charges registration oficers have no power to provide personal information to any of the bodies referred to by the hon. Gentleman. Recent changes to the Local Government Finance Act specifically preclude the provision of any information from which any individual can be identified.

Mr. Maples: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to provide further public information on the community charge.

Mr. David Hunt: In order to provide further information on individuals' rights and duties under the community charge, my right hon. Friend has decided to make additional resources available to ensure that those who are eligible for community charge rebates and transitional relief are aware of their entitlement.

HEALTH

Germanium

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he can give to AIDS sufferers and others on the use of dietary supplements containing germanium.

Mr. Freeman: Dietary supplements containing germanium have been sold in health stores, pharmacies and by mail order. Product literature and articles sponsored by manufacturers claimed or implied potential health benefits, including an improved immune response. However, the Department of Health has no evidence that germanium is beneficial to health, and a report from Japan suggests that, taken as a dietary supplement, it may actually be harmful. The Department of Health has therefore advised that sales and consumption of dietary supplements containing germanium should cease.

"Working for Patients"

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will announce the allocation of the 100 new consultant posts promised in the White Paper, "Working for Patients."

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have approved 35 new posts for the first year of the scheme in 1989-90. Officials have today written to health authorities advising them of successful bids for posts in their area. The new posts we have created are over and above existing plans for new consultants. They are targeted on districts and specialties where there are long waiting times for treatment. They will enable many extra cases to be treated from waiting lists and will make a significant impact on the increasing demand which leads to long waits.

We will meet the full costs of the new posts up to a maximum of £500,000, which will cover the cost of the new consultants, plus additional staff and running costs, and essential equipment in support of the posts.

The annual running cost of posts approved in the first year of the scheme averages £360,000 with an additional average cost of £40,000 to cover one-off capital expenditure. The new posts are in general surgery (10 posts); trauma and orthopaedics (7 posts); obstetrics and gynaecology (5); ophthalmology (5); urology (3); ear nose and throat surgery (2); and (one post each in) medicine, oral surgery and plastic surgery. These new posts will be supported by additional medical and non-medical staff. A total of 13·5 whole-time equivalent consultants in anaesthetics; a small number of extra consultant sessions in radiology, audiology and histopathology; 16 whole-time equivalent junior medical staff; 377 nurses; 68 professional and technical staff and 113 other non-medical staff will be provided as a result of the scheme in its first year. We are seeking further information from health authorities on a number of the other bids, and I expect to announce the allocation of the remaining 65 new posts early next year.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response he has received from the Royal College of Psychiatrists on the National Health Service White Paper "Working for Patients"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The response we have received from the Royal College of Psychiatrists endorses the Government's aims for the Health Service. It raises a number of concerns regarding the implication of our proposed reforms for mental health services. Many of these concerns will be addressed in the White Paper on the future development of community care which we hope to publish very shortly.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of letters from hon. Members to his Department received a reply *(a)* in under four weeks, *(b)* within four to six weeks, *(c)* within six to eight weeks and *(d)* over eight weeks, in each of the last three years;

(2) what information his Department has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available on the time taken to reply to correspondence before November 1988. Since then 51 per cent. of letters from hon. and right hon. Members have received a reply within four weeks. I regret that information on delays in replying beyond four weeks is not available in the detail requested. Following a very large increase in the amount of correspondence received earlier this year the Department has taken steps to improve the speed of reply.

Wheelchairs and Artificial Limbs

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether all regional health authorities have submitted to his Department their detailed proposals for the integration of the wheelchair and artificial limb services in 1991; how far advanced the preparations for the integration are; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Proposals for the integration of the Disablement Services Authority's services have now been received from all regional health authorities. We shall be assessing the progress made with preparations for integration at the Disablement Services Authority's annual review meeting on 9 November.

Students (Free Prescriptions and Dental Treatment)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding free prescriptions and free dental treatment for all students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: During the last 12 months we have received six letters from hon. Members and four letters from members of the public about free prescriptions for students. We have also had a small number of representations about free dental treatment for students.

Students up to the age of 18 are entitled to free prescriptions and free dental treatment. Students aged 19 and over can apply for help under the NHS low income scheme. We believe it is right that students of that age who can afford to pay for their prescriptions and dental treatment should do so.

Central Nottingham DHA

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the present 10-year capital programme of Trent regional health authority for Central Nottingham district health authority.

Mr. Freeman: Responsibility for capital programmes lies with regional health authorities which maintain records. I have asked the regional chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Babies

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many babies born in England and Wales, in 1987 and 1988 at 25, 26 or 27 weeks gestation who have been handicapped from oxygen starvation or other causes will need special care for the rest of their lives; and what is the estimated cost to the National Health Service of this special care over the estimated lifetime of these children;

(2) how many babies were born in England and Wales, in 1987 and 1988 at 25, 26, and 27 weeks gestation and survived one year.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available; information on gestation is not collected at live birth registration.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will respond to the statement made by the Pharmaceutical Society setting out its concerns about the quantity of tranquillisers still being prescribed.

Mr. Freeman: I welcome the concern shown by the Royal Phamaceutical Society of Great Britain about the need to avoid incorrect prescribing of benzodiazepines. As its statement makes clear, the Committee on Safety of Medicines has already given guidelines on the use of benzodiazepines.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many breaches of the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising between his Department and the tobacco industry there have been in the past 12 months.

Mr. Freeman: During the past 12 months, the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship has recorded nine instances in which the voluntary agreements that it monitors were breached. The agreements monitored by the committee are the 1987 agreement on the sponsorship of sport, and the 1986 agreement on tobacco products advertising and promotion, and health warnings. On one of these occasions—a televised sporting event—a number of breaches of the same agreement occurred. In addition to this, the committee referred one complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority, which decided that it was in breach of the cigarette code.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the members of the Department of Health and Tobacco Industry Committee monitoring the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising and their occupations; and whether he has any plans to reconstitute the committee to include fewer representatives from the tobacco industry.

Mr. Freeman: The committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship was set up as part of the 1986 voluntary agreement on tobacco products advertising and promotion, and health warnings, and the terms of that agreement stated that the Committee should have equal representation from interested Government departments and from the tobacco industry. The Government cannot decide unilaterally to reconstitute the committee; this would have to be discussed with and agreed by the tobacco industry. The independent chairman of the committee is Sir Peter Lazarus. The Government members are Mr. T. S. Heppell, Mr. N. M. Hale and Mr. W. Burroughs, all from the Department of Health, Mr. A. King, Scottish Office, Mr. D. MacDonald, Department of the Environment, Mr. D. Adams, Welsh Office and Mr. J. Scott, from the Department of Health and Social Security (Northern Ireland). The industry members are Mr. W. C. Owen and Mr. D. R. Hare from the Tobacco Advisory Council, Dr. R. R. Boxall, Gallaher Limited, Mr. Haynes, Imperial Tobacco Company, Mr. E. D. Oxberry, Rothmans (UK) Limited, and Mr. B. C. W. Heard from the Imported Tobacco Products Advisory Council. The seventh industry member has just resigned from the committee and has not yet been replaced.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has to make the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising binding on the tobacco industry.

Mr. Freeman: The tobacco industry has undertaken to honour the current agreement and its operation is monitored by the independent committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship (COMATAS). The chairman of COMATAS, Sir Peter Lazarus, concluded in the second annual report of the committee, published in April this year, that the industry tries hard to keep to the agreement.

Speech Therapists

The Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the grades of speech therapists in England, Wales and Scotland following the regrading under HSS(TC7)3188 broken down by area board, showing the percentage in each grade before regrading and the percentage after.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[Pursuant to the reply, 6 July 1989, cols. 238-40]:* My hon. and learned Friend gave information for the "percentage of speech therapists in each grade in England at 30 September 1989". This was incorrect and should have read, "We do not have the information in the form requested, but the tables show the percentage of speech therapists in each grade in regional health authorities in England on the dates shown."

Percentage speech therapy staff by grade as at 30 September 1987

Regional Health Authority	*Snr II*	*Snr I*	*Ch IV*	*Ch III*	*Dist II*	*Ch Dist I*	*Ch Dist Snr chief*
Northern	39·43	40·89	3·99	6·33	8·73	0·00	0·63
Yorkshire	35·69	49·78	1·12	3·60	6·08	2·48	1·24
Trent	47·94	32·38	4·55	10·37	2·38	0·40	1·98
East Anglian	47·05	36·27	2·22	7·87	5·73	0·86	0·00
North West Thames	40·70	41·08	4·40	8·67	3·75	0·47	0·94
North East Thames	36·13	39·18	3·18	15·59	4·66	0·85	0·42
South East Thames	39·38	39·94	3·60	10·62	5·08	0·92	0·46
South West Thames	28·83	51·20	0·42	13·82	5·14	0·60	0·00
Wessex	46·47	27·99	4·90	13·21	4·45	2·97	0·00
Oxford	31·87	44·40	3·48	15·38	2·09	2·78	0·00
South Western	34·47	49·26	2·75	8·03	2·20	2·20	1·10
West Midlands	45·07	36·03	6·17	6·05	5·11	0·79	0·79
Mersey	41·53	34·48	0·88	13·58	6·88	2·65	0·00
North Western	44·98	37·75	4·05	6·76	5·60	0·43	0·43

Percentage speech therapy staff by grade as at 30 September 1988

Regional Health Authority	*Grade A*	*Grade B*	*Grade C*	*Grade D*	*Grade E*
Northern	13·37	47·96	25·13	11·17	2·38
Yorkshire	7·11	49·83	33·68	5·98	3·40
Trent	10·72	56·83	26·79	2·38	3·28
East Anglian	9·40	59·77	21·78	6·49	2·56
North West Thames[1]	10·93	63·80	16·37	5·32	3·58
North East Thames	12·55	32·01	36·06	14·67	4·72
South East Thames	15·03	52·02	22·14	8·43	2·38
South West Thames	10·28	54·30	27·56	5·24	2·62
Wessex	5·23	61·72	24·10	5·23	3·73
Oxford	6·85	53·45	28·51	7·19	3·99
South Western[2]	—	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	10·59	59·21	20·43	7·58	2·20
Mersey	13·30	48·23	29·79	6·03	2·66
North Western	14·81	39·98	36·60	4·30	4·30

[1] North Western figures as at 31 March 1989.

[2] South Western figures not available in comparable form.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Radioactivity Research and Environmental Monitoring Committee

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's role in the radioactivity research and environmental monitoring committee since its inception.

Mr. Maclean: The function of the radioactivity research and environmental monitoring committee (RADREM) is to review research and monitoring requirements and activities relating to radioactive waste management. In addition to contributing to the joint scientific secretariat for this committee, my Department has been represented on and played a full and active part in the work of the committee since its inception in 1986. Officials in my Department also chair two RADREM sub-committees, set up in 1988, dealing with research on radioactivity in the terrestrial environment and the aquatic environment respectively.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of letters from hon. Members to his Department received a reply *(a)* in under four weeks, *(b)* within four to six weeks, *(c)* within six to eight weeks and *(d)* over eight weeks, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not readily available in the form requested. However, in the financial year 1988-89, a total of 88 per cent. of letters receiving a ministerial reply, including those from hon. Members, were answered within three weeks.

Radioactive Fallout

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek information from the Ukrainian and Byelorussian agriculture departments on the emergence of unpredicted mutations in vegetations in pine, oak and acacia trees, and in rodents and waterfowl in areas contaminated by radioactive fallout from Chernobyl.

Mr. Maclean: Scientists from my own and other Departments keep fully abreast of scientific developments through contact with their Soviet counterparts and others in various international fora. Migratory waterfowl that might have been in the vicinity of Chernobyl at the time of the accident were examined as part of my Department's extensive post-Chernobyl monitoring programme to ensure the safety of United Kingdom food supplies. The wider environmental implications of the accident are the concern of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Goats

Mr. Steel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the Government proposes to revise the set-aside scheme so as to accommodate fibre-producing animals such as cashmere and angora goats.

Mr. Curry: The Government have decided not to take up the option under the Community set-aside scheme to introduce grazed fallow because of problems of control and possible adverse effects upon existing livestock producers, particularly in the hills. The Community rules do not permit restriction of the option to particular types of animals such as fibre-producing goats.

SCOTLAND

Piper Alpha

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he can make of the total cost of the inquiry into the Piper Alpha disaster chaired by Ford Cullen; and what will be the costs met by the Scottish Office.

Mr. Rikind: The public inquiry into the Piper Alpha disaster was established by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, whose Department spent £1·05 million in 1988-89 on setting up and running the inquiry. In 1989-90 the best estimate of the costs of the inquiry is £2·7 million, although the precise figure will depend on how long it lasts. It is not yet possible to estimate any further costs which may be involved in the completion of the report.

The only costs being met by my Department are those associated with providing legal advice and counsel to the Department of Energy. In 1988-89 these amounted to approximately £0·1 million and the best estimate for 1989-90 is £0·3 million.

Gaelic Television Services

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from organisations supporting the expansion of Gaelic television services.

Mr. Lang: The Secretary of State has received a wide range of representations about the future of Gaelic broadcasting. All call for a substantial increase in Gaelic television programming, although many differ as to how this might be best achieved. The Government are currently considering the future of Gaelic broadcasting and an announcement of their conclusion will be made shortly.

Environmental Research

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his Department's role in the radioactivity research and environment monitoring committee since its inception.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office has been represented on the radioactivity research and environmental monitoring committee since it was established in 1986 and has taken a full part in the committee's work. This has included reviewing and collating the programmes of research and monitoring undertaken both by Government and industry. It has ensured that appropriate work is in hand to cover both the United Kingdom and Scottish interests.

Self-governing Hospitals

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how a large mental health hospital will compete for patients if accorded self-governing status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All self-governing NHS trusts will be required to enter into contracts with health boards and other purchasers of health services. Their ability to win contracts will depend on the quality of the services they are able to provide and the prices they wish to charge.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will accord self-governing status to hospitals or other medical units other than major acute hospitals as part of the two hospitals he envisages awarding such status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend will give careful consideration to all applications for self-governing status.

National Health Service Reform

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether separate legislation will be required to implement "Working for Patients" in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Cash Limits

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make any further changes to the cash limits for 1989-90 within his responsibility.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. I intend to make changes to nine of the cash limits within my responsibility.

As a result of reduced requirements the cash limit for class XVI, vote 3—regional and general industrial support—has been decreased by £4,000,000 from £148,249,000 to £144,249,000. This reduction will partially offset increases in other votes.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 6—roads, transport and environmental services—will be increased by £1,881,000 from £211,061,000 to £212,942,000 reflecting the take-up of entitlement to carry forward underspends in 1988-89 under the end year flexibility arrangements as announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 20 July 1989. The full entitlement of £1,673,000 on capital expenditure and £208,000 in respect of running costs for historic buildings and monuments are taken up.

The cash limit on class XVI, vote 14—prisons, hospitals and community health services, etc.—is being reduced by £4,630,000 from £2,003,389,000 to £1,998,759,000. The supplementary estimate includes take-up of the entitlement to carry forward £388,000 under the end year flexibility scheme for running costs.

There is a new cash-limited vote, class XVI, vote 27—hospital and community health services—covering from 1 January 1990 the hospital and community health services formerly carried on vote 14.

The cash limit has been set at £8,697,000, reflecting gross expenditure of £542,199,000 and appropriations in aid of £533,502,000. This comprises transfers from vote 14 for the final quarter of the financial year, together with additional resources, originally agreed for vote 14, of £4,747,000 on capital expenditure for the take-up of the full entitlement to carry forward underspending in 1988-89 under the end year flexibility scheme and £3,950,000 for NHS review implementation costs, partly offset by savings of £200,000 on class XVI, vote 14.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 15—education, arts, libraries and social work—will be increased by £162,000 from £215,649,000 to £215,811,000 to take account of the changes in payment of income support for hostel dwellers.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 19—General Register Office for Scotland—will be increased by £50,000 from £5,318,000 to £5,368,000 reflecting the take-up of the full entitlement to carry forward underspends in 1988-89 under the end year flexibility scheme for running costs. In addition, the running costs limits for the General Register Office for Scotland will be increased by £50,000 from £5,815,000 to £5,865,000.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 21—Scottish Office administration—will be increased by £1,014,000 from £120,358,000 to £121,372,000. The increase includes take-up under the end year flexibility scheme for running costs of £379,000 and legal expenses of other departments for which legal advice is provided. As a result of these changes and the full take-up of carry forward under the end year flexibility scheme by historic buildings and monuments within class XVI, vote 6 and by prisons within class XVI, vote 14, the running costs limit for the Scottish Office will be increased by £1,057,000 from £205,865,000 to £206,922,000.

Cash block SO/LA1, which covers non-housing capital expenditure by local authorities, is to be increased by £12,000,000 from £501,035,000 to £513,035,000 reflecting the take-up of the full entitlement to carry forward underspending under the end year flexibility scheme for capital expenditure.

Cash block SO/LA2, which covers housing capital expenditure by local authorities and capital expenditure by new towns, is to be increased by £18,524,000 from £326,900,000 to £345,424,000. Within this total, £24,900,000 reflects the take-up of the full entitlement to carry forward underspending under the end year flexibility scheme for capital expenditure.

The net effect of these changes will be met from the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Lead Water Pipes

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total of central Government grant in each of the past 10 financial years for the replacement of lead piping.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 26 October 1989]:* Information is not held centrally on the element of grants for house improvements relating to the replacement of lead piping. However about 58,000 grants which included lead plumbing replacement were made in the period 1982-88 inclusive.

House Repossessions

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply of 18 October, *Official Report*, column *170*, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, if he will make it his policy to collect information about house repossessions in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 26 October 1989]*: The possibility of obtaining such information is being pursued.

Dyslexia

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what guidelines the Scottish Education Department has issued to local education authorities concerning the testing for dyslexia among young schoolchildren; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent consultations have been conducted between officials of the Scottish Education Department and local education authorities concerning the detection of dyslexia among schoolchildren; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 23 October 1989]*: Responsibility for identifying children who have difficulty with reading or writing rests with education authorities, whose teaching staff are becoming increasingly well-equipped, through improved training, to recognise and to help such children. While the Scottish Education Department has not issued guidance or held consultations with authorities, its inspectorate has, in approving teacher training courses, ensured that these now contain a special educational needs component. Special educational needs diploma courses include specific instruction in recognising dyslexia.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of letters from hon. Members to his Department received a reply *(a)* in under four weeks, *(b)* within four to six weeks, *(c)* within six to eight weeks and *(d)* over eight weeks, in each of the last three years.

The Attorney-General: Letters from hon. Members are treated as a matter of priority within my Department, and are answered as soon as the necessary information is available. The legal secretariat does not have the facilities to produce the information requested at other than disproportionate cost. Nevertheless I can safely say that the vast majority of letters from hon. Members receive a substantive reply within two weeks.

Guildford Four

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor will make it his policy to express apologies on behalf of the legal profession to Patrick Armstrong, Gerard Conlon, Carole Richardson, and Paul Hill for the miscarriage of justice they have suffered; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No. The outcome of Sir John May's inquiry may be expected to provide a reliable foundation for any comment on these cases.

Petty Officer John Black

Mr. Latham: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will make a statement on the current position regarding his proposed application to the courts to hold a fresh inquest in respect of the death of the late Petty Officer John Black, RN, at Sabinillas, Spain, in December 1983.

The Attorney-General: The application and supporting documents were lodged in the Crown Office at the High Court of Justice on 16 August. The Crown Office has not yet fixed a date for the hearing of the application.

Treasury Solicitor's Department

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Attorney-General whether any changes have been made to his class XX, vote 16, cash limit and running costs limit for the Treasury Solicitor's Department's estimate.

The Attorney-General: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate the cash limit has been increased by £293,000 from £12,784,000 to £13,077,000 and the Department's running costs limit by £243,000 from £14,127,000 to £14,370,000. This increase has been charged to the Reserve and will not increase the planned total of public expenditure.

Agreement on the early implementation of the recommendations contained in Sir Robert Andrew's review of the Government legal service, which resulted in the setting up of the lawyers management unit and the early acquisition of a computerised system for repayment billing, was reached too late for provision to be taken in the main estimate, and is therefore reflected in this additional provision.

Legal Aid

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General what evaluation is made by his and the Lord Chancellor's Department as to the progress of civil cases which are legally aided to ensure that public money is not wasted as a result of inefficiency or unnecessary delay by solicitors and counsel.

The Attorney-General: Neither my office nor the Lord Chancellor's Department evaluates the progress of civil cases which are legally aided.

It is the responsibility of the Legal Aid Board to establish controls to ensure that legally aided cases are not unjustifiably prolonged, and that expenses are not wasted or unnecessarily incurred. The board is in the process of preparing a case control procedure and will be reporting to the Lord Chancellor when this is settled.

TRANSPORT

Marine Rescue Services

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those coastguard stations equipped with MF radio.

Mr. McLoughlin: Every coastguard rescue centre except Belfast and Oban is fitted with an MF transceiver.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those coastguard stations which have not maintained a 24-hour watch on the MF frequencies together with the dates when they were off the air, in the last 12 months.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is no requirement for Her Majesty's coastguard to maintain a 24-hour watch on MF distress frequencies. The MF transceivers are provided at rescue centres for the conduct of search and rescue operations outwith VHF range. Her Majesty's coastguard contracts British Telecom International to maintain a continuous watch on the MF distress frequencies.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that Her Majesty's coastguard do not answer routine calls from unlicensed VHF installations.

Mr. McLoughlin: The majority of VHF transmissions to Her Majesty's coastguard are of a distress or safety nature. Much congestion on VHF already exists in some areas and attempts to verify that the installation is licensed would aggravate the congestion. Routine calls should be directed via British Telecom coast radio stations which are obliged to verify the installations licence for billing purposes.

InterCity Routes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about improvements to the main InterCity South Yorkshire to London line, and when they could be scheduled for implementation.

Mr. Portillo: InterCity services are a commercial matter for British Rail. Any new investment would need to earn a proper return. British Rail introduced improved services on the midland main line, with faster and more frequent trains, on 2 October.

Ilfracombe (Incident)

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many minutes elapsed between the first reporting of an incident involving a child or children in difficulties in the sea at Ilfracombe on 16 August before the coastguard *(a)* was dispatched to the scene and *(b)* arrived at the scene.

Mr. McLoughlin: The first notification to Swansea MRCC of an incident at Ilfracombe on 16 August was by 999 telephone call at 1620 local time. The auxiliary coastguard at Ilfracombe was tasked at 1624, and arrived on scene at 1641. This first notification, from two sources, was of a person "on the rocks, cut off by tide". Swansea MRCC was subsequently advised at 1635 that a person was in the water, the helicopter was tasked, and was on scene within 10 minutes.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement explaining the reasons for any delay on the part of the coastguard in responding to the incident at Ilfracombe on 16 August in which Mark Woodward was drowned.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is not considered that there was any delay on the part of Her Majesty's coastguard at Swansea in acting on the information received regarding this tragic incident.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many personnel were scheduled to be on duty at Swansea coastguard station on 16 August.

Mr. McLoughlin: There were five persons detailed to be on watch on 16 August, comprising three regular coastguard officers, and two auxiliary coastguards.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the normal establishment of Swansea coastguard station.

Mr. McLoughlin: Swansea coastguard has a complement of 18 watchkeeping officers and a three-man district management team.

Emergency 999 Service

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has had any discussions with British Telecom about ways of improving the emergency 999 service since 16 August.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is a continuing programme of discussions between Her Majesty's coastguard and BTI in South Wales, on the 999 emergency service. Any problems encountered are the subject of an immediate reporting procedure, with follow-up discussion at subsequent meetings between BTI and senior members of the coastguard staff from Swansea coastguard region.

A69

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake a new survey of traffic flows on the A69 west of Hexham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: At present the Department has two permanent traffic counters west of Hexham on the A69 trunk road. One of these is east of Haltwhistle where regular counting takes place. The other is close to Greenhead village, and operates on alternate months.

A further two sites are proposed, one is to be located close to the Cumbria border, the other to the east of Haydon Bridge. The intention is to monitor and count these sites every alternate month.

The length of the A69 west of Hexham to the Cumbria border is approximately 20 miles and the Department considers that with all these counters in operation sufficient information will be available to keep a close check on the use of this section of the trunk road.

Merchant Navy Reserve

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current strength of the Merchant Navy Reserve.

Mr. McLoughlin: On 25 October 1989, membership of the Merchant Navy Reserve stood at 188.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Areas of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many areas of special scientific interest have been declared under the terms of article 24 of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Twenty four.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland intends to declare the freshwater lagoon within the Belfast harbour estate known as BP1 (or D1) an area of special scientific interest.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

Lagoons

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what date the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland issued the written consent for the infilling of the two lagoons known as BP1 and BP2.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Written consent under article 25 of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 to the infilling of the two lagoons known as BP2 and BP3 (not BP1 and BP2) was issued by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland on 16 March 1988. It was a condition of the consent that such infilling should not commence before 1 March 1993.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what date the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland received an application to infill the two lagoons in the Belfast harbour estate known as BP2 and BP3.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following lengthy discussions, formal written application was received on 16 March 1988.

Mr. Charles Haughey (Security)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many *(a)* soldiers of the regular Army, *(b)* members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and *(c)* members of the Ulster Defence Regiment were deployed to provide security for the visit of Mr. Charles Haughey to Eglinton airport on 19 October;

(2) how many man hours were required in respect of *(a)* the regular Army, *(b)* the Ulster Defence Regiment and *(c)* the Royal Ulster Constabulary to provide security for the visit of Mr. Charles Haughey to Eglinton airport on 19 October;

(3) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show the roads closed off by the security forces in the provision of security cover for the visit of Mr. Charles Haughey to Eglinton airport on 19 October, showing the periods for which each such road was closed off.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* No; it is not considered appropriate in the interests of security to give this information.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how may people live in the area covered by the security measures taken during the visit of Mr. Charles Haughey to Eglinton airport on 19 October.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* This information is not available.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if any members of the civic guards were at Eglinton airport on 19 October.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* It is not considered appropriate in the interests of security to give this information.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what restrictions were placed on the free movement of people in the Eglinton area due to the security measures taken during the visit of Mr. Charles Haughey to Eglinton airport on 19 October.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* There were no restrictions on the movement of people in the Eglinton area; however, some traffic disruption may have been experienced in the area as a result of the security operation which was mounted.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total cost of the security measures taken on 19 October to cover the visit of Mr. Charles Haughey to Eglinton airport, broken down as far as is possible, into costs for *(a)* the regular Army, *(b)* the Ulster Defence Regiment and *(c)* the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* For security reasons, it is not considered appropriate to provide this information.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total cost to *(a)* the Government of the United Kingdom and *(b)* the Londonderry council in relation to the visit of Mr. Charles Haughey to Eglinton airport on 19 October;

(2) whether any council employees were given advance notice of the visit of Mr. Charles Haughey to Eglinton airport on 19 October;

(3) whether councillors known to be members of Sinn Fein were given advance notice of the visit of Mr. Charles Haughey to Eglinton airport.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* The arrangements for the event were made by the company which funded and organised it. Therefore, apart from the cost of the security operation, no other public moneys were involved.

Gerard Conlon

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary on the questioning and holding of Gerard Conlon in Belfast on Tuesday 24 October.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* No. This is a matter for the chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary; if a complaint is made to him, it will be investigated.

THE ARTS

Exports Review

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he is able to announce the publication date of the report of the reviewing committee on the export of works of art for the year ended 30 June.

Mr. Luce: I have today presented the 35th report of the reviewing committee on the export of works of art for 1988-89. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House. I am particularly pleased such a prompt publication date has been achieved and I draw the attention of the House to the concise treatment given in the report to the role of the reviewing committee in the issue of export licences.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Holidays

Q24. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received concerning the pattern of public holidays.

The Prime Minister: A number of differing views have been expressed about the pattern of public holidays, including the position of the first Monday in May, which are under consideration.

Local Government Finance

Q60. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have any proposals to deduct poll tax payments directly from payments of income support; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Act 1987 was amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to provide this additional power for the enforcement of community charge debts. The Community Charges (Deductions from Income Support) (Scotland) Reglations 1989 (SI 1989 No. 507) made under this power enable the social security adjudicating authorities to authorise deductions to be made from income support in Scotland to pay community charge debts. Deductions can only be made at the request of a charging authority which must first obtain a warrant from a court to prove the debt. Parallel regulations will apply in England and Wales from April 1990.

British Telecom

Q65. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received requesting that British Telecom be renationalised; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None. The public generally and British Telecom's 1·2 million private shareholders have benefited substantially from the 60 per cent. increase in investment, the 2,000 digital exchanges which have been installed and the increase in profitability and efficiency since British Telecom was privatised.

Law and Order

Q83. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Prime Minister what has been the real term increase in Government expenditure on law and order since 1979.

The Prime Minister: In the current financial year spending on law and order services in England and Wales was increased in real terms by 73·5 per cent. over expenditure in 1978-79.

GATT

Q85. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the use of the general agreement on tariffs and trade as an arbitration in resolving disputes between the EEC and other trading groups.

The Prime Minister: The British Government, like our Community partners, strongly believe that the general agreement on tariffs and trade provides the best route for the resolution of trade disputes. We have pressed for improvements to its dispute settlement procedures in the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations and an initial package of such measures is now in force following the December 1988 ministerial meeting in Montreal. We take all appropriate opportunities for reminding our Community partners of the importance we attach to GATT dispute settlement procedures, and the need to improve them still further.

Metropolitan Police

Q93. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received requesting that responsibility for the Metropolitan police be removed from the Home Secretary and placed in the hands of an elected authority.

The Prime Minister: I have received no such representations. I have every confidence in the present system. The Home Secretary, as police authority, is answerable to Parliament.

Prevention of Terrorism Act

Q95. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she has received any recent representations requesting the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The Prime Minister: I have received no such representations. We need to have firm measures to combat terrorism and the Prevention of Terrorism Act will remain in force for as long as necessary.

Labour Statistics

Q97. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement about the levels of unemployment since 1979.

The Prime Minister: In September 1989 the number of unemployed claimants, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom was 1,695,000. Unemployment has been falling for 38 consecutive months. It is now at its lowest level for nearly nine years, and well below the European Community average.

Corporate Taxation

Q100. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister what estimates she has made about the likely consequences for British industry and commerce of a rise or fall in the level of corporate taxation.

The Prime Minister: A change of one percentage point in the full rate of corporation tax from 1 April 1989 is estimated to have a full-year effect on tax payments of £580 million. An equivalent change in the small companies' rate is estimated to have a full-year effect of £50 million.

National Health Service

Q102. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received about the National Health Service.

The Prime Minister: Since the publication of the White Paper, "Working for Patients", my right hon. and learned

Friend the Secretary of State for Health has received some 12,000 representations making suggestions or seeking further information about our proposals.

House of Lords

Q114. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received seeking the abolition of the House of Lords.

The Prime Minister: The Government receive representations from time to time advocating abolition or reform of the House of Lords.

Independent Schools

Q116. **Sir Michael Shaw:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received in the past year seeking to abolish the assisted places scheme and withdraw charitable status from independent schools.

The Prime Minister: I have received no recent representations on these matters. This year the assisted places scheme will make available up to 33,000 places at 278 independent schools throughout England. The scheme continues to provide an important means by which parents who would not otherwise be able to afford to do so can receive financial help towards sending their children to independent schools.

Import Controls

Q118. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she has received any requests for import controls to be imposed.

The Prime Minister: I have received very few requests to impose import controls. It is the Government's policy to promote free and fair trade and it is not generally to the United Kingdom's advantage to impose import restrictions.

Steel Industry

Q.120 **Mr. Nelson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on progress made in rationalising the steel industry since 1979.

The Prime Minister: During the period since 1979 the Government promoted the Phoenix joint ventures involving private sector steel companies and the then nationalised British Steel Corporation and also a private sector steel scheme. These initiatives have now ceased, but they reduced product overlap between the private and public sectors and contributed towards rationalisation within the industry as a whole. British Steel itself was then returned to the private sector in December 1988 and recently announced record profits of £593 million compared with substantial losses while nationalised. Productivity in the United Kingdom steel industry rose by 151 per cent. between 1979 and 1988.

Further mergers and acquisitions have taken place within the industry as it adjusts and responds to the challenge of a competitive market.

Immigration

Q159. **Sir William Clark:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received seeking repeal of the primary purpose rule and the Immigration Acts of 1971, 1981 and 1988.

The Prime Minister: The Home Secretary and I receive many representations from Members of Parliament and others about the operation of immigration and nationality legislation, including the primary purpose rule. The Government have no plans to remove the primary purpose test which is an important safeguard against abuse of the immigration rules.

Ethiopia

Q187. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to Ethiopia.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Prime Minister what information she has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

The Prime Minister: I receive an enormous number of letters each week from Members of Parliament and others. It is not possible for me to deal with all these letters personally and I must accordingly refer most of them to the Minister and the Department with the responsibility for the policy in question. All correspondence is dealt with as quickly as possible.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the implementation of the community charge and the uniform business rate.

The Prime Minister: Following the successful introduction of these arrangements in Scotland, I understand that most local authorities in England and Wales are making excellent progress in preparing for the new community charge and uniform business rating arrangements. Registration for the charge is proceeding smoothly and on time. I have every confidence that all authorities will wish to ensure that bills, with any necessary adjustment for transitional relief and rebates, will be issued to chargepayers on time next April.

Engagements

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 October.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 October.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an Audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chernobyl

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what compensation has been sought from the Soviet Union to offset payments made to

United Kingdom farmers for losses resulting from radioactive fallout contaminating land and animals after the Chernobyl accident in 1986.

Mr. Sainsbury: The position remains as stated in the reply given to the hon. Member on 21 July 1986.

Paris Conference

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who were the United Kingdom's representatives at the recent Paris conference on the future of the Antarctic; what papers were presented by the delegation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom delegation at Paris consisted of Dr. J. A. Heap, Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Mr. N. Bonner, one time deputy director and head of life sciences division of the British Antarctic Survey; Mr. R. Cummins, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr. P. Hancock, Hydrographic Department, Ministry of Defence, and Mr. I. Hendry, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Of about 89 working papers submitted to the meeting, the United Kingdom delegation was sole or joint author of 26. The papers dealt with aspects of environmental protection, encouragement of scientific research and operational safety in the Antarctic.

Human Rights

Mr. Molyneaux: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those Commonwealth Governments which have not yet acceded to or ratified international covenants on human rights.

Mr. Sainsbury: Thirty Commonwealth countries have not yet acceded to or ratified the international covenant on civil and political rights or the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belize, Botswana, Brunei, Dominica, Ghana, Grenada, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Nauru, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Swaziland, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa and Zimbabwe.

The Solomon Islands and Uganda have ratified the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights but not the international covenant on civil and political rights.

Cambodia

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been provided by Her Majesty's Government to Cambodian resistance groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since 1979 we have provided over £13 million of assistance to Cambodians living along the Thai border in camps administered by the non-Communist resistance groups. So far this year we have donated £350,000 through the United Nations border relief operation. We have commited a further £120,000 to the non-Communist resistance for English language training and humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Fiassel Abdel Waheb Salem

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mr. Fiassel Abdel Waheb Salem applied at Her Majesty's embassy in Cairo for a re-entry stamp in his passport to enable him to return to the United Kingdom; and what has been the cause of the delay in issuing it.

Mr. Sainsbury: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit in due course.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

International Fund for Agricultural Development

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the negotiations to replenish the International Fund for Agricultural Development; and what will be the United Kingdom's contribution.

Mrs. Chalker: I am glad to say that for its third replenishment IFAD will receive $566·3 million to cover its operations up to 30 June 1992. This compares with only $487 million pledged for the full three years' second replenishment. There will be two main components, "core funding" and "supplementary funding". The first consists of OPEC (category 2) pledges totalling $124·4 million and matching pledges by OECD donors (category 1) in the ratio 60:40 totalling $186·8 million. The second is made up of pledges from non-oil exporting developing countries (category 3) totalling $63·8 million and OECD matching contributions in the ratio 3:1 totalling $191·5 million. This second element is seen by both category 3 and category 1 as wholly exceptional and confined to this replenishment.

Britain's contribution to the replenishment will be £11·305 million ($19·8 million), comprising core funding of £5·098 million ($8·9 million), and a supplementary matching contribution of £6·217 million ($10·9 million). Parliamentary approval for this contribution will be sought in due course.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Unemployed People (Part-time Study)

100. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the position of unemployed people who undertake part-time study.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is the prime responsibility of unemployed people claiming benefit to make every effort to secure paid employment. So long as they remain available for and actively seeking employment, they are free to spend their spare time usefully by pursuing a course of part-time study. They must, though, organise their studies so that they can make adequate arrangements to seek work and must be prepared to break off their studies if a job opportunity arises.

21-hour Rule

101. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the continuance of the 21-hour rule.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to change the 21-hour rule.

Local Expenditure and Benefits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish tables on spending power using the assumptions in the answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 22 June 1988, *Official Report*, columns *571–76*, but using expenditure and benefit figures appropriate for families in *(a)* Doncaster and *(b)* Wath-on-Dearne together with a column showing the extent of the differences resulting from the changes in April and October 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There were no prescribed procedures for uprating supplementary benefit, housing benefit or family income supplement—different elements of these schemes were uprated in different ways and by different indices at different times. It is impossible to say what the rates of these benefits would have been in April 1989 if the reform of social security had not been introduced in April 1988. A simple mechanistic uprating of the April 1987 system of benefits would be unrealistic. The tax benefit model tables for 1989 will be published shortly.

Correspondence

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the contents of the letter dated 7 June sent by Mrs. P. Henry of the class 4 group of the social security central office at Newcasle-upon-Tyne, relating to correspondence with people in Wales, represents his Department's policy on such matters.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department's policy is that local offices in Wales will reply in Welsh to any letters received in that language. However some social security matters are administered centrally from outside Wales. When correspondence from Wales, in Welsh, is received by any of these central offices it is normally answered in Welsh, provided the reply is one of substance and not, for example, a routine acknowledgment. Following the hon. Member's question, staff at Newcastle central office have been reminded to comply with this policy.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of letters from hon. Members to his Department received a reply *(a)* in under four weeks, *(b)* within four to six weeks, *(c)* within six to eight weeks and *(d)* over eight weeks, in each of the last three years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No information is available on the time taken to reply to correspondence before November 1988. Since then, 41 per cent. of letters from hon. and right hon. Members have received a reply within four weeks.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the numbers in receipt of housing benefit and *(b)* the average amount of benefit payment in constant terms for (i) Burnley and (ii) each region in England for the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimated number of housing benefit recipients in Burnley is given in the table. Similar estimates are not available on a regional basis. The average amount of housing benefit in payment is not available at local authority or regional level.

Estimated recipients of Housing Benefit in Burnley

Year	*Number*
1983–84	13,206
1984–85	11,356
1985–86	11,274
1986–87	11,346
1987–88	10,924
1988–89	8,436

Note: 1983-84 to 1987-88—estimates for caseload during the year.
1988–89—caseload count, 31 May 1988.

Child Support

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to amend existing legislation to ensure that non-custodial parents do more to meet their responsibilities to support their children; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: When income support is claimed by a lone parent, existing legislation places a duty on the non-custodial parent to meet their responsibilities wherever they can afford to do so. However, for over three quarters of lone parent families receiving income support the absent parent pays no maintenance at all. We are naturally concerned by this and will continue to look for ways to ensure that our efforts to obtain a contribution from non-custodial parents are even more effective.

Means Testing and Targeting

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what definition his Department uses of the terms *(a)* means testing and *(b)* targeting; and what is his policy towards the use of each.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Income-related or means-tested benefits are paid to people whose resources are below levels laid down by Parliament and who meet other tests of eligibility. Means testing is, therefore, one of the mechanisms which can be used to establish entitlement. Targeting, which means the effective and responsive provision of extra financial help to groups of people needing particular priority, is an important objective of social security policy. Thus, my right hon. Friend's uprating statement for April 1990, *Official Report*, 25 October, columns 841-54, continues the policy of targeting worthwhile extra help to groups like the less-well-off among families with children, elderly and disabled pensioners and the long-term sick and disabled.

Local Offices

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of his Department's local offices in Greater London he now plans to close; and what steps he is taking to ensure that income support claimants in the affected areas will still be able to have personal access to officers dealing with their cases.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department announced on 16 January that in order to improve service to customers in London it was moving backroom work not requiring face-to-face contact with the public out of 21 London local offices. Such work will be processed in three social security centres (SSCs) in Glasgow, Belfast and Ashton-in-Makerfield near Wigan.

I must stress that the Department has no plans to close any of its offices in London as a result of this relocation of work. A full network of branch offices will be retained in London to carry out that work which does need face-to-face contact with our customers. Indeed, we are planning to open wholly new branch offices in two localities—Wembley and Dulwich—where we do not have any provision at the moment.

Social security claimants in the areas affected by the relocation of work will be able to call at any branch office in their district to conduct their business. Alternatively, by using a special telephone number, they will be able to talk directly to the person dealing with their claim in the social security centre. All calls to the SSC will be charged at the London local call rate.

Housing Benefit

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers in receipt of housing benefit and the average level of housing benefit payments in *(a)* Dundee district and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past 10 years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 19 October 1989]:* The estimated numbers receiving rent rebates or rent allowance are given in the table. The average amount of housing benefit in payment is not available at local authority level.

Housing Benefit
Estimated recipients of rent rebate/allowance

	Dundee district council	*Scotland*
1983-84	25,046	563,038
1984-85	30,395	563,692
1985-86	26,480	583,671
1986-87	26,964	591,694
1987-88	26,953	598,151
1988-89	24,523	572,181

Note:

1983-84 to 1987-88—estimates for caseload during the year.
1988-89—caseload count, 31 May 1988.

Average amount of Housing Benefit in payment: Scotland

	Claims where Supplementary Benefit/Income Support also in payment		*Claims where Housing Benefit only in payment*	
	Rent rebate £ weekly	*Rent allowance £ weekly*	*Rent rebate £ weekly*	*Rent allowance £ weekly*
1983	9·50	13·20	n.a.	n.a.
1984	9·90	14·10	n.a.	n.a.
1985	11·00	18·50	n.a.	n.a.
1986	12·70	21·50	n.a.	n.a.
1987	14·20	23·90	n.a.	n.a.
1988	15·73	24·77	11·22	13·77

Notes:

1. Rate rebate information is not collected for Scottish District Councils.
2. 1983-87 based on sample information about recipients of Supplementary Benefit from local authorities in November or December.
3. 1988 based on sample of all HB recipients on 31 May 1988.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Banking Services Review

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Government has completed its consideration of the findings of the review committee of banking services law, published in February; and if he will make a statement on how these considerations will affect the banking ombudsman system.

Mr. Ryder: The Government are still considering a number of detailed comments on the review committee's recommendations. The report was widely welcomed as presenting an extremely clear and comprehensive critique of the present law on banking services, but reservations were expressed about some of the recommendations. The Government are considering these comments very carefully in formulating their response.

Currency Reserves

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his practice to publish a report of major movements in the total and composition of the United Kingdom currency reserves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The change in the level of the United Kingdom official reserves is published each month. I see no reason to change the practice of successive Governments regarding disclosure of details of the composition of the reserves.

Cash Limits

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there will be any changes to the Treasury's cash and running costs limits in 1989-90.

Mr. Major: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIX, vote 11 will be increased by £1,004,000 from £55,779,000 to £56,783,000.

This increase reflects the take-up of entitlement to carry forward underspending in 1988-89 under the end of year flexibility arrangements, as I announced on 20 July 1989 at columns *258-62*. The full entitlement of £661,000 on capital expenditure is taken up together with £223,000 of the £302,000 entitlement on running costs. Additionally, it reflects an increase in expenditure of £35,000 by the History of Parliament Trust to meet the costs of additional research staff. These increases will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

There is also an increase in provision of £85,000 to meet the setting-up costs at Chessington computer centre prior to the take-on of new payroll work, which will be offset by corresponding decreases in running costs limits of other Departments, as well as an increase to meet the increased costs of services provided by the Government Actuary's Department, which will be offset by a corresponding payment from the Government Actuary's Department vote (class XIX, vote 4).

As a result, the running costs limit of Her Majesty's Treasury will be increased by £308,000 from £74,944,000 to £75,252,000.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any changes are proposed in the cash limit and running cost limit for 1989-90 for the Inland Revenue.

[illegible] Lilley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIX vote 7 will be increased from £1,209,573,000 to £1,234,973,000 and the running cost limit from £1,174,692,000 to £1;202,092,000. The changes in running costs reflect the amount agreed for the Department under the running costs end-year flexibility scheme, and to enable the Department to meet its forecast work loads including setting up independent taxation. The increase will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure.

Civil Service Pay

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish a list of the pay agreements in the Civil Service and in the public services sector which make reference to inter-quartile settlement levels in the private sector; if he will state the annual period of time used as the base period for such inter-quartile settlement figures and the gap of time before the effective date of pay increases under each agreement; and if he will state the approximate number of employees and the total annual pay bill under each agreement;

(2) what is the longest period of time in any Civil Service or public services sector pay agreement between the relevant period of data collection, such as inter-quartile settlement levels in the private sector and the effective date of pay increases under the agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: There are now six long-term flexible pay agreements covering separate groups of staff in the Civil Service which take the inter-quartile range of settlements in the private sector as a negotiating constraint. There are no similar arrangements in the rest of the public services sector. The relevant inter-quartile range of pay settlements is available to the parties to the pay agreements approximately one month before the settlement date and takes account of pay settlements in the private sector over the previous 12 months.

The six pay agreements in the Civil Service together with the number of employees on the basic pay bill covered by each is as follows:

Main grades covered	*Number of employees*	*1989-90 paybill £ million*[1]
1. Scientific and technical grades	55,000	755
2. Departmental grades in the Inland Revenue	60,000	570
3. Grades 5 to 7	23,000	585
4. Executive and office support grades	130,000	1,625
5. Clerical, typing and secretarial grades	195,000	1,350
6. Industrial grades	68,000	590

[1] Estimate.

Privatisation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what have been the total sums in debt and financial liabilities written off in each case of privatisation since 1979, both at current prices and at 1989 prices; and in each case how capital reconstruction altered the balance sheet in relation with the profit or loss position beforehand;

(2) how much in write-offs was granted to each company and industry privatised since 1979; and how much is planned over the next three years.

Mr. Peter Lilley *[holding answers 18 and 19 October 1989]:* The normal practice on privatisation—of a nationalised industry or company wholly or majority owned by Government—is to repay, rather than write off debt. This repayment may be financed from the company's existing resources, the injection of new equity, or new debt finance. In some cases, the Government provide the finance to repay debts, for example, by an equity injection. Such finance is shown in the relevant departmental

National loan fund debt has been formally written off only in the following privatisation cases:

Year	*Company*	*Amount £*
1980-81	National Freight Corporation (under Section 45 of the Transport Act 1980)	100,000,000
1982-83	British Transport Docks Board (under Section 6(1) of the Transport Act 1981)	81,293,616
1984-85	British Telecom (BT (Extinguishment of Loans) Order 1982)	2,789,865,772
1986-87	BAA (under section 3 of the Airports Act 1986)	43,503,340

Details of the debt write-offs proposed for the 10 water plcs are set out in the reply by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 26 October 1989.

These write-offs had no direct effect on public expenditure in as much as they represented a reconstruction of the balance sheets of the industries concerned. In each case, having had NLF debt written off, the successor company issued new securities to be held by the Secretary of State as assets of the Consolidated Fund pending realisation.

Public dividend capital has been reduced in three privatisation cases:

Year	*Company*	*Amount £*
1980-81	British Airways Board (under the Civil Aviation Act 1980 S1(1))	160,000,000
1980-81	British Aerospace (under the British Aerospace Act 1980)	60,000,000
1988-89	British Steel (under the British Steel Act 1988)	500,000,000

A further £3,480,000,000 of borrowing by British Steel under the Iron and Steel Act 1982 (S18(1)) was written off on privatisation.

Details of the capital reconstruction of the companies concerned can be found in the individual prospectuses.

Any further write-offs over the next three years will be announced at the time of a specific privatisation.

Charity Shops

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to oppose the proposed extension of value added tax to goods donated to charity shops.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 24 October 1989]:* The Government have no plans to alter the VAT relief for donated goods sold by charity shops and will not accept any proposals from the EC Commission which affect the United Kingdom's ability to apply zero rates. Changes to EC tax law require unanimity, and there is no question of any unwelcome proposals being forced upon us.

Interest Rates

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were *(a)* the ratio of inflation and *(b)* the levels of interest rates in each of the EEC countries, Japan and the United States of America for the most recent dates for which figures are available.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 26 October 1989]:* Following is the information requested:

Inflation and short-term interest rates in the EC, United States and Japan

	Short-term interest rates[1]	*12 month inflation rates excluding estimates of home-owners costs*[2]
United Kingdom	15·1	5·8
United States	8·5	4·7
Japan	6·4	3·0
Germany	8·2	2·8
France	10·1	3·4
Italy	13·0	6·6
Spain	15·0	7·4
Netherlands	8·2	0·8
Belgium	9·7	3·2
Portugal	12·9	13·7
Greece	20·0	13·6
Denmark	11·4	3·2
Ireland	11·6	3·7
Luxembourg	9·7	3·4

[1] Figures refer to close 24 October, except for Portugal (September), Spain, Greece, Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg (open 25 October).

[2] Figures refer to August, except for Italy and the United Kingdom (September), Netherlands and Spain (July) and Ireland (Q2).

Source: inflation rates estimated from OECD and national sources, interest rates from national sources.

Manufacturing Output (East Midlands)

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much manufacturing output in the east midlands has changed since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 26 October 1989]:* Gross value added in manufacturing industry in the east midlands rose by 90 per cent. between 1979 and 1987, the latest year for which figures are available. The corresponding figure for the United Kingdom was 66 per cent.

These figures measure changes in the value of output; changes in volume would be smaller.

VAT

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of value added tax refund claims under Customs and Excise notice 719 processed during 1988-89.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* The number of claims under Customs and Excise notice 719 (Refund of VAT to Do-It-Yourself Builders) processed in 1988-89 was 9,052.

Charities (Scotland)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes will be required to the administrative arrangements and the requirements for confidentiality in the Inland Revenue in order to implement the Government's proposals for the improved regulation of charities in Scotland.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland announced on 23 October, legislation will be introduced to enable the Inland Revenue to disclose the names and addresses of bodies in Scotland which it has recognised as charitable for tax purposes. The rules of confidentiality under which the Inland Revenue normally operates will be modified for this specific purpose.

When the legislation is enacted, arrangements will be made for members of the public to find out from the Inland Revenue claims branch in Edinburgh whether a body has been recognised by it as charitable for tax purposes.

Statistics (Report)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will place in the Library a copy of the report, "Accessibility and Other Problems Relating to Statistics Used by Social Sciences" prepared by Professor Bernard Benjamin for the Economic and Social Research Council;

(2) what are the conclusions of the report, "Accessibility and Other Problems Relating to Statistics Used by Social Sciences" prepared by Professor Bernard Benjamin for the Economic and Social Research Council on the quality of Government statistics collected by the Government statistical service since the Rayner review;

(3) what are the principal conclusions on the education statistics made in the report, "Accessibility and Other Problems Relating to Statistics Used by Social Sciences" prepared by Professor Bernard Benjamin for the Economic and Social Research Council;

(4) what are the principal conclusions on unemployment statistics made in the report, "Accessibility and Other Problems Relating to Statistics Used by Social Sciences" prepared by Professor Bernard Benjamin for the Economic and Social Research Council;

(5) what is the reason for the delay in the publication of the report, "Accessibility and Other Problems Relating to Statistics Used by Social Sciences" prepared by Professor Bernard Benjamin for the Economic and Social Research Council;

(6) what were the principal conclusions on the objectivity of Government statistical presentation made in the report, "Accessibility and Other Problems Relating to Statistics Used by Social Sciences" prepared by Professor Bernard Benjamin for the Economic and Social Research Council;

(7) when he will authorise the publication of the report, "Accessibility and Other Problems Relating to Statistics Used by Social Sciences" prepared by Professor Bernard Benjamin for the Economic and Social Research Council;

(8) when the report, "Accessibility and Other Problems Relating to Statistics Used by Social Sciences", prepared by Professor Bernard Benjamin for the Economic and Social Research Council was completed and presented for consideration.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* Professor Benjamin was commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) to prepare a report for the ESRC and the Royal Statistical Society on the accessibility and availability of official statistics for social science researchers. Questions on the conclusions and publication of the report are matters for these two bodies.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

13. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has come to a decision on the future of wages councils.

Mr. Nicholls: No.

Construction Industry Training Board

18. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the future of the construction industry training board.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement shortly.

Workplace Nurseries

19. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary for Employment what recent discussions he has had concerning workplace nurseries.

Mr. Nicholls: I have had discussions on child care, including the provision of workplace nurseries, with my advisory committee on women's employment. This committee includes the EOC chair, my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), representatives of the CBI, TUC and the Women's National Commission.

I am also a member of the ministerial group on women's issues which has been looking at the whole question of child care.

I have also had discussions on child care, including workplace nurseries, with the National Council for One Parent Families, the Working Mothers Association, the National Out of School Alliance, the Pre-School Playgroups Association and the National Childminding Association and have attended and spoken at a number of conferences dealing with these and related matters.

Construction Workers (Safety)

20. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for improving the safety of workers on construction sites.

Mr. Nicholls: I shortly expect to bring before the House legislation to make the wearing of safety helmets on site compulsory. The HSC has recently published a consultative document setting out proposals for strengthening the management of health and safety on sites and HSE inspectors will be paying more attention to site management. The HSE has increased the number of inspectors dedicated to the construction industry and aims to have 100 by 1990.

Training and Enterprise Councils

21. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provision his Department has made for the provision of employment training and YTS under the training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Eggar: The Training Agency will contract with training and enterprise councils to deliver employment training and YTS in their areas.

23. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many areas have now made applications to set up training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Fowler: To date, 40 applications for development funding from prospective training and enterprise councils have been received by the national training task force. A table that lists the areas from which applications have been received has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

30. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made in establishing training and enterprise councils in the south-east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been very encouraged by the excellent response from employers in the south-east and throughout the country to our invitation to form training and enterprise councils. Some 40 groups of senior employers from around the country have applied for development funding of which six are from employer groups in the south-east.

52. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how his Department will monitor the spending of public funds by the training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Nicholls: Training and enterprise councils will be required to submit an income and expenditure account for each programme funded by my Department at the end of every four-week accounting period. In addition, TECs will be required to submit a balance sheet showing their financial position at the end of each accounting period.

53. **Dame Janet Fookes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made in establishing training and enterprise councils in the west country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has been very encouraged by the excellent response from employers in the west country and throughout the country to our invitation to form training and enterprise councils.

Some 40 groups of senior employers from around the country have applied for development funding, of which four are from employer groups in the Training Agency's south-west region.

48. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he intends to ensure that training and enterprise councils provide a uniform quality of training provision throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: In England and Wales, training and enterprise councils will arrange training provision within a broad national framework, to suit local circumstances. The TECs will be required to set out their strategy for delivering quality training in their corporate and business plans. In Scotland, local enterprise companies will have similar arrangements for ensuring quality training.

58. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made in establishing training and enterprise councils in the east midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has been very encouraged by the excellent response from employers in the east midlands and throughout the country to our invitation to form training and enterprise councils.

Some 40 groups of senior employers from around the country have applied for development funding, of which three are from employer groups in the Training Agency's east midlands and eastern region.

60. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made in establishing training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

93. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made in establishing training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has been very encouraged by the excellent response from employers throughout the country to our invitation to form training and enterprise councils.

A total of 40 groups of senior employers in England and Wales have applied for development funding, of which 31 have been approved; the table lists the areas from which we have had applications and indicates their status.

List of training and enterprise councils that have applied for development funding at 23 October

	Status
South East	
Milton Keynes	Approved
Hertfordshire	Approved
Essex	Approved
Hampshire	Approved
Isle of Wight	Approved
Thames Valley	Approved
London	
Kingston/Merton	Approved
London East	Under consideration
South West	
Devon/Cornwall	Approved
Dorset	Approved
Somerset	Approved
Avon	Under consideration
West Midlands	
Birmingham	Approved
Walsall	Approved
Staffordshire	Approved
Coventry/Warwickshire	Under consideration
Dudley	Under consideration
East Midlands and Eastern	
North Nottinghamshire	Approved
Norfolk/Waveney	Approved
Suffolk	Under consideration
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Sheffield	Approved
Calderdale/Kirklees	Approved
North Yorkshire	Approved

	Status
Rotherham	Approved
North West	
Cumbria	Approved
East Lancashire	Approved
Rochdale	Approved
Oldham	Approved
South and East Cheshire	Approved
Wigan	Approved
Manchester	Under consideration
Stockport/High Peak	Under consideration
Northern	
Teeside	Approved
Tyneside	Approved
Wearside	Approved
County Durham	Under consideration
Northumberland	Under consideration
Wales	
Mid Glamorgan	Approved
North East Wales	Approved
West Wales	Approved

77. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how training and enterprise councils will respond to the interests of small firms and voluntary organisations within the local community.

Mr. Nicholls: Training and enterprise councils will be expected to undertake a comprehensive assessment of local market needs to enable them to draw up their corporate and business plans. Consultation with a range of organisations and individuals, including employers of all sizes and voluntary organisations, will be vital to this assessment.

90. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made in establishing training and enterprise councils in East Anglia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has been very encouraged by the excellent response from employers in East Anglia and throughout the country to our invitation to form training and enterprise councils. A total of 40 groups of senior employers in England and Wales have applied for development funding, of which three are from the East Anglia area.

95. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the small business support programmes of the training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Nicholls: Training and enterprise councils will be directly responsible for the major current programmes which help small firms and promote self-employment. These include the enterprise allowance scheme, business growth training, enterprise in employment training and counselling for small firms in England. Some training and enterprise councils are also being invited to run elements of the Department of Trade and Industry's enterprise initiative. The councils will also be able to use their local initiative fund to strengthen and expand existing programmes and services or to finance new initiatives to support business growth and enterprise.

EC Social Charter

22. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest position concerning the European social charter.

33. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response his Department has made to the European Commission's draft social charter.

69. **Mr. Richard Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any representations about the effect on employment of the European Commission's proposed social charter.

83. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any further representation on the social charter; and if he will make a statement.

98. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress on the negotiations between European Community Employment Ministers on the social charter.

Mr. Fowler: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) earlier today.

89. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he plans to have further discussions with his European counterparts concerning the proposed European social charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I will next meet my counterparts in the European Community at the meeting of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers on 30 November. The European Commission's proposal for a social charter is not presently on the agenda of that meeting.

72. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Commission of the EEC has yet notified member states as to whether it intends to present social charter directives to be determined by majority vote; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The European Commission has indicated its intention to present an action programme of social measures to the Council of Ministers before the end of the year. The Commission has not yet notified member states of the voting arrangements of any directives which they may bring forward.

Public Sector Strikes

24. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any recent representations about strikes in the public sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Representations have been received from a variety of organisations. The Government are reviewing the law on industrial action. Proposals made in the Green Paper "Unofficial Action and the Law" aim to discourage "wildcat" action in public and private sectors alike.

40. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to combat strikes in the public sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government are reviewing the law on industrial action. Proposals made in the Green Paper "Unofficial Action and the Law" aim to discourage "wildcat" action in public and private sectors alike.

Training

25. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have completed the new entrants training scheme to date.

Mr. Nicholls: It is estimated that 239,000 people had left employment training by the end of September 1989, the latest date for which information is available. We cannot say at present how many of these people had completed their planned training.

46. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how his Department intends to encourage training provision for those aged 16 to 19 years in employment.

Mr. Nicholls: Training and enterprise councils will pursue the Government's aim that all young people in the labour market participate in vocational training leading to recognised qualifications.

The opportunity to undertake training is already available to all young people eligible for YTS. As the number of school leavers diminishes those seeking jobs will be looking for jobs with training. Now is the right time for all employers recruiting young people to take advantage of YTS and give a real commitment to training.

66. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how his Department intends to encourage the numbers of trainees and apprentices in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Nicholls: Many employers in manufacturing participate in YTS for training young people, including apprentices. The Government will continue to encourage employers to make quality, vocational training available to all young people as the best way of meeting the skill needs of the modern economy.

74. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how his Department will encourage the provision of training to those persons aged 25 years and over.

Mr. Nicholls: Responsibility for training for employed people rests primarily with employers and individuals. Training and enterprise councils will have a key role to play in encouraging employers to train the whole of their work force throughout working life. The business growth training programme and other measures taken by my Department to raise employers' awareness of the importance of training will help in this. My Department will continue to develop employment training as a quality training programme which is available to people aged 25 and over who are eligible.

85. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage private employers to provide more extensive training opportunities.

96. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he intends to encourage the provision of training by employers.

Mr. Nicholls: Training and enterprise councils in England and Wales and local enterprise companies in Scotland will ensure that private sector employers lead Britain's training effort into the 1990s. They will increase employer commitment to training and will use private and public resources. In particular they will support employers through business growth training.

Labour Statistics

17. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people in full-time employment.

Mr. Fowler: In June 1989 the number of people in full-time employment in Great Britain was 19,482,000, an increase of over a quarter of a million since June 1988.

26. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in which regions of the United Kingdom the unemployment rate has fallen most rapidly over the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: In the 12 months to September 1989 the region which experienced the largest fall in the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was west midlands which fell by 2·5 percentage points to 6 per cent. followed by the north and Wales which both fell by 2·4 percentage points to 9·3 and 7·2 per cent. respectively. This compares with a fall of 1·8 percentage points in the United Kingdom in the last 12 months to 6 per cent.

29. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consider introducing arrangements to allow independent scrutiny of unemployment statistics.

Mr. Nicholls: Details of the methodologies used to compile this Department's unemployment statistics are well documented and in the public domain.

54. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will detail the unemployment figures for the Barnstaple and Ilfracombe travel-to-work area for August 1979, August 1984 and August 1989, respectively.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the Barnstaple and Ilfracombe travel-to-work area in August 1989 and August 1984, along with the number of unemployed registrants in the Barnstaple and Ilfracombe jobcentre-based travel-to-work areas in August 1979. The figures are affected by the changes in the boundaries of travel-to-work areas as well as the changes in the coverage of the unemployment count.

Barnstaple and Ilfracombe Travel to Work Area
Unemployed Claimants

	Total	*Rate*[1]
August 1984	2,906	12·4
August 1989	1,517	6·0

Barnstaple and Ilfracombe Jobcentre Travel-to-work Areas
Unemployed Registrants—August 1979

	Total	*Rate*[1]
Barnstaple	1,178	5·3
Ilfracombe	242	5·6
And for these areas together	1,420	5·3

[1] Unemployed expressed as a percentage of employees-in-employment and the unemployed. Workforce based unemployment rates for small areas are not available prior to 1983.

62. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the average monthly fall in the number of long-term unemployed aged under 25 in the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Unemployment figures by age and duration are calculated on a quarterly basis. Between July 1984 and July 1989, the number of unemployed claimants aged 18 to 24 years in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for one year or more fell by an average of 11,142 per quarter. This comparison is affected by the change in compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording and by the change in benefit regulations for under 18-year-olds in September 1988.

68. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the fall in unemployment in the northern region.

Mr. Nicholls: In the 12 months to September 1989 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the north fell by 35,000 or 28·9 per cent., on a consistent basis. Unemployment in the north is now at its lowest level for nearly nine years, as it is in the country as a whole.

81. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of job vacancies currently notified to his Department in the Birmingham travel-to-work area; and what was the figure 12 months ago.

Mr. Nicholls: In September 1989 the number of notified vacancies at jobcentres in the Birmingham travel-to-work area was 6,021 compared to 4,689 12 months ago. Vacancies at jobcentres do not represent the total number of vacancies in the economy. Research shows that nationally only about one third of vacancies are notified to jobcentres; however a recent survey covering part of the west midlands region shows that the stock of vacancies held at jobcentres in this area is about one quarter of the total.

88. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of unemployment in the Rugby and Daventry travel-to-work area.

Mr. Nicholls: In September 1989 in the Rugby and Daventry travel-to-work area there were 1,935 unemployed claimants or 3·3 per cent. of the estimated total work force.

94. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many days were lost in industrial disputes *(a)* in the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available and *(b)* in 1978.

Mr. Nicholls: A total of 4,568,000 working days were lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes in the most recent 12-month period ending in August 1989. In 1978, a total of 9,405,000 working days were lost.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Derbyshire are currently unemployed; and by what percentage this figure has changed in the last year.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 26 October 1989]:* In September 1989 the number of unemployed claimants in Derbyshire was 25,859. This compares to a total of 38,275 in September 1988, a fall of 32·4 per cent.

These unadjusted unemployment figures are slightly affected by the change in benefit regulations for under 18-year-olds in September 1988.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has had from trade unions about the understaffing of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: Since the beginning of 1989, my right hon. Friend has had representations about the staffing of the Health and Safety Executive from the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT), and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU).

Mr Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 October 1989, a total of 1,204·5 inspectors were in post in the Health and Safety Executive. The executive plans to increase the total number of inspectors employed to 1,277 by 1 April 1990.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many members of the Health and Safety Executive's management board possess *(a)* professional management or *(b)* professional accounting qualifications.

Mr. Nicholls: One member of the Health and Safety Executive management board holds a professional management qualification. None of the members holds a professional accounting qualification.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff, and of which grades, are employed in the Health and Safety Executive's press department.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of staff and their grades employed in the Health and Safety Executive press department as at 1 October 1989 is as follows:

1 Grade 7
5 Senior Press Officers (SIO Grade)
2 Press Officers (IO Grade)
1 Executive Officer
1 Administrative Officer
1 Administrative Assistant
1 Personal Secretary
1 Part-time Personal Secretary

Health and Safety Commission

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to appoint the ninth Health and Safety Commission commissioner.

Mr. Nicholls: On 29 September my right hon. Friend announced his intention to replace a member of the commission, who had indicated that he was unable to continue as a commissioner, and reappoint the remaining seven commissioners for a further period of six months. In the interim, my right hon. Friend will consider reconstituting the commission, and bearing in mind the increasingly important role played by the commission, he is giving consideration to the appointment of a ninth member. My right hon. Friend will announce the new appointments early next year.

YTS

28. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether all persons aged 16 years who seek a YTS place are now offered one.

Mr. Nicholls: Under the Government's guarantee over 500,000 places are available to YTS eligible young people aged 16 and 17. Young people should consult the careers service to see which particular training place is suitable for them. If there are particular difficulties in individual cases careers officers have been asked to approach the Training Agency for assistance as necessary.

51. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to reduce the accident rate among peope while participating in YTS.

Mr. Nicholls: I am introducing a more vigorous description of health and safety arrangements as part of the YTS contract, and also an improved approach to monitoring which reflects assessment of the degree of risk. I have also set up two exercises to assist with further policy development. An independent study of the YTS accident statistics has been set up which will be published in the spring of next year, and a review of general YTS health and safety arrangements by the Training Agency and HSE is now in progress.

44. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to ensure that sufficient YTS places exist throughout the United Kingdom for those aged 16 and 17 years seeking such a place.

Mr. Nicholls: Particular care is taken to ensure that there are enough YTS places to meet demand throughout the year. There are currently close to 400,000 young people in YTS. My Department has in total contracted with managing agents for over 500,000 places to be available.

Employment Training

31. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many local authorities have withdrawn from employment training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Seven local authorities have withdrawn from employment training. These are: Barrow borough council; Rochdale metropolitan borough council; Wolverhampton metropolitan borough council; Nottinghamshire county council and Cleveland county council, which withdrew because of political decisions; and London borough of Merton and London borough of Barnet, which withdrew because of operational difficulties.

57. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to grant approved training organisation status to employment training agents and managers.

Mr. Nicholls: Approved status will be granted to the first groups of employment training agents and managers during April and May 1990.

35. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from individuals or organisations over participants in the Government's employment training scheme leaving the scheme before completing their training programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department has received various representations about employment training. These all receive careful consideration. Many people leave employment training in order to take jobs, though it is possible to continue the training while being employed.

65. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training trainees have received the full or part of the training bonus.

Mr. Nicholls: Information is not yet available on the number of trainees receiving training bonuses.

73. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the names of those employment training training agents that have been given approved status since the inception of employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: No employment training training agents have yet been granted approved status. All organisations that have applied to become training agents have until September 1990 to satisfy the rigorous criteria for gaining approved status.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for Great Britain and each standard Training Agency region, what are the monthly statistics for the latest available four months for employment training showing *(a)* the number of referrals to employment training from Restart interviews, *(b)* the number of employment training action plans completed, *(c)* the number of starts with employment training training managers, *(d)* the number of employment training filled places and *(e)* the number of profiled or contracted employment training places.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the numbers of referrals to employment training from restart interviews are given in table 1. The numbers of action plans agreed at training agents are given in table 2. The numbers of starts and filled places are given in tables 3 and 4. The numbers of contracted places as at 30 September, the only date for which information is available, are given in table 5.

Table 1

Referrals to employment training from restart interviews: May 1989 to August 1989

Employment service region	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*
London and South East	5,700	7,200	5,300	5,900
South West	1,200	1,100	1,000	1,000
West Midlands	3,800	3,900	3,300	3,500
East Midlands and Eastern	2,400	3,000	2,200	2,200
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,800	3,200	2,600	2,800
North West	4,100	5,000	4,300	4,100
Northern	2,600	3,200	2,300	2,700

Employment service region	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*
Wales	1,900	2,100	1,700	1,500
Scotland	5,000	6,500	4,000	4,600
Great Britain	29,500	35,200	26,900	28,300

Table 2

Employment training action plans agreed at training agents: June 1988 to September 1989

Training agency region	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*
South East	3,200	3,500	2,900	3,600
London	4,700	4,200	4,400	5,000
South West	2,200	1,800	1,800	2,800
West Midlands	4,500	4,300	3,900	5,200
East Midlands and Eastern	3,400	3,100	3,100	3,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,800	4,700	4,600	6,300
North West	6,400	6,000	5,600	6,600
Northern	4,700	4,000	3,900	5,100
Wales	2,700	2,300	2,200	3,200
Scotland	6,200	4,500	5,500	6,400
Great Britain	42,800	38,200	37,900	47,700

Table 3

Starts at employment training managers: June 1989 to September 1989

Training agency region	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*
South East	2,400	4,500	1,900	3,400
London	3,100	3,100	2,700	4,800
South West	1,900	1,500	1,200	2,300
West Midlands	3,800	3,300	3,200	4,500
East Midlands and Eastern	2,800	3,000	2,500	3,500
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,500	3,800	3,500	5,500
North West	6,300	5,300	4,500	6,200
Northern	4,100	3,600	3,000	4,900
Wales	2,600	2,700	2,300	3,700
Scotland	4,800	3,400	4,500	5,600
Great Britain	36,400	34,200	29,300	44,200

Table 4

Employment training filled places: June 1988 to September 1989

Training agency region	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*
South East	11,500	14,500	14,200	14,900
London	18,300	19,000	19,000	20,200
South West	11,800	11,800	11,500	12,000
West Midlands	22,800	23,200	23,600	23,400
East Midlands and Eastern	15,500	16,400	16,800	16,900
Yorkshire and Humberside	25,200	25,200	25,100	25,200
North West	27,600	29,000	28,700	29,100
Northern	23,000	24,400	24,700	24,900
Wales	14,800	15,800	16,000	16,500
Scotland	23,200	23,700	24,400	25,100
Great Britain	193,700	203,000	204,000	208,000

Table 5

Employment training contracted places: 30 September 1989

Training agency region	*September*
South East	16,700
London	22,800
South West	13,500
West Midlands	28,500
East Midlands and Eastern	17,800
Yorkshire and Humberside	29,100
North West	36,800
Northern	27,000
Wales	20,900
Scotland	31,200
Great Britain	244,000

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the nature of the relationship between employment training training managers and local education authorities.

Mr. Nicholls: Local education authorities, like any other organisations, may apply to become either training agents or training managers within employment training. They may also choose to act as subcontractors to training managers.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently undertaking employment training in the north-west of England.

Mr. Nicholls: On 13 October, the latest date for which information is available, there were 28,800 people on employment training in the north-west of England.

Cooling-off Periods

32. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about his proposals for statutory cooling-off periods in industrial disputes.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government are reviewing the law on industrial action.

Manufacturing Productivity

34. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the average annual growth in manufacturing productivity since 1980 in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* and other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows:

Manufacturing output per person employed[1] *1980–1988*

Country	*Annual average percentage change*
Ireland	9·8
Luxembourg	6·1
Portugal	5·6
United Kingdom	5·3
Austria	4·4
Finland	4·4
Belgium	4·2
United States	4·1
Italy	3·8
Canada	3·6
Spain	3·3
France	3·1
Japan	3·1
Netherlands	3·0
Norway	2·8
Sweden	2·7
Switzerland	2·6
Germany	2·2
Australia	2·1
Denmark	0·6
Greece	0·5

[1] Exact coverage differs between countries.

Source: OECD; IMF; CSO.

Unofficial Strikes

36. **Mr. Tracey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any representations about unofficial strikes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on unofficial industrial action from a wide variety of sources. Proposals for reform of industrial relations law to limit the scope for such action have been made in the Green Paper "Unofficial Action and the Law" (Cm. 821).

50. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce legislation to enable employers to dismiss employees who have taken part in unofficial industrial action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Green Paper "Unofficial Action and the Law" (Cm. 821) proposes changes to industrial relations and trade union law to discourage wildcat industrial action. It includes proposals which would allow greater freedom for employers to dismiss those who choose to take unofficial industrial action.

42. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he intends to introduce his proposals to reform the law covering unofficial strike action.

Mr. Nicholls: These proposals were published for public consultation in the Green Paper "Unofficial Action and the Law" (Cm. 821), which invites comments by 1 December.

71. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he plans to meet representatives of the Trades Union Congress to discuss forthcoming legislation on unofficial strikes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend regularly meets representatives of the Trades Union Congress to discuss a wide range of employment issues. He has no current plans for such a meeting.

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to make unofficial strikes illegal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Unofficial, "wildcat" industrial action is a deep-rooted and long-standing industrial relations problem. It can cause disproportionate damage to businesses and to jobs because of its unpredictable and disruptive nature. It can also cause serious inconvenience to the general public, as in the industrial action affecting the London Underground and British Rail last summer.

The Green Paper "Unofficial Action and the Law" proposes a number of changes in the law to discourage wildcat industrial action, by extending union responsibility and giving employers greater freedom to dismiss those taking unofficial action.

Skills Training

37. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further measures he is considering to upgrade the skills of young people.

47. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further measures he is considering to upgrade the skills of young persons.

49. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further measures he is considering to upgrade the skills of young persons.

92. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further measures he is considering to upgrade the skills of young persons.

Mr. Nicholls: The White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" (Cm. 540) announced the formation of local enterprise companies in Scotland and training and enterprise councils in England and Wales. These are being given the task of assessing the key skill needs, prospects for expanded job growth and the adequacy of existing training arrangements in their local labour market. It will be for the councils to develop strategies and measures that will meet the higher skill needs of the economy.

The White Paper also stated that YTS would be reviewed in the light of the changing labour market. I shall announce shortly the results of this review.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

38. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of whether the enterprise allowance scheme provides value for money in creating new jobs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The efficiency unit and the National Audit Office have both endorsed the scheme as a value-for-money employment measure. Survey evidence shows that 65 per cent. of those people who complete their year in the scheme are still operating their business three years after start-up. These same surveys also show that for every 100 businesses still trading at this stage 114 additional jobs have been created.

76. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have participated in the enterprise allowance scheme since its launch in 1983.

Mr. Eggar: Over 470,000 people have participated in the enterprise allowance scheme since it began in 1982.

Benefit Fraud

39. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been found to be signing for benefit while working during each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The number of people who have withdrawn their claims to benefit as a result of investigations by this Department's fraud investigators over the last five years is as follows:

	Number
1984-85	22,500
1985-86	37,500
1986-87	59,500
1987-88	80,000
1988-89	86,895

61. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his Department's exercise on the south coast of England to detect benefit fraud among seasonal workers in the tourism industry.

Mr. Eggar: The south coast exercise, which was carried out between May and September 1989 and covered the area from Worthing to the New Forest, investigated possible benefit fraud amongst seasonal workers in the tourism industry. A total of 2,380 investigations were undertaken with 634 people withdrawing their claims to benefit. This resulted in net benefit savings of £487,750 and 31 prosecution cases, two of which are collusive employers.

Electrical Engineering (Skill Shortages)

41. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on skill shortages in electrical engineering.

Mr. Nicholls: The growth in the economy during recent years, along with new technological developments, has created a strong demand for staff in the electrical engineering industry, especially those at technician and professional levels. The Government's response to meeting skill needs is set out in the White Paper "Employment in the 1990's" (Cm. 540).

Unemployment Benefit (Merseyside)

43. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of persons whose entitlement to unemployment benefit was disallowed because they were considered not to be available for work in the adjudication area covering Merseyside for each quarter since June 1988.

Mr. Eggar: The table shows the number of persons whose entitlement to unemployment benefit was disallowed because they were considered not to be available for work for the period and area requested.

Quarter ending	*Number disallowed*
30 June 1988	160
30 September 1988	118
31 December 1988	142
31 March 1989	146
30 June 1989	106
30 September 1989	136

Unemployment Surveys

45. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will be commissioning any further surveys into long-term unemployment in certain areas of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Surveys of both longer-term unemployed people and employers in the Bristol area have been commissioned in partnership with the Bristol urban development corporation and interviews are currently taking place. There are no plans at present for further surveys in other areas.

Secondary Industrial Action

55. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to legalise secondary action.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The March 1989 Green Paper "Removing Barriers to Employment" (Cm. 655) proposes changes to the present law to make it unlawful to induce industrial action by workers of an employer not party to a trade dispute except in the case of lawful picketing.

Unemployed Benefit Claimants

56. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement regarding the new test that unemployment benefit claimants have to satisfy proving they are actively seeking work.

Mr. Eggar: The "actively seeking employment" condition applies to all claimants and will normally be satisfied by a simple declaration when a person claims benefit—usually fortnightly. It is too early to provide any figures for the number of those interviewed about their job search by employment service counsellors. This change is a timely and appropriate modernisation of unemployment benefit law.

Aberdeen Journals Limited

59. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has considered the implications for his legislative programme arising from the developments in the industrial dispute between Aberdeen Journals Ltd. and the National Union of Journalists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no such implications.

Job Clubs

63. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce specialist job clubs for specific industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have no plans to introduce further job clubs for specific industries. In general job clubs work best by having members from different backgrounds working together to find jobs.

There are currently three job clubs, in London, Birmingham and Manchester, which specialise in helping people seeking work in the hotel and catering industry. It is too early to assess the results they are achieving.

I am pleased with the continuing success of the job club programme, with over 54,000 people being helped so far this financial year; 54 per cent. have gone into jobs and 14 per cent. into other positive outcomes, including training, further education and self-employment.

Pensioners (Employment)

64. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what advice his Department is issuing to employers about employing those drawing retirement pension.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government believe that employers should see older workers as a valuable resource. Demographic trends mean it is more important than ever that employers use the talents which older workers can contribute to the economy. Although recruitment decisions must be left to employers, in making them they should not discriminate unfairly on age grounds. They should also be considering how best to use workers who want to continue beyond retirement pension age. We are putting these messages across to employers through various media, thus creating opportunities for workers over retirement pension age to remain in or return to employment if they so wish.

Vocational Qualifications

67. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on those achieving vocational qualifications in retail business in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: The number achieving full retail vocational qualifications in the United Kingdom during the academic year 1988-89 was 11,536. In addition, the Scottish Vocational Education Council awarded 7,332 modules for retail distribution.

86. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how his Department intends to increase the numbers of those achieving vocational qualifications in clothing in Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: Work on national vocational qualifications (NVQs) for the clothing industry is being co-ordinated by the clothing and allied products industry training board (CAPITB).

With encouragement from the then Manpower Services Commission, the CAPITB was among the first industry training boards to develop NVQs based on occupational standards. There are already considerable numbers of young people training towards NVQs as machinists, an occupation in which previously few employees were qualified. The Training Agency of the Employment Department has required that those on YTS for machining occupations within the clothing industry are given the opportunity of working towards the NVQ or credit towards it.

In addition, the CAPITB is receiving specialist advice and a substantial amount of money via the Training Agency's standards programme to assist it to develop high-quality NVQs which reflect the competences employees need to work in other areas of the industry such as cutting and pressing.

Skills Training Agency

70. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress his Department is making towards the privatisation of the Skills Training Agency.

Mr. Nicholls: An advertisement about the offer of the Skills Training Agency (STA) for sale appeared in the press in September. The response to the advertisement has been encouraging. My sale advisers, Deloitte Corporate Finance, have issued over 100 copies of an information memorandum about STA to potential bidders who have signed a confidentiality undertaking. The next stage of the sale process will be to draw up a shortlist of bidders whose intentions are to run a training business.

Disabled People (Employment)

75. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he is planning any new initiatives to increase employment opportunities for disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: The Department's general employment and training programmes are designed to help meet the needs of as many people with disabilities as possible. They are supplemented as necessary by a range of provision specifically for people with disabilities including sheltered employment for those with severe disabilities. These programmes are the subject of a review, the results of which will be made available as soon as possible.

Industrial Action (Ballots)

78. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what responses he has received on the draft statutory code of practice on industrial action balloting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Various representations were received on the draft code of practice on industrial action balloting during the public consultation period. A modified draft was laid before Parliament on 7 September, and approval for its issue will be sought.

Trade Unions (Sequestration of Assets)

79. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received seeking repeal of the legislation on sequestration of union assets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government receive representations on various aspects of industrial relations law from a variety of sources. Sequestration is a penalty that may be imposed by courts, where appropriate, for contempt of court. There is no specific employment law for the sequestration of union assets

Staff Dispersal

80. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress his Department has made in relocating its staff from London to the regions.

Mr. Eggar: On 3 August 1989 I announced that 1,100 jobs from my Department's headquarters in London and Watford would be moved to Runcorn and Sheffield over the next two to three years. I can report to this House that good progress is being made and the first phase of the move will begin, on schedule, in spring 1990.

Industrial Disputes (Legal Action)

82. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received seeking the transfer from the High Court to tribunals of consideration of industrial disputes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Various representations about industrial relations law are received from a variety of sources. Industrial tribunals currently have jurisdiction to determine complaints about certain individual employment protection rights and other matters which may relate to industrial disputes.

Strikes

84. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many strikes there have been *(a)* in the public sector and *(b)* in the private sector on average over the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: In the 10 years to 1988 the annual average of recorded stoppages of work due to industrial disputes in the public sector was 541 while in the private sector the average was 720. These statistics exclude stoppages of work involving fewer than 10 workers or lasting less than one day unless the total number of working days lost in the stoppage is greater than 100. This exclusion will have a smaller effect on the public sector figures where the negotiating groups tend to be larger.

Women Workers

87. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being considered to attract women back to work.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government are already taking many steps to help women who choose to work to do so while continuing to recognise that women who choose not to do so are doing an equally valuable job in looking after the family at home.

All Government schemes to help the unemployed, to help the inner cities and to help people set up their own businesses are open equally to women and men. These include Restart courses, job clubs, employment training, inner cities, the enterprise allowance scheme and job share —which is particularly attractive to women returning to work after a career break.

Job clubs are open to all who have been out of work for six months whether or not in receipt of benefit, and attendance times can be varied to suit domestic requirements.

My Department's employment service has also produced a special leaflet to tell women interested in returning to work about available opportunities and schemes.

We are also helping to develop to the full the skills of women by increasing the availability of training to them. All women aged 18 to 59 unemployed for six months or more are eligible to take advantage of employment training. In addition, women returning to the labour market and certain single parents on order books can also enter the programme, full or part-time, without fulfilling the six-month unemployment eligibility condition. All lone parents on employment training can qualify for a child care allowance.

In the period up to the year 2000, women are expected to account for over 90 per cent. of the new jobs. It is therefore important that employers do what they can to encourage women back to work. The Government are encouraging employers to adapt traditional working practices to accommodate the needs of women. This means more flexibility in hours of work and in holidays, job sharing, career breaks, part-time working and where possible help with child care costs.

Engineers

91. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of engineers qualifying in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: The continuing supply of engineers is important to the strength of the economy. The number of students graduating in engineering has increased in the last three years. Despite these increases in supply, some employers do find it difficult to meet some of their recruitment needs.

The Government, under the engineering science and technology initiative, have made more resources available to increase relevant higher education opportunities. My Department, through the Training Agency, is also committing resources to encourage retraining and conversion training for adults wishing to pursue engineering careers. In addition, the agency is providing specific support to institutions that promote increases in the number of women and other under-represented groups studying engineering, and to increase general access to engineering and other high-level training opportunities.

Industrial Action (Essential Services)

2. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to limit the disruption of essential services by industrial action.

Mr. Eggar: The Government are reviewing the law as it affects industrial action in essential services. The proposals in the Green Paper "Unofficial Action and the Law" are designed to tackle the problem of wildcat strikes and other forms of unofficial industrial action which have been particularly damaging in such essential services as the London Underground and British Rail.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the average earnings of full-time adult male manual workers in the railway industry and *(b)* the average of full-time adult male non-manual workers at the latest available date together with the corresponding figures for the United Kingdom for 1959 and 1972 and the information he has on comparable figures for 1972 and the latest available date in France and West Germany.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information is provided in the table. Comparable figures for France and West Germany are not readily available.

Average gross hourly earnings of full-time adult male employees in the United Kingdom; pay not affected by absence, April of each year

	1972 £	*1988* £
(a) Manual employees in the railway industry	0·67	4·25
(b) All non-manual employees	1·10	7·40

Sources: New Earnings Surveys in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Air Conditioning (Contamination)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what studies have been conducted by his Department, or consultants to his Department, into mitigation of the effects of contaminated cooling towers and air conditioning systems in high-rise buildings.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) is to publish in November a consultative document seeking views on courses of statutory action for the control of legionella. This follows a detailed review of policy undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). In addition, a joint Department of Health/HSE working group is examining all aspects of legionella, including its control. It will be making recommendations to the chief medical officer and the HSE on any specific areas of study that are seen to be appropriate.

Training Schemes

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the financial support from the Government for *(a)* the community programme per annum since its inception and *(b)* employment training since its inception until the last available year.

Mr. Nicholls: The community programme was started in 1982, and was replaced by employment training in September 1988. The table shows the expenditure on each programme by the Government in each year since 1982.

	Expenditure £ million
Community Programme	
1982-83	[1] [2] 177
1983-84	[1] 400
1984-85	524
1985-86	667
1986-87	1,043
1987-88	1,085
1988-89	664
Employment Training	
September 1988 to September 1989	977

[1] Includes administrative costs.

[2] Includes some residue of the Community Enterprise Programme.

Health and Safety (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, for each Health and Safety Executive area, on how many occasions in the last three years Health and Safety Executive inspectors have been accompanied on work place visits by an interpreter.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the ethnic origin of persons suffering workplace accidents and diseases reported under RIDDOR is recorded by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: Information about the ethnic origin of people suffering workplace accidents and diseases is not recorded by the Health and Safety Executive. Neither the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences regulations 1985 nor the approved form of report require notification of the ethnic origin of the injured person.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, in relation to the categories used in the Civil Service ethnic monitoring system, how many people in each category have been employed in each division of the Health and Safety Executive, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the ethnic monitoring of staff in each division of the Health and Safety Executive has been collated only since 1987. The tables show the numbers of staff in each category at the end of June 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Quarter ending June 1989

	White	*Black*	*Asian*	*Other*	*Non-respondents*	*Total*
Secretariat	25	4	3	0	7	39
HSD	67	2	9	1	15	94
SPD	60	4	5	2	8	79
RPD	514	16	8	2	52	592
TD	278	2	2	2	23	307
MQI	107	0	1	0	6	114
MD	236	7	5	1	22	271
FAID	1,332	17	11	7	136	1,503
NII	181	6	3	1	29	220

	White	Black	Asian	Other	Non-respondents	Total
RLSD	428	8	12	1	31	480
Total	3,228	66	59	17	329	3,699

Quarter ending June 1988

	White	Black	Asian	Other	Non-respondents	Total
Secretariat	23	5	3	0	5	36
HSD	59	3	7	0	16	85
SPD	139	5	5	1	25	175
RPD	379	12	11	4	63	469
TD	267	1	0	2	37	307
MQI	98	0	1	0	15	114
MD	220	6	6	0	29	261
FAID	1,240	17	8	5	190	1,460
NII	150	4	2	1	35	192
RLSD	392	6	9	1	46	454
Total	2,968	60	52	14	461	3,555

Quarter ending June 1987

	White	Black	Asian	Other	Non-respondents	Total
Secretariat	24	5	0	0	3	32
HSD	67	3	6	0	12	88
SPD	52	3	3	0	13	71
RPD	375	12	11	4	66	468
TD	365	4	1	3	52	425
MQI	107	0	3	0	19	129
MD	236	5	6	0	34	281
FAID	1,287	18	9	5	190	1,509
NII	130	4	2	1	31	168
RLSD	405	6	11	1	47	470
Total	3,048	60	52	14	467	3,641

Redundancies

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees have been made redundant by their employers in the past year, having worked for *(a)* up to six months, *(b)* seven to 12 months, *(c)* 13 to 18 months, *(d)* 19 to 24 months, *(e)* 25 to 30 months, *(f)* 31 to 36 months and *(g)* more than 36 months respectively.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 1 November 1989

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low flying exercises have been carried out by the Royal Air Force and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation over the Hexham constituency for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Neubert: I regret that the information requested cannot be provided without disproportionate cost and effort.

Weapons Security

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received from the United States Government a copy of the latest nuclear weapons surety report to the United States President which deals with security of United States nuclear warheads and weapons deployed in the United Kingdom and Europe; and whether his Department received earlier copies of this report.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. We do, however, work closely with the Americans on a range of nuclear safety and security matters.

Bullets (Northern Ireland)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total amount of compensation paid for *(a)* deaths and *(b)* injuries inflicted by (i) rubber bullets and (ii) plastic bullets fired by the Army in Northern Ireland from 1969 to the present.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, our records show that of the claims received since 1 April 1987, we have paid out to date a total of £8,250 in compensation awards for injuries caused by rubber or plastic bullets in Northern Ireland.

HMS Tamar

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the considerations which influenced him to order the relocation of HMS Tamar from Hong Kong to Stonecutters island.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The defence estate in Hong Kong is the property of the Hong Kong Government. Under long-standing arrangements, whenever defence land is required for redevelopment, for economic or social purposes, the Hong Kong Government reprovide defence facilities, as required, at other suitable locations. The naval basin and related facilities at HMS Tamar lie in an area required by the Hong Kong Government for a major new development. No decision has been taken on the future of the Prince of Wales building (headquarters British forces Hong Kong), which is unaffected by the reprovision of the Royal Navy's facilities at Stonecutter's island.

Vanguard Submarine

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been carried out into the power-to-weight ratio of the Vanguard class submarine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The power-to-weight ratio for the Vanguard class was calculated in the course of deciding on the submarine's design. Adequate power will be generated to satisfy the operation requirement.

Aircraft

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects that the joint tactical information distribution system will be fitted to aircraft of the Royal Air Force, and to which aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: The AEW Sentry E3D will enter RAF service in the early 1990s fitted with JTIDS class 2. On current plans the Tornado ADV will have JTIDS fitted shortly after. Consideration is also being given to fitting JTIDS to tanker aircraft in the mid-1990s. A reduced size version of JTIDS is specified for the European fighter aircraft.

Field Howitzer

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to order the evaluation on behalf of his Department of the 155 mm ultra lightweight field howitzer.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will write to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Cambodia

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training and material resources have been provided to Cambodian resistance groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 30 October 1989.

Tanks

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's plans to coordinate the development of the next generation of tanks.

Mr. Alan Clark: NATO nations generally consider opportunities for collaboration in the development of equipment, and are doing so in relation to elements of armoured fighting vehicle technology. There is at present no project aimed at the development of a complete tank.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

EC Education and Training Policy (Seminar)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representation there was from his Department at the seminar on the education and training policy of the European Commission held at the university of Manchester and Wales on 14 October.

Mr. Jackson: None.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will initiate a national child abuse education campaign to explain the problem of child abuse.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department last year issued a circular entitled "Working Together for The Protection of Children From Abuse: Procedures Within The Education Service", which was designed to help local education authorities and others to increase the effectiveness of their efforts to prevent and deal with child abuse.

The circular discussed the potential contribution of the curriculum in this matter and invited local education authorities and schools to consider carefully the extent to which teaching should be directly concerned with warning children of the risks of child abuse. The circular also invited local education authorities to consider the extent to which, within their responsibilities for adult, further and higher education, there was scope for personal and social education about the prevention of child abuse.

The Department has recently asked local education authorities to report on the action they have taken to give effect to the recommendations of the circular.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set up a programme to train teachers to recognise the signs of child abuse.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department is currently providing grant of some £70,000 towards the costs of a programme to help local education authorities to train teachers in the protection of children from abuse.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Catastrophes

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the preparedness of United Kingdom emergency services to deal with major civil catastrophes.

Mr. John Patten: As my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary said on 15 June at columns *514-15*, the emergency services provide an excellent response to such incidents, and recent events have confirmed that.

Risk Conference (Bradford University)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contribution was made by Ministers or officials of his Department to the conference on risk held at the university of Bradford on 12 September.

Mr. John Patten: The conference was attended by two officials from the emergency planning division and the principal of the Emergency Planning College. A presentation was given on the outcome of the Home Office review of peacetime emergency arrangements.

"Making Rehabilitation Work"

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he hopes to respond to the recent Apex Trust report, "Making Rehabilitation Work;" and if he will make a statement regarding implementation of its proposals in future legislation.

Mr. John Patten: We wrote to the Apex Trust on 22 August. I will put a copy of the letter in the Library.

Dispersal Prisons

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the latest available figures from the staff-inmate ratios in dispersal prisons during the time that inmates are unlocked.

Mr. Mellor: The seven dispersal prisons vary considerably in size, design, function and population. Comparisons between staff/inmate ratios need therefore to be made with some care. As at 1 September 1989 the position was as follows:

Prison	*Prisoners*	*Officers in post*	*Prisoners per officer*	*Typical number of prisoners per officer at time of unlocking*
Albany	375	317	1·2	3·0
Frankland	388	396	1·0	2·4
Full Sutton	386	381	1·0	2·5
Gartree	316	290	1·1	2·7
Long Lartin	425	337	1·3	3·1
Parkhurst	224	338	0·7	1·7
Wakefield	689	429	1·6	4·0

Broadcasting (Children's Programmes)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make provision in the broadcasting legislation for a franchise section to provide for children's programmes;

(2) if he will make provision in the broadcasting legislation for the protection of hours during which children's programmes traditionally are shown;

(3) if he will make provision in the broadcasting legislation for children's television programmes to continue being provided as a public service, and not subject to subscription;

(4) if he will make provision in the broadcasting legislation for the setting up of an independent panel to ensure quality children's programmes;

(5) if he will make provision in the broadcasting legislation for the distribution of money through a public service broadcasting council, to the BBC and earmarked for children's programmes;

(6) if he will make provision in the broadcasting legislation to permit the Independent Television Commission to arrange a minimum level of funding for children's programmes on channels 3 and 5.

Mr. Mellor: There is no express requirement in current broadcasting legislation to show children's programmes. Under our proposals for new legislation Channel 3 and Channel 5 will be required, among other things, to cater for a wide range of tastes and interests, and Channel 4 will be required to include programmes appealing to tastes and interests not generally catered for by Channel 3. As new television channels proliferate it becomes generally less desirable for legislation to impose detailed requirements for particular programme types to be included in schedules at particular times or made subject to special funding or licensing mechanisms. But our proposals will suffice to ensure that children's programmes continue to be shown on both the BBC and on independent terrestrial television; and that the possible outlets for children's programmes will increase.

Deportation

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons from Liverpool have accepted voluntary repatriation at the latest available date;

(2) how many persons have accepted voluntary repatriation at the latest date; and what was the total cost;

(3) if he will list the number of deportations from Liverpool for each of the last three years to the latest available date;

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on persons removed from the United Kingdom under the deportation process in the years 1986 to 1988, including those who accepted supervised departure, and those on whom a deportation order was enforced, is published in table 14 of Home Office statistical bulletin issue 31/89 "Control of Immigration: Statistics—Second Quarter 1989", a copy of which is in the Library. Separate information on the removal of persons from Liverpool, and on the total cost of supervised departures, is not available.

Wrongful Imprisonment (Compensation)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names, dates and amounts paid to persons who have been wrongfully imprisoned and the method of calculating compensation for each year since 1970.

Mr. John Patten: It is not our practice to publish details of individual payments to applicants for compensation. The assessment of the amount paid is based in the main on written submissions setting out the relevant facts. In making his assessment, the independent assessor will apply principles analogous to those governing the assessment of damages for civil wrongs.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what applications for compensation in respect of unlawful conviction of Paul Hill, Carole Richardson, Gerard Conlon and Patrick Armstrong he has received; how they will be assessed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Applications for compensation have been received in respect of Paul Hill, Carole Richardson, Gerard Conlon and Patrick Armstrong. As I informed the hon. Gentleman in my written reply on Monday 30 October, on the advice of the independent assessor my right hon. and learned Friend has agreed that interim awards of compensation should be made to all four pending a final settlement of their claims, for which purpose further information has been sought. Arrangements are in hand for the early payment of the interim awards, and my right hon. and learned Friend will accept the assessor's recommendation as to the final amount to be paid in due course.

West Midlands Police (Investigation)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive a report on investigations into the west midlands serious crime squad currently being conducted by Mr. Donald Shaw.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the terms of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the reports on these investigations will be made to the Police Complaints Authority and the chief constable of the West Midlands police. I understand that reports on individual cases will be submitted as they are completed and it will be some time before all cases have been examined.

The chief constable of the West Midlands police has been asked to inform my right hon. and learned Friend if anything emerges which casts doubt on the safety of any conviction.

Pub Bombings

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many meetings he has had with the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police since 1 January; and on how many occasions the convictions for the Guildford and Woolwich public house bombings were discussed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) had three meetings with the commissioner this year. The subject of the convictions for the Guildford and Woolwich public house bombings arose at one of those meetings.

Refugees

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the UNHCR concerning the right of appeal for asylum seekers under United Kingdom law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In a variety of contacts over a number of years UNHCR officers have made clear their preference for an in-country right of appeal for all asylum applicants. The Government have responded by explaining the risk that we see of encouraging abusive asylum applications from passengers who have been refused leave to enter for other purposes in order to benefit from the delays inherent in an extended appeal system. The experience of those countries that operate such appeal systems is that the delays in deciding cases typically run into several years. Despite this difference of view, both sides have worked together in establishing and operating the UKIAS referral arrangements, which successfully provide an independent input to the consideration of port cases.

Downing Street (Barricade)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what authority members of the public are prevented from walking along Downing street.

Mr. Waddington: Access to Downing street is controlled under the police's common law powers which allow them to take reasonable steps to preserve the peace and prevent threats to it.

Bingo

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to amend section 42 of the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 to allow bingo organisers to advertise specific games of bingo at pre-arranged times and places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 27 October 1989]*: The advertising of licensed bingo clubs is controlled by section 42 of the Gaming Act 1968. We have no current plan for Government legislation to amend the section, but we are considering arguments put forward by the Bingo Association of Great Britain for supporting a private Member's Bill entirely to remove bingo clubs from these advertising controls. Bingo clubs can, and do, advertise freely as social clubs; specific games of bingo, and certain prizes in them, can already be advertised on the front of licensed bingo club premises.

Sex Offences

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to increase staffing levels at Wormwood Scrubs unit for sex offenders, and to improve training for staff.

Mr. Waddington *[holding answer 27 October 1989]*: Wormwood Scrubs therapeutic unit for addicts and sex offenders is carrying vacancies at senior and principal hospital officer level; action is being taken in connection with current promotion boards to fill them. In-house training is provided by the establishment's medical staff, who are considering what further steps can be taken, and by visiting consultants; a senior hospital officer, was released last month for a one year course in group psychotherapy and the possibility of further external training will be reviewed as vacancies are filled.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Leasehold Flats

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor has yet received the draft Bill to reform the leasehold system of ownership of flats, which he indicated on 13 June that he was expecting; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Work is continuing at the Law Commission with the preparation of draft legislation to give effect to the recommendations made in the report of the working group on commonhold. The Lord Chancellor hopes to announce a decision about the matter in the next few months.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Rain Forest

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what projects his Department is presently sponsoring to use British forestry expertise in pursuit of conserving the rain forests.

Mrs. Chalker: Under our bilateral country programmes we are currently supporting 64 forestry projects in 27 countries; in addition we are funding 23 forestry research projects. We are also co-financing 38 projects under our joint funding scheme with British NGOs. I am sending a list of these projects to my hon. Friend.

International Literacy Year

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to contribute to International Literacy Year; and whether additional public funds will be available to assist projects undertaken by non-government organisations in support of International Literacy Year.

Mrs. Chalker: Our contribution to International Literacy Year will be as part of our on-going programme of literacy activities within wider programmes of help for people and their communities. Examples are support for the Gujarat integrated family welfare project, the Hyderabad slum improvement project and the Ghana programme of action to mitigate the social costs of adjustment. We shall also consider carefully any further projects in the literacy field overseas which non government organisations might wish to send us under the joint funding programme.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners (Nursing Home Care)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the £3,000 savings limit which debars pensioners from having the costs of their long-term nursing home care met by his Department.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Pensioners with savings of over £3,000 can receive income support and, therefore, help with nursing home fees. However, an income of £1 a week is assumed for every £250, or part of £250, of any savings between £3,000 and £6,000. No income support is payable to people with more than £6,000. There are no plans, at present, to raise these capital limits.

Archway Tower Local Office

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what date he expects the Department of Social Security offices in Archway tower to close; how many staff will be transferred; and what will be the location, staffing levels and opening date of the new offices for Finsbury Park and Highgate.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The restructuring of social security services in the Department's offices in Archway tower is due to start in August 1990 and should be completed by March 1991. During this period there will be a phased transfer of backroom work to the social security centre in Glasgow and of administrative and specialised services to the district office to be located in Euston. Branch offices providing the full range of social security services to public callers will be established within Archway tower. At present we have no firm dates for the movement of these offices.

A study is currently under way to find a better location for each branch office in order that it can meet our objective of placing service where our customers need it. Accommodation will then be sought within the required areas and plans developed to vacate the premises in Archway tower. In the meanwhile both offices will continue to provide a full personal service from their existing location.

Staffing levels in the existing offices in Archway tower will start to reduce from August 1990 when the first tranche of backroom and specialised work is transferred to the Glasgow social security centre and Euston district office. Rundown of surplus staff will be achieved by a combination of natural wastage and transfers to nearby offices or other Government Departments. Precise details of the numbers to be transferred will not become clear until nearer the date for relocation of the work.

The number of staff required to support the remaining business at each branch office is estimated to be between 12 and 15 per office. These figures will, however, be subject to continuing review and adjustment in the light of departmental experience of existing offices whose backroom work has earlier been relocated.

Lone Parents

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further plans he has to study ways of encouraging single mothers to return to work rather than depend on income support and other benefits; and if he will make a statement.

31. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to help and encourage lone parents who want to become more independent through work.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 23 October 1989]:* The number of lone parent families dependent on supplementary benefit income support has grown from 318,000 in 1979 to 722,000 in 1988[1] and approximately two-thirds of all lone parent families are dependent on income support.

Legislation places a duty on absent husbands and fathers to meet their responsibilities wherever they can afford to. However, for over three quarters of the lone parent families receiving income support the absent parent pays no maintenance at all. We shall continue to look for ways to make our efforts to obtain a contribution even more effective. Regular payments of maintenance can provide a useful basis of non-benefit income for lone parents who wish to work.

Lone parents are able to receive income support without having to be available for work, and it is right that they should be able to decide for themselves what is best for them and their children. However, where the lone parent does wish to work the family credit and housing benefit schemes give special help which recognises that lone parents can face extra expenses in working.

In addition, as announced in my right hon. Friend's statement about the uprating of Social Security Benefits, on 25 October, lone parents in work will receive extra help from next year. In housing benefit, the lone parent premium will increase from £8·60 a week to £9·70 from April 1990 and the earnings disregard will increase from £15 to £25 a week from October 1990.

In addition, lone parent families in work will benefit like other families on low incomes from increases my right hon. Friend has announced of £1 a week in the family credit adult credit and 50 pence a week housing benefit family premium which are in addition to the normal uprating of these benefits.

[1] *Sources:*
1979 Supplementary Benefit Annual Statistical Enquiry.
1988 Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiry.

Note: The figures on the numbers of lone parents do not include prisoners' partners.

HEALTH

Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his national policy for the future management, operation and ownership of the non-emergency ambulance services.

Mr. Freeman: Health authorities will remain responsible for the operational management of ambulance services and they are currently considering how best to provide non-emergency ambulance services in the light of the review proposals and local circumstances.

North-East Thames RHA

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will alter the composition of North-East Thames regional health authority to give due representation to Waltham Forest.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No; RHA members are appointed for their personal qualities and experience, and not to represent any particular or geographical interest.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the representation of residents of each district health authority area on the North-East Thames regional health authority, showing political affiliation where known.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: RHA members are appointed for their personal qualities and experience and not to represent the residents of a particular geographical area.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will instruct Waltham Forest district health authority to increase the provision of essential life-saving emergency equipment at Whipps Cross hospital; if he will provide additional funding to the hospital for this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The level of provision of health care services within a particular area is a matter for the health authority concerned, who are best able to judge the priorities for provision of services and equipment in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Insulin

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths have been reported of young diabetics who have switched from animal to human insulin; and what study the Committee on Safety of Medicines has made of the effects of treatment by synthetic human insulin for diabetics.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) has received three reports of deaths of young diabetics who have switched from animal to human insulin. Such reports do not establish a relationship between cause of death and change of insulin type. The CSM considered a range of studies in relation to human insulin before product licences were granted and since this time has monitored published studies worldwide. Currently the CSM is working closely with the British Diabetic Association and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in the United Kingdom and epidemiological centres in the USA to monitor the possible effects of changing from animal to human insulin and of improving diabetic control in patients under treatment with all types of insulin.

The CSM has advised all diabetics not to make any change in the type of insulin they use, or the dose they take, without consulting their doctor.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if there is an adequate supply of animal insulin for the treatment of diabetics.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are four suppliers of animal insulin for the treatment of diabetes in the United Kingdom. Each has given an assurance that there are adequate supplies available.

AIDS

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the guidance and criteria for support grant for social services for people with AIDS and related expenditure will be forthcoming; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We will outline the criteria following consultation with the local authority associations later this year.

Handicapped Children

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children up to 18 years of age are *(a)* mentally handicapped, *(b)* physically handicapped and *(c)* both, by health region and by severity of disability.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available centrally. The third report from the OPCS on disability in Great Britain, "The Prevalence of Disability Among Children" contains estimates of the number of mentally and/or physically handicapped children under 16 years of age in each local government region of England, but these regions are not regional health authority areas. A copy of this report is in the Library.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions were carried out on overseas women in the last 12 months; at how many weeks gestation they were undertaken; if he will list their countries of origin; what information he has on the allowable upper time limit for abortions in their countries of origin; how much was paid to private clinics in fees to carry out these abortions; how many were after 18 weeks gestation; and whether his Department requires an anaesthetic or pain killer to be administered to the unborn child before a late abortion takes place.

Mr. Freeman: The information regarding the numbers of abortions performed in England and Wales to overseas women, with a breakdown by gestation, is shown in the table.

Abortions to non-British Isles residents by country of origin and gestation period for 1988

		Gestation weeks				
Country	*Total*[1]	*Under 9*	*9-12*	*13-17*	*18+*	*Unknown*
Other European	7,357	1,084	1,366	2,263	2,644	—
Austria	54	4	1	13	36	—
Belgium and Luxembourg	33	3	5	1	24	—
France	3,047	45	126	1,335	1,541	—
Gibraltar	32	14	12	4	2	—
Italy	631	26	32	257	316	—
Malta	45	19	20	2	4	—
Portugal	51	17	8	12	14	—
Spain	3,188	900	1,107	601	580	—
Switzerland	68	9	11	14	34	—
German Federal Republic	140	24	31	14	71	—
Rest of world	1,011	371	342	172	126	—
Algeria	78	11	5	22	40	—
Australia	40	16	17	7	—	—
Republic of South Africa	400	112	156	90	42	—
United States of America	66	33	24	4	5	—
Zimbabwe	49	14	21	8	6	—

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[1] Only countries where the number of terminations exceeds 24 are included.

The upper limits and circumstances in which abortions may lawfully take place vary widely from country to country but do not affect the availability in individual cases of abortions in this country to foreign women.

Information about the sums paid to private clinics by non resident women is not collected centrally.

Decisions as to the drugs and anaesthesia to be given to a woman undergoing an abortion are entirely a matter for the clinical judgement of the doctor responsible for her care.

Haemophiliacs

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what further consideration he has given to the settlement of compensation claims by haemophiliacs infected by the HIV virus through National Health Service blood transfusions: and what plans he has for an early out-of-court settlement with these victims;

(2) what further representations he has received regarding financial compensation for haemophiliacs infected by the HIV virus through National Health Service blood transfusions.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what study he has undertaken of compensation arrangements made by other Governments for people with haemophilia who, in the course of medical treatment, have been infected with HIV virus; and if he will now facilitate an out-of-court settlement of the claims of the British victims; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received 30 further representations from members about compensation for people with haemophilia and HIV infection since my hon. and learned Friend replied to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 23 October at column *318*. We understand that a variety of schemes have been adopted in other countries, although some have made no special arrangements.

I am advised that the current legal action relating to haemophiliacs is sub-judice and it would therefore not be appropriate for me to comment further.

Food Safety

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Government will respond to the sixth report, 1988-89, of the Social Services Committee on food poisoning, listeria and listeriosis.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have today published their response to this report. Copies have been placed in the Library.

TRANSPORT

King's Cross Fire

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total expenditure incurred by London Regional Transport and London Underground Limited arising from the King's Cross Underground fire.

Mr. Portillo: London Regional Transport estimated last year that £266 million needed to be spent between 1989-90 and 1991-92 on proposals to enhance underground safety following the King's Cross fire. It is expected that about £80 million of this will be incurred in 1989-90.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether at the Council of European Transport Ministers on 16 October in Luxembourg he introduced any policies to promote the reduction in road traffic use in the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It is not the Government's policy to seek to influence overall levels of road traffic, but to secure efficient use of vehicles and highways. At the Council on 16 October my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pressed for action to liberalise road haulage cabotage across the European Community. The effect of allowing non-resident companies to offer road haulage services within a member state would be to reduce the number of lorries which return home empty.

Road Schemes

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assumptions are made of the value of public open space needed for road schemes in cost-benefit analysis.

Mr. Atkins: Public open space taken for road schemes, like all land acquired for road schemes, is valued in the cost-benefit analysis on the basis of market prices as assessed by the district valuer, who is independent of the Department. Cost-benefit analysis is only one part of the total appraisal procedure for road schemes. Decisions are taken in the light of a comprehensive assessment which includes environmental effects, such as the effect on amenity and nature and environmental conservation. Under the terms of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 if open space or common land is taken for a road scheme, the Department provides equivalent land in exchange or the compulsory purchase order is subject to special parliamentary procedure. The current approach to the valuation of public open space, like all elements in the appraisal of roads, is kept under review.

Roads (London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what instructions he has given to the consultants for the London assessment studies with regard to *(a)* scheme components to be dropped from the studies and *(b)* scheme components to be added to the studies in advance of the consultants finalising their reports.

Mr. Atkins: It is for the study consultants to determine what components should or should not be included in their recommendations. I am still awaiting their reports.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what value was ascribed to that portion of Oxleas wood needed for the east London river crossing for the purposes of assessing the costs and benefits of the scheme.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) on 23 January 1989, at column *387*.

Air Traffic Congestion

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what strategy the Government have for tackling air traffic congestion in Europe.

Mr. Parkinson: The Government and the Civil Aviation Authority have reviewed the provision of air traffic control in Europe. We consider that in addition to initiatives taken in the last year, western European states should now work urgently towards the integration of their air traffic control systems. In order to achieve this, states would need to enter into a specific commitment to integrate their system to an agreed timetable and to bring about the necessary changes to the institutional framework.

We envisage that the integrated system would be operated from a series of area control centres which have compatible systems and equipment and would be connected by a common communications network. Some changes of air space boundaries might be agreed, but we would expect most control centres to continue to be operated by national authorities. The system would function irrespective of state boundaries, which would become transparent to airspace users. Eurocontrol, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation, would be given an enhanced role in developing a single integration plan and in helping national authorities to expedite its implementation.

In response to a United Kingdom proposal, the European Civil Aviation conference recently established a task force to examine the scope for further integration of air traffic control systems in Europe. The United Kingdom will be playing a leading part in the work of the task force and we will be putting forward proposals at the first meeting of the task force on 3 November. The task force's report will be considered at a meeting of European Transport Ministers in the spring of 1990 at which I hope the Governments of western Europe will agree a timetable for the necessary technical and institutional changes.

Cash Limits

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he proposes to make to the cash limits on his votes and to his Department's running costs limit.

Mr. Parkinson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limits for my votes are to be changed as follows:

£ thousand

		Increases			
		End year flexibility[1]			
Class and vote	*Current cash limit*	*Capital*	*Running costs*	*Other*	*Revised cash limit*
VIII, 1	1,282,912	22,832	—	[2]65,000	1,370,744
2	234,213	2,000	686	[3]1,970	238,869
4	128,883	1,913	602	—	131,398
5	218,706	—	—	[4]1	218,707

[1] Take up in full of entitlements announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 20 July 1989 (*Official Report*, columns 258-62).

[2] Increases of £25 million towards preparation and supervision of new construction as part of the expanded roads programme described in the Roads for Prosperity White Paper (Cm. 693) and £40 million to meet faster than expected progress in schemes in the current roads programme.

[3] Additional running costs provision to cover work on the expanded roads programme.

[4] Token. Increased payments and recoveries in respect of traffic control systems.

All these increases will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The running costs limit of the Department of Transport has been increased by £3,258,000 from £284,873,000 to £288,131,000 as a consequence of the running costs increases referred to above.

Roads (London)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money, and on what projects, has been spent by his Department on road schemes in Greater London for each year since 1975 to date; and what is proposed to be spent, and on what projects, for the remainder of this year and each year until 1995.

Mr. Atkins: Details of construction costs for individual projects costing over £1 million each in progress in the period 1986-87 to 1989-90 are shown in table 1. All 1989-90 figures are estimates.

Expenditure in future years will be determined by progress on preparation and construction of individual projects and the total funds available for road building.

The information for earlier years could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Expenditure on major DTP schemes in London—construction costs only

£ million

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
A12 Gallows Corner/Brentwood	0·6	—	—	—
A406 South Woodford/Barking Relief Road	32·8	21·8	5·4	0·6
A20 Sidcup Bypass Improvement	14·2	9·2	3·8	1·1
A2 Rochesterway Road Junction	7·3	13·0	2·7	2·3
A406 Great Cambridge Relief Road	0·8	5·7	7·0	8·4
A406 Hangar Lane/Harrow Road	—	0·2	1·6	18·8
A406 Chingford Road/Hale End Road	—	3·9	1·5	25·2
A40 Swakeleys Road Junction	—	—	4·7	6·7
A23 Waddon Marsh Bridge	—	—	0·4	0·4
A40 Long Lane Junction	—	—	—	0·7
Hackney Wick/M11 Link	—	—	—	1·9
East London Traffic Control System	—	—	—	0·4
Final Accounts for earlier schemes	0·6	0·6	0·1	0·5
Total	56·3	54·4	27·2	67·0

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report from Ove-Arup partners on the east London assessment study.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 23 October to my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe), *Official Report*, column *373*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Meat Imports

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the powers to serve notice requiring the re-importation of meat unfit for human consumption under the Imported Food Regulations (NI) 1984 are to be retained after the implementation of the Single European Act in 1992; and if he will make a statement about controls against the importation of unsuitable meat into Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Until the EC negotiations are finalised it is not certain what effect the single market proposals for 1992 will have on public health inspection of imported meat, but in those negotiations the United Kingdom are arguing strongly in favour of adequate safeguards on meat from member states. The existing controls under the Imported Food (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1984, require that imported meat shall be subject to inspection by authorised officers of district councils, to ensure compliance with the EC certification and health marking conditions.

ACE Schemes

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the operation of the ACE scheme and give the following information: how many people are currently employed on the ACE scheme, how many people currently employed on the ACE scheme are disabled and what this is as a percentage of the total number employed on ACE schemes, how many sponsor organisations within the ACE scheme employ 20 or more staff and which statutory provisions apply to these organisations, what information he has as to how many sponsor organisations within the ACE scheme fulfil their obligations under the 1945 and 1960 Acts to employ a minimum of 3 per cent. registered disabled people, what arrangements are made by the Department of Economic Development for Northern Ireland to monitor whether organisations in receipt of public money fulfil their legal obligations in respect of employing disabled people and what action is taken by the Department of Economic Development against organisations who are in breach of the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Employment) National Insurance Act 1945 and 1960; if he will list any prosecutions undertaken and the outcome in each case; what is his policy regarding promotion of equality of opportunity in obtaining employment under the ACE scheme for disabled people; and whether he has any plans to introduce further measures to ensure that disabled people have equality of opportunity to obtain employment under the ACE scheme.

Mr. Needham: The Action for Community Employment (ACE) scheme provides temporary employment for up to one year for the long-term unemployed in work of community benefit. A total of 10,561 people are currently employed on the ACE scheme and 182 or 1·7 per cent. of the total work force have declared themselves to be disabled; 147 sponsors employ 20 or more staff; ACE sponsors are subject to all statutory provisions affecting employers;

Information about the number of ACE sponsors who meet their obligations under the 1945 and 1960 disabled person's legislation is not available.

Organisations in receipt of public money, in common with all other employers, are required to obtain a permit from the Department of Economic Development if they do not meet the quota obligations imposed by statutory provision and wish to recruit non-disabled employees. Permits are issued only where the Department is satisfied the employer has made every effort to recruit registered disabled people and has been unsuccessful. Employers with 20 or more employees are required to make an annual return to the Department of Economic Development showing the number of disabled workers in their work force. Visits are paid by the Department's disablement resettlement officers to employers not fulfilling their quota obligations to check on their recruitment practices and to advise on the recruitment of registered disabled people. It has not previously been normal practice for DRO's to monitor recruitment of disabled people into ACE jobs, but this matter is now under review.

Employers in breach of the statutory provisions are liable to prosecution, but it is generally considered more appropriate to advise employers about any departures from their statutory obligations and provide advice and assistance in helping them to meet their obligations; there have been no prosecutions.

The Department's policy is that registered disabled people should be given every opportunity to compete on equal terms with their non-disabled colleagues for ACE jobs, and should benefit from the special measures in operation to assist with the employment of this group. Under existing recruitment rules disabled people get preferential treatment in that they need only to have been unemployed for eight out of the previous 15 months before being eligible for the scheme and can obtain a further ACE job 16 months after leaving the scheme, instead of the normal 24 months. In a recent series of conferences with ACE sponsors special attention was drawn to the employment needs of disabled people and sponsors were asked to develop positive policies towards the employment of these people. The Department of Economic Development is currently reviewing measures that may be taken to increase the number of registered disabled people employed in the ACE programme.

Students

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students from *(a)* the Republic of Ireland and *(b)* other European Community countries are in receipt of state-supported education in Northern Ireland; and what is the total cost in Northern Ireland of support.

Mr. Needham: The total numbers of students from the Republic of Ireland and other EC countries respectively attending Northern Ireland universities, teacher training colleges and further education college in 1988-89 were 1,783 and 110.

It is not possible to disaggregate the overall cost of support. However, the cost of remitting the tuition fees of eligible students from the Republic of Ireland and other EC countries in 1988-89 (1,256 total student numbers of which four are from EC countries other than the Republic of Ireland) was £702,650 (£700,550 Republic of Ireland and £2,100 other EC countries).

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated total value of grants paid to students in Northern Ireland in the academic year 1989-90.

Mr. Needham: A total of £53,949,000.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total cost of grants paid to Northern Ireland students in each of the last three years.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Financial year	*£000s*
1986-87	41,720
1987-88	44,912
1988-89	48,606

Belfast Urban Area Plan

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give an approximate date for the publication of the Belfast urban area plan.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on 17 October 1989 at column *69*.

Education

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many secondary schools in Northern Ireland fall into a particular group category for promotional allowance values and are paid *(a)* at the lower allowance and *(b)* at the higher allowance.

Mr. Needham: One secondary school has a promotion allowance value which is lower than that appropriate to its group and six secondary schools have promotion allowance values which are higher than that appropriate to their groups.

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those schools in Northern Ireland which fall into group 12 category for promotional allowance values for secondary schools and are treated accordingly.

Mr. Needham: Following is the information:

Ballyclare High School
Ballymena Academy
Coleraine Academical Institution
Grosvenor High School, Belfast
Rathmore Grammar School, Belfast
Sullivan Upper School, Holywood
St. Mary's Christian Brothers Grammar School, Belfast
St. Patrick's College, Maghera
Thornhill College, Londonderry
Wallace High School, Lisburn

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those schools in Northern Ireland which fall into category group 12 for promotional allowance values for secondary schools and are paid group 11 allowances.

Mr. Needham: One group 12 school—Portadown college—has had a promotion allowance value appropriate to a group 11 school determined for it by the Department of Education for the 1989-90 school year.

Arts

The Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the projects in Northern Ireland which have benefited from his Department's support for the arts in the last three years for which figures are available, and the sums granted in each case.

Mr. Needham: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Family Planning

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many general practitioners were registered at 31 December 1987 and 1988 to provide a National Health Service family planning service to their patients in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* The total numbers providing such services were 876 and 904 respectively.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Stationery

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the date of the expiry of the current contract to supply the House with stationery; when he intends to invite tenders for any subsequent contract; and whether it will be open to any company located in the United Kingdom to tender for that contract.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The HMSO is responsible for supplies of stationery to the House of Commons (Estimate Class XIX Vote 6). A contract for the supply of die-stamped stationery was awarded in May 1989 following competitive tendering. This is due to run for three years.

Invitations to tender for a replacement contract will be issued in late 1991, following advertising in the Official Journal of the European Communities, to all suppliers on HMSO's tender list, together with any acceptable firms who may respond to the notice in the Official Journal. Interested suppliers may request inclusion on HMSO's tender list at any time.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Lord President of the Council how much paper used by the House of Commons is *(a)* recycled and *(b)* virgin; and what are the comparative costs.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer the hon. Member to my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) of 4 April 1989, column *69*.

Papers used in the production of buff envelopes and file covers for HMSO are traditionally made from recycled papers and therefore a comparison with virgin papers is not possible. For general purpose printing papers the price of recycled qualities is similar to that for virgin papers. For higher quality writing papers savings of up to 10 per cent. may be obtainable.

Refreshment Department (Packaging)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the policy of the Refreshment Department on the use of chlorofluorocarbons containing packaging material, non-bio-degradable wrapping and recycled paper.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Refreshment Department's policy with regard to the use of environmentally friendly products and recycled paper is in line with that of the House. The Department is not responsible for the manufacture of the wrapping and packaging materials it receives but does have plans to use biodegradable carrier bags when current stocks are exhausted.

PRIME MINISTER

Whisky Look-alikes

Mr. Sims: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her recent meeting with the Japanese Prime Minister, she raised the subject of the appropriate steps to resolve the issue of whisky look-alike products.

The Prime Minister: During my visit to Japan I told the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Kaifu, of the concern in the United Kingdom about the sale of whisky look-alikes in Japan. Mr. Kaifu responded helpfully, saying that action would be taken to ensure that such products were clearly perceived as being different from genuine whisky. I understand that the Japanese authorities have given guidance to the trade to this effect. Our embassy in Tokyo continues to monitor the market situation closely.

Advisers

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her advisers, their terms and length of appointment and salaries.

The Prime Minister: My current advisers, who are not career civil servants, are:

G. D. Bourne
Sir Percy Cradock
A. Dunlop
Professor B. Griffiths
G. Guise
H. Harris-Hughes
Mrs. A. Ponsonby
I. K. Whitehead

The conditions of service are broadly the same as those for established civil servants. The appointments may be terminated at the end of the current Administration; following a general election; or if the Minister who appointed them moves on. It is not our practice to reveal the salaries of advisers as they are individually negotiated in relation to previous outside earnings and are therefore confidential.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what are her plans regarding appointing a successor to Professor Walters as her economic adviser; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister how many advisers who were not career civil servants, indicating whether part time or full time, she had in 1979-80; and how many in each year since.

The Prime Minister: I have had the following number of advisers in the policy unit since 1979:

Year	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
1979	2	—
1980	2	—
1981	2	—
1982	4	—
1983	11	—
1984	11	—
1985	8	—
1986	7	—
1987	4	—
1988	6	—
1989	6	—

In addition Sir Percy Cradock has been my foreign affairs adviser since 1984. Professor Alan Walters was my economic adviser from 1981 until 1983 on a full-time basis and this year on a part-time basis. I have also had a personal assistant full-time from 1979 until 1986 and part-time since then.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list all her current advisers who are not career civil servants, giving their date of appointment and fees.

The Prime Minister: My current advisers in the policy unit are:

	Appointed
Professor B. Griffiths	1985
G. Guise	1986
G. D. Bourne	1988
A. Dunlop	1988
I. K. Whitehead	1988
H. Harris-Hughes	1989

In addition Sir Percy Cradock has been my foreign affairs adviser since 1984. Mrs. A. Ponsonby has been my personal assistant since February.

It is not the Government's practice to reveal the salaries of advisers as they are individually negotiated in relation to previous outside earnings and are therefore confidential.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost of the Prime Minister's advisers who were not career civil servants in 1979-80 and each succeeding year.

The Prime Minister: The total expenditure on the salaries of my advisers since 1981 is as follows (the figures for earlier years are no longer available).

Year	£
1981	35,762·50
1982	75,569·25
1983	[1]167,126·97
1984	145,022·52
1985	188,654·82
1986	210,746·87
1987	239,459·46
1988	215,379·85
[2]1989	141,142·00

[1] In 1983 the CPRS was abolished and a few members became ministerial advisers.
[2] To date.

Commonwealth Conference

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister how many Ministers and Government officials, respectively, accompanied her at the Commonwealth conference in Malaysia.

The Prime Minister: I was accompanied at the Commonwealth conference in Malaysia by the Foreign Secretary and his party, three officials from my office and 24 support staff (including secretaries, a duty clerk and security personnel).

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost of her visit to Malaysia for the Commonwealth conference.

The Prime Minister: Information on the cost of this visit is not yet available.

Prime Minister's Office

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost of the Prime Minister's Office in 1988-89; and what is the estimated cost for 1989.

The Prime Minister: The total cost of my Office in 1988-89 was £6,553,712 (1). The latest estimate of the total cost for 1989-90 is £7,003,500 (1).

Note: (1) Salaries and wages, notional pension liability, administration costs and the grant-in-aid to the Chequers trust are included. My salary as a Cabinet Minister is excluded, as are my pay and allowances as a member of this House.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total number of staff in the Prime Minister's Office in 1988-89; and what is the estimated total for 1989.

The Prime Minister: The total number of staff in 10 Downing street during 1988-89 was 67. At present the number of staff is 68.

Japan (Visit)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister whether any Conservative party official accompanied her on her recent trip to Japan.

The Prime Minister: Four Conservative officials accompanied me to Japan for the International Democratic Union conference.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Council

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much per copy it cost to produce the report of the British Council for the reporting years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Sainsbury: The British Council annual report and accounts for 1986-87 cost £1·96 per copy and the report had 64 pages. In 1987-88 the cost per copy was £2·23 and there were 36 pages. In 1988-89 the cost per copy was £3·41 and there were 72 pages.

Chile

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to send observers to the forthcoming elections in Chile.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no plans to send any official British Government observers to the forthcoming elections in Chile.

Antarctica

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps were taken at the Antarctic meeting in Paris to protect the Antarctic environment; what was the outcome of debate on the Franco-Australian proposals; what steps were taken by the British delegation to protect the Antarctic environment; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: In line with our view that all possible concrete and practical steps should be taken to protect the Antarctic environment, building on the measures already adopted under the Antarctic treaty, including the Antarctic minerals convention, the meeting adopted an unprecedented number and range of environmental recommendations. These dealt with waste disposal; the prevention and control of, and response to marine pollution; environmental monitoring; improved descriptions and management plans for specially protected areas (SPAs); the amendment of article VIII of the agreed measures for the conservation of Antarctic fauna and flora to provide for management plans for SPAs; new sites of special scientific interest, the establishment of specially reserved areas, the establishment of multiple-use planning areas. The concentration of the siting of stations, the use of Antarctic ice, the role of Antarctica in understanding and monitoring global change, including the ozone layer, the charting of Antarctic waters, and co-operation to improve scientific productivity in Antarctica. Of the 14 recommendations covered in this list, 12 resulted from the initiatives of, and close collaboration between, the United States and the United Kingdom delegations.

The meeting also considered the Franco-Australian proposals, as well as other proposals submitted by the Chilean, New Zealand, Swedish, United Kingdom and United States delegations, relating to comprehensive measures for the protection of the Antarctic environment. While none of those proposals was endorsed by the meeting, it was agreed that meetings should be held next year:

(i) to explore and discuss all proposals relating to the further elaboration, maintenance and effective implementation of a comprehensive system for the protection of the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems, aimed at ensuring that human activity does not have adverse environmental impacts or compromise the scientific, aesthetic or wilderness values of Antarctica; and

(ii) to explore and discuss all proposals relating to article 8(7) of the convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities, relating to the issue of liability.

The venue or venues of these two meetings, and their timing, are to be decided through diplomatic channels.

We are very satisfied with the results of this meeting which carry forward protection of the Antarctic environment. At next year's meetings our representatives will continue to support the process of further strengthening the system for protecting the Antarctic environment. The outcome of the Paris meeting reinforced our view that the early entry into force of the minerals convention, with its strict environmental standards and procedures, remains an important objective as a necessary element in the overall system for protection of the Antarctic environment.

I will deposit a copy of the report of the meeting in the Library of the House when it becomes available.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions he will now take to comply with the Antarctic treaty convention in respect of *(a)* the removal of rubbish and sewage from British bases, *(b)* the preservation of fish stocks and *(c)* the proposed environmental convention due to be held in Santiago in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Salisbury *[holding answer 31 October 1989]*: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) today about the XVth Antarctic treaty consultative meeting held earlier this month in Paris, which covers part *(c)* of his question. In answer to parts *(a)* and *(b)*:

(a) the British Antarctic survey is taking steps to ensure that it will be able to comply with the mandatory code for waste disposal in the Antarctic, adopted at Paris, when it enters into force; and

(b) the preservation of fish stocks is a matter for the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources meeting in Hobart from 6-17 November, and was not dealt with at Paris.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Maude: The Foreign Affairs Council meets on 6 November and again on 27-28 November. At the earlier meeting the Council will discuss progress in the Lomé renegotiation in the light of the outcome of the ACP/EC ministerial negotiating meeting in Luxembourg on 27-29 October. There will be a further ACP/EC ministerial negotiating meeting on the Lomé renegotiation towards the end of November in Brussels but dates have yet to be confirmed. A meeting of the EC/Egypt Co-operation Council will be held on 6 November in the margins of the FAC. Also on 6 November the FAC will consider proposals for further assistance to Poland and Hungary. The Council will discuss follow up to the Audio-Visual Conference which took place in Paris from 30 September to 2 October. The Council will consider the adoption of the Commission's proposals to renew generalised tariff preferences in 1990, to include Poland and Hungary in decisions for 1990 GSP schemes, subject to the Ministers' agreement to their inclusion in the GSP. The Council is also expected to discuss economic and monetary co-operation, and free movement of people. The FAC may also take stock of recent developments in its trade relations with third countries.

A further meeting of the FAC will be held on 27-28 November, when it will discuss preparations for the Strasbourg European Council and the future of the Communities relations with eastern Europe; a meeting of the EC/Yugoslavia Co-operation Council will take place in the margins of FAC. The Council may also discuss the Commission's draft negotiation mandate for second stage EC/GCC agreement. The Council is expected to discuss preparation for the 19 December EC/EFTA ministerial meeting. The ministerial meeting will review progress in recent discussions between the Commission and EFTA on closer economic co-operation. The Council will discuss the present state of play and prospects for the current round of multilateral trade negotiations taking place in Geneva under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Japanese cars and EC/US relations may also be considered.

The Telecommunications Council meets on 7 November when the Presidency is hoping to reach a common position on the ONP directive, the pan-European paging directive and recommendation and high definition television. Discussion is likely on liberalisation of telecom services, ONP directive and recommendation on pan-European radio paging, common action on HDTV in CCIR, external aspects of telecoms policy, use of ECU in European telecoms accounting, new R & D in broad band telecoms and postal Europe.

The Consumers Council on 9 November is expected to consider some key questions arising from the draft directive. The Presidency will seek member states' views in an orientation debate on the future of this proposal. Proposals for future representation of consumers at Community level (an oral communication from the Commission) will be presented orally. This may take the form of an informal lunch meeting. A draft Council resolution outlining future priorities will be considered and the Commission may also give an oral presentation of its three year future programme. The European home and leisure accident surveillance system (EHLASS) is also likely to be discussed at the Consumer Council on 9 November.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 13 November to discuss stage 1 of Economic and Monetary Union including the revised decisions on economic convergence and co-operation between the central banks of the member states. There will also be a discussion on the longer term, which will consider the report of the high level group and the Chancellor's paper on an alternative approach to that in the Delors report. The discussion of taxation of savings will focus on measures to combat tax evasion. ECOFIN is expected to discuss a further report on indirect taxation on rates and technical systems for both VAT and excise duties and on budgetary consequences. There will also be a discussion on, and the probable adoption of a draft directive co-ordinating regulations on insider dealing across the Community, thereby establishing standards and providing for collaboration in the exchange of relevant information.

The Health Council is scheduled to meet on 13 November. The agenda will include the tobacco labelling directive, which requires member states to introduce legislation to ensure that standardised health warnings are printed on packets of tobacco products: the tobacco tar yields directive, which sets a maximum limit of 15 mg of tar per cigarette by 1992 and 12 mg tar/cigarette by 1995; tobacco advertising directive, which concerns advertising of tobacco products in the press and by means of bills and posters. The directive places restrictions on the content of advertisements, and requires them to include health warnings. Also to be considered are the 2nd action against cancer programme 1990 to 1994. This continues and expands work carried out under the first cancer programme with the aim of reducing projected cancer mortality by 15 per cent. by the year 2000 through prevention campaigns, information, training and research. A solemn declaration on AIDS policy and conclusions on measures for the prevention of addiction and the care of drug addicts are expected. The Health Council will discuss a Presidency note urging meetings on a regular basis to discuss the problem of the movement of health professionals around the Community in view of the overall surplus of trained doctors and the shortage of nurses, and oral conclusions urging acceleration of work on European self-sufficiency in blood and blood products. The mutual recognition of pharmaceutical products will be discussed, in particular a note from the Presidency and possibly written conclusions on the current situation and problems and conclusions asking the Commission to report on developments so far and to make recommendations for future action to encourage the use of the European emergency health card. The question of a standard European number for calling emergency services will also be discussed.

The Industry Council meets on 14 November. The textiles sub-group will be looking at the effects of the Uruguay round, the setting up of a monitoring body or observatory to improve statistics on the sector and possibly an exercise to improve the transparency of state aids to this sector. The Council will discuss how the Community should respond to United States proposals to eliminate all state aid to shipbuilding by the end of 1991. Cars and HDTV ars also likely to be discussed.

The Budget Council will meet on 14 November to consider the second reading of the 1990 draft budget and the amending letters.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 20 and 21 November to discuss the reform of the agricultural structures regulations and the cereals co-responsibility levy. It may also discuss milk quotas, veterinary checks, bovine somatotropin, and pigmeat.

The Development Council will meet on 21 November. The Council will adopt conclusions arising from an evaluation of Community aid to Asia and Latin America, the period 1976 to 1988, and will consider annual guidelines for the Community's aid programme to Asia and Latin America for 1990. The Council is expected to adopt a resolution on priorities and the future direction of the Community's food aid programme, and will adopt conclusions based on a Commission paper on the implementation of the Community's aid control programme. The Council will adopt conclusions on desertification based on a Commission paper on action taken in this field since 1986, and will have a free-ranging discussion on other environmental issues, specifically the management and conservation of tropical forests. The council will also review progress on the current renegotiation of the Lomé convention.

The Internal Market Council on 23 November will discuss a number of measures relevant to the completion of the single market.

The Fisheries Council will meet on 27 November to discuss prices, inspection and surveillance, processing and marketing of fisheries products and possibly EC/Greenland and EC/USSR relations and 1990 TACS and quotas.

The Environment Council is scheduled to meet on 28 November. The Presidency is hoping for a political agreement on the terms of reference for a European environment agency to co-ordinate and analyse environmental information from existing national and regional networks for Commission and member states' use. There is likely to be a detailed discussion of the proposal concerning the protection of habitats and of wild fauna and flora and an attempt to resolve some of the outstanding difficulties. Early exchanges of views are expected on the proposal to protect waters from nitrate pollution and on the proposal to guarantee the public freedom of access to data on the environment.

The Social Affairs Council is due to meet on 30 November, when Ministers will discuss health and safety directives on work place requirements, work equipment and personal protective equipment. In the field of vocational training the Council will also discuss Eurotech II, and the medium term guidelines for education and training the Community. The establishment of a employment observatory may also be discussed.

WALES

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many disabled people are currently in local authority, health authority, voluntary and private sector homes in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The number of disabled people in local authority, voluntary and private sector homes in Wales is shown in the table:

as at 32 March 1988

Category of resident[1]	*Residents in local authority homes*	*Residents in private and voluntary homes*	*Total residents*
Elderly	7,067	6,497	13,564
Younger physically handicapped	99	198	297
Blind	—	101	101
Mentally ill	288	258	546
Mentally handicapped	676	699	1,375
Alcohol dependence	—	48	48
Total	8,130	7,801	15,931

[1] These categories are as defined under Sections 21 and 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948 and under section 1 of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Learning Difficulties

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will conduct a detailed HMI survey on further education provision to assess the demand for and availability of provision for students with learning difficulties.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Her Majesty's inspectors are currently undertaking a survey of the provision for students with special educational needs in the Welsh further education colleges.

Common Land

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has received a copy of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation's report on common land; and if he will make a statement on his policy towards commons.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have received a copy of the report "Wildlife importance of common land" prepared by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC) under contract to the Nature Conservancy Council. I understand that there is another report, "A Future for Wildlife on our Commons" published by the RSNC itself, which I have not been sent. The Government are considering our future policy on common land.

Water Supply

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the number of people in Wales who receive water from supplies granted relaxations to the aluminium standard under section 20(5)(b) of the Water Act 1989, *(b)* the location of each supply, by county and *(c)* the number of people served by each of those supplies.

Mr. Grist: Under section 20(5)(b) of the Water Act 1989, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has accepted undertakings from Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig relating to the aluminium parameter in respect of the water treatment works shown in the following table:

Location and water treatment works	*Estimated population served*
Clwyd	
Bylchau	2,350
Cynwyd	3,230
Glascoed	30,270
Meifof	1,470
Trecastell	9,700
Alwen	108,750
Bretton	12,640
Cilcain	9,640
Dyfed	
Bontgoch	22,050
Strata Florida	21,750
Bolton Hill	53,780
Hotwells	590
Preseli	41,450
Valley Court	10,870
Capel Dewi	21,150
Bryncoch	15,870
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	
Bryngwyn	87,580
Felindre	311,500
Powys	
Llanwrtyd Wells	1,470
Llandeilo Graban	5,880
Portis HL	3,820
Hereford and Worcester	
Byton	2,645
Broomy Hill	99,330
Gwent	
Cwmtillery	36,150
Nantybwych	10,580
Georgetown	10,000
Craig Dhu	7,940
Rhymney Bridge	18,220
Gwent and Mid Glamorgan	
Pontsticill	164,300
South Glamorgan and Mid Glamorgan	
Cantref	133,700
Llwynon	22,600
Mid Glamorgan	
Hendre Bailey[1]	3,530
Penderyn BH	2,940
Maerdy HL and LL	37,030
Gwynedd	
Abergynolwen	290
Total Population	1,325,065

[1] Currently not in supply.

Note.—Population figures have been derived by Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig from the average daily output of the works when in use, and therefore represent the potential number of customers.

Toxic Waste Imports

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the ports in Wales currently registered for the import of toxic waste and the amount of such waste imported through each of those ports for the last 10 available years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The available information on imports of special/hazardous waste through Welsh ports, based on returns made by waste disposal authorities, is shown in the table:

Tonnes

Port of entry	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Briton Ferry (Neath)	2,300	15,000·0	12,360
Fishguard	50	0	0
Holyhead	124	383·5	221
Newport	3,082	448·0	0

Health Service (Information Technology)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the information technology requirements under the proposals of the National Health Service White Paper for *(a)* acute hospitals, *(b)* general practitioner practices that opt to control their own budgets and *(c)* general practitioner indicative prescribing budgets; and for each, what assessment he has made of (i) capital equipments costs and (ii) manpower costs.

Mr. Grist: The Information and IT implications of the White Paper for all levels of the NHS have been subject to a detailed and widespread consultation and review. The results will be published shortly in the form of a Strategy of Wales which will include recommended core strategic systems for each tier. The implementation costs are currently under examination.

Renal Unit (Wrexham)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to receive a case from the Clwyd health authority containing a justification for a renal unit in Wrexham.

Mr. Grist: I understand that the authority will be presenting its case in response to consultation which is presently taking place on the report of the evaluation of renal services in Wales.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when, as a result of a request from the Clwyd health authority, he decided to decline funding to the authority for a renal unit in Wrexham; and when, subsequently, he invited the authority to present to him a case containing a clear justification.

Mr. Grist: Funding by the Welsh Office was considered inappropriate and the authority was invited to present a detailed case for the regional designation of the unit on 24 January 1989.

Cash Limits

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to make any changes to the cash limits for class XVII and to his Department's provision for running costs in the current financial year.

Mr. Peter Walker: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the following changes will be made.

The cash limit on class XVII vote 2 is to be reduced by £1,499,000 from £90,947,000 to £89,448,000 reflecting (i) a decrease of £1,500,000 in the public dividend capital provision for the Welsh Development Agency and (ii) a token £1,000 Supplementary to open a new subhead to make a special contribution to the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society. The reduction in the provision for public dividend capital will enable a corresponding increase to be made in the agency's non-voted borrowing facility with the National Loans Fund and assist in meeting the higher demand for capital investment loans from small businesses in Wales.

The cash limit for class XVII, vote 5 is to be increased by £2,260,000 from £266,711,000 to £268,971,000. The increase covers the transfer of responsibility for payment of grants in respect of hostel deficits from the Secretary of State for Social Security (£20,000), an increase to the grant-in-aid for the Wales Tourist Board to be met from existing but unallocated public expenditure provision (£100,000) and an increase for the carry forward of 1988-89 capital underspends under the end year flexibility scheme (£2,140,000).

The cash limit for class XVII, vote 8 is to be increased by £5,000,000 from £830,510,000 to £835,510,000. The additional provision is required to help meet the cost of implementing the National Health Service Review proposals contained in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

The cash limit for class XVII, vote 9 is to be increased by £1,786,000 from £46,271,000 to £48,057,000. This increase covers the take up of 1988-89 capital and running costs underspends under the end year flexibility scheme (£317,000 and £205,000 respectively) and makes provision for the running cost implications of the National Health Service review (£1,000,000), for the statutory audit of National Health Service activities in Wales (£200,000) and for the administrative cost of introducing two new grant regimes (£64,000). The Department's running costs limit is to be increased by £1,469,000 from £44,688,000 to £46,157,000.

In accordance with the reply by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 26 October 1989 to the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), the cash limit on class XVII, vote 13 is being increased by £276,000,000 from £1,000 to £276,001,000. This increase provides for the establishment of an appropriate capital structure for Welsh Water plc.

The cash limit changes total £283,547,000. Allowing for the cash limit reduction on vote 2 (£1,499,000), the total of the cash limit increases is £285,046,000. Of this sum, the increase in respect of the capital structure of Welsh Water and compensation by the residuary company (£276,000,000) will be met from the privatisation proceeds programme; the increases on account of end-year flexibility (£2,662,000), the National Health Service Review (£6,000,000) and the administration costs of National Health Service Audit and the new grants regimes (£264,000) will be charged to the Reserve and the increases for hostel deficit grants (£20,000) and the Wales Tourist Board (£100,000) are covered by my existing PES resources. These increases will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the factors he took into account when announcing on 27 July *Official Report*, column 950, his decision to maintain the rates of payment for set-aside unchanged.

Mr. Curry: I see no reason to alter rates of payment which have attracted a good level of uptake in two successive years.

Eggs

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what action he has taken concerning imports of contaminated eggs from other European Community countries; and what evidence he has that other national governments are taking any steps to prevent such exports or to apply standards similar to those which have been imposed in the United Kingdom;

(2) what proportion of eggs imported into the United Kingdom are tested for salmonella and other forms of contamination; how many incidents of such contamination have been verified during the last 12 months; and how many consignments found to contain such contaminated eggs have been disposed of.

Mr. Curry: Arrangements have been made for port health authorities and the public health laboratory service to monitor imported eggs for salmonella. This is done by taking a sample of 60 eggs from each consignment, for testing. Since April when these arrangements commenced, six isolations of invasive salmonella have been made from imported eggs. We have, as a matter of the utmost seriousness, taken these up straightaway with the member states concerned.

The aim of the monitoring is to determine the risk of infection that imports pose over a period of time. No consignments of imported eggs have been destroyed.

No other member state is taking such comprehensive action as we are to deal with salmonella contamination in eggs although I am aware that the Dutch Government have introduced measures in respect of the presence of Salmonella enteritidis in breeding flocks. For the future, effective safeguards depend on taking action on an EC-wide basis and we are pressing for the introduction of effective EC measures on specified zoonoses as soon as possible.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to my written answer to him of 31 October 1989.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions are taking place between his Department and the European Commission about proposals to restrict the current European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund contributions to hill livestock compensatory allowances; what response has been made by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall South-East (Mr. Hicks) on 30 October 1989.

Beagles (Death)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will publish in full the results of his Department's investigation into deaths of 79 beagles in the care of Alpha-Sirius (Perrycroft Lodge Kennels);

(2) whether he will initiate a prosecution against Alpha-Sirius (Perrycroft Lodge Kennels) under the Transport of Animals (General) Order 1973 for failing in their duty of care in respect of the deaths of beagles transported to Sweden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: My Department is investigating this tragic incident with a view to possible prosecutions. We cannot divulge details of the case in advance of any proceedings.

Papain

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he is expecting to announce guidelines on the use of the tenderising agent papain in administration to cattle.

Mr. Curry: I intend to include guidance on the handling of cattle injected with papain in a code of practice on the welfare of livestock at slaughter. I propose to issue the code under new enabling powers which it is proposed to take in primary legislation when parliamentary time permits.

Hens

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of hens slaughtered under the provisions of the Testing of Poultry Flocks Order for each month of its operation.

Mr. Curry: The provisions relating to the compulsory slaughter of poultry are contained in the Animal Health Act 1981, as applied in respect of salmonella through the provisions of the Zoonoses Order 1989. The number of birds compulsorily slaughtered since 1 March 1989 when the order came into force is as follows:

	Numbers
March	207,379
April	95,378
May	48,178
June	91,941
July	47,718
August	55,221
September	131,379
October (to 20)	39,141

Hormone Implants

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many successful prosecutions his Department has initiated following the discovery of cattle with hormone implants.

Mr. Curry: Two farmers have been prosecuted following the discovery of cattle with hormone implants and convictions were achieved in both cases.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the monitoring procedures whereby samples of animals at point of slaughter are taken and tested for hormone implants; by whom the sampling and testing is carried out; and what numbers and proportion of animals are tested.

Mr. Curry: Under the terms of the Animals and Fresh Meat (Examination for Residues) Regulations 1988 (S.I. 1988/848) animals are sampled by staff of the state veterinary service for veterinary residues including evidence of illegal hormone implantation. All samples for hormone analysis are forwarded to the Ministry's central veterinary laboratory. Each year some 3,700 samples are collected at slaughterhouses in Great Britain. These comprise about 0·15 per cent. of those fattening bovine animals which are slaughtered and 1,300 samples from cull cows, sheep and pigs.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the most recent figures available on the proportion of cattle sampled which carry traces of hormone implants.

Mr. Curry: In the course of routine monitoring for illegal hormone use a total of 1,296 samples were taken from cattle at slaughterhouses in Great Britain between January and June of this year. 0·3 per cent. of these were found to be positive.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the existence of hormone implant stocks in other European Community countries.

Mr. Curry: None. I am not aware that such information is collected.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department is taking to ensure that live cattle or beef imports have not been subjected to artificial hormone treatment.

Mr. Curry: Under Community monitoring arrangements *(Directive 86/469/EEC)* responsibility for hormone testing of cattle and beef entering intra-Community trade rests with the Member State of origin. In the case of supplies from third countries the Community has obtained assurances that production is subject to controls equivalent to those operating in the Community.

Food Advisory Committee

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those recommendations he has received from the Food Advisory Committee during each of the last three years, and which have not been implemented by his Department.

Mr. Maclean: It is not practical to answer this question in quite the way the hon. Member has asked. The following list represents the committee's published reports over the last three years on which the recommendations have yet to be implemented.

Final Report on the Review of colouring Matter in Food Regulations 1973 published March 1987 (MAFF Press Release No. 83/87).

Report on Coated and Ice Glazed Fish Products—published March 1987 (MAFF Press Release No. 58/87).

Caffeine and Saccharin and Soft Drinks—announcement made in May 1988 (MAFF Press Release No. 180/88).

Use of the term "low alcohol" in the labelling of Alcoholic Drinks announced September 1988 (MAFF Press Release No. 358/88).

The Use of Mineral Hydrocarbons in Food—published February 1989 (MAFF Press Release No. 53/89).

Slimming pills—announcement made in May 1989 (MAFF Press Release No. 212/89).

Use of Nutrition Claims in Food Labelling and Advertising—published July 1989 (MAFF Press Release No. 309/89).

We have accepted all these reports in principle. We shall shortly be announcing my decision on the recommendations in the Colouring Matter in Food report. On all the other reports we have either published implementing regulations for consultation or are in course of so doing.

Tartrazine and Sunset Yellow

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will refer the additives tartrazine and sunset yellow to the Food Advisory Committee for re-assessment.

Mr. Maclean: These two substances are covered by the recent Food Advisory Committee review on the use of colouring matter in food on which I shall be announcing my decisions shortly. I therefore have no plans to ask the Food Advisory Committee to re-assess them unless or until any new scientific evidence about them becomes available.

Food Premises

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to introduce measures in the forthcoming food Bill to provide for a compulsory licensing system for all food premises.

Mr. Maclean: We have already made it clear that the new legislation will provide for the registration of all food premises, for an associated system of improvement notices and for enhanced closure powers. We also envisage making provision for licensing in certain sensitive areas.

Frozen Food

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he proposes to introduce legislation governing frozen food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I shall need to implement into United Kingdom law the provisions of Council Directive 89/108/EEC on quick frozen foodstuffs for human consumption and the provisions of Council Directive 89/395/EEC on food labelling which includes a requirement for the date marking of frozen foods. I expect to issue separate proposals for regulations under the Food Act 1984 on both these matters early in 1990.

Food Labelling

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends introducing legislation to regulate the use of descriptions such as low fat, no added sugar and high in fibre in food labelling.

Mr. Maclean: Yes. The legislation is intended to form part of the regulations to protect consumers from misleading nutrition claims which I announced in reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on 28 July at column *1153*.

Meat and Meat Products

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements exist for the certification of meat and bone meal of ruminant derivation destined for export from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: The Agriculture Departments provide certification for exports of meat and bone meal in accordance with the requirements of individual importing countries. Certificates are signed by officers of the Departments or by authorised local veterinary inspectors.

Livestock Market (Computerisation)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has taken any steps to investigate the possibilities of computerising livestock markets.

Mr. Curry: The extent to which any market can or should take account of new technology is a matter for the commercial judgment of its operators.

Pesticides

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response he has made to the report on pesticide use in the United Kingdom sent to him on 7 August by the Green Alliance and the British Agrochemicals Association.

Mr. Curry: I have replied to these organisations on behalf of all the Ministers responsible for the control of pesticides in a letter dated 26 September 1989. A copy of the letter has been deposited today in the Library of the House.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Balance of Trade

75. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects British manufacturing trade to be in balance.

89. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects British manufacturing trade to be in balance.

90. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects British manufacturing trade to be in balance.

95. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects British manufacturing trade to be in balance.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The deficit on manufacturing trade reflects the surge in investment and the fall in personal saving in recent years. Tighter monetary policy is already slowing the growth in demand. As new capacity comes on stream, and domestic demand slows further, the deficit will narrow.

76. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the total United Kingdom trade deficit for the current year.

82. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the total United Kingdom trade deficit for the current year.

86. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the deficit in manufactured trade for 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A new forecast will be published at the time of the Autumn Statement.

79. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further policies he has to deal with the trade deficit.

92. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further policies he has to deal with the trade deficit.

93. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further policies he has to deal with the trade deficit.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No further policies are necessary. The current account deficit will gradually narrow as the Government's tight monetary policy continues to slow domestic demand.

80. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest balance of trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information was published on 24 October in table 12 of the monthly press notice on the current account of the balance of payments, a copy of which is available in the Library.

85. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he now expects the balance of trade to be in surplus.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Tighter monetary policy is already slowing the growth in demand. As domestic demand continues to slow down, and new capacity comes on stream, the deficit on visible trade will gradually narrow.

87. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with which European Community countries Britain is running a trade deficit.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The United Kingdom's balance of trade in the first nine months of 1989 was in deficit with the following European Community member states:

Belgium/Luxembourg
Denmark
Federal Republic of Germany
France
Italy
Netherlands

94. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further policies he has to deal with the trade deficit.

Mr. Major: No further policies are necessary. The current account deficit will gradually narrow as the Government's tight monetary policy continues to slow domestic demand.

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current balance of trade with *(a)* Australia and *(b)* New Zealand.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the first nine months of 1989 the United Kingdom's crude balance of trade[1] showed a surplus of £550 million with Australia and a deficit of £49 million with New Zealand.

These figures are only available on an overseas trade statistics basis which tends to overstate deficits and understate surpluses.

[1] Exports free on board (fob) less imports carriage, insurance and freight (cif).

Share Ownership

77. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the adult population owns shares *(a)* directly and *(b)* as members of pension schemes and life assurance schemes.

Mr. Lilley: Twenty per cent. of the adult population owned shares directly at the beginning of the year. Subsequently the Abbey National flotation will have led to a large number of people becoming shareholders for the first time.

Surveys suggest that around 60 per cent. of the adult population have some form of life assurance policy, 35 per cent. are members of company pension schemes and 13 per cent. have personal pensions.

Manufacturing Output

78. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total percentage growth in output in manufacturing industry for each of the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On the basis of the most recent published figures, manufacturing output grew by 6·8 per cent. between 1987 and 1988, following growth of 5·5 per cent. between 1986 and 1987.

Balance of Payments

81. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the balance of payments deficit for the last full year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information was published on 24 October in table 2 of the monthly press notice on the current account of the balance of payments, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Base Rates

83. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the cost to industry of the rise in base rates since April 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not possible to answer this question with any acceptable degree of precision. It would depend on how industry reacted to the interest rate changes themselves and any changes in borrowing for other reasons. The costs to British industry of high inflation are far greater than the costs of higher interest rates. Tight monetary policy will ensure that inflation is brought down.

Investment

84. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on current investment levels in British industry.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1988 business investment grew by 17½ per cent. to reach £51·3 billion at 1985 prices. Business investment is now at the highest level ever recorded as a proportion of GDP.

88. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on levels of industrial investment and company profitability.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1988 business investment grew by 17½ per cent. to reach £51·3 billion at 1985 prices. Business investment is now at the highest level ever recorded as a proportion of GDP.

Data for company profitability are available only up to 1987. The net real rate of return on capital employed for non-North-sea industrial and commercial companies rose from 9 per cent. in 1986 to 10 per cent. in 1987, the highest level for over a decade.

High levels of investment and company profitability reflect the success of the Government's macroeconomic policy.

96. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest figures for manufacturing investment, and show comparable figures in real terms for a similar period in 1978.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Revised estimates of investment in the second quarter of 1989—the most recent available —were included in the GDP press release issued on 22 September. Manufacturing investment including leased assets, is estimated to have been £3·2 billion (1985 prices, seasonally adjusted) in the second quarter of 1989, compared to £2·7 billion in the second quarter of 1978. The figure for the second quarter of 1989 is the highest recorded, and comes after growth of 8¼ per cent. a year between 1983 and 1988. Under the last Labour Government manufacturing investment grew by less than 2½ per cent. a year.

Manufacturing Output

91. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent figure for output in manufacturing industry; and what was the figure for the same month in 1973.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The August 1989 index of manufacturing output (based on 1985 = 100, seasonally adjusted) was 120·0, 8·1 per cent. higher than the level of 111·0 in August 1973. Figures for individual months can be erratic, however, and a more reliable comparison can generally be made on the basis of three-month on three-month changes. On this latter basis, in the three months to August 1989, manufacturing output was 7·3 per cent. higher than in the same period in 1973.

Government Data Network

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on the development of the Government data network.

Mr. Ryder: In addition to the service provided to the initial four departments, Department of Social Security, Inland Revenue, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and Home Office, access agreements to use the network have been made between Racal Data Networks Ltd. and Department of Employment, Department of Energy, General Register Office (Scotland), Her Majesty's Stationery Office, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Her Majesty's Treasury and the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce. Discussions with the contractor on development of the service, including its use to carry value added data services, are proceeding.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average yearly public expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product from *(a)* 1970 to 1979 and *(b)* 1980 to 1988 as shown in table 2.3 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* The averages of the annual ratios of general Government expenditure (excluding privatisation proceeds) to GDP for the financial years 1970-71 to 1979-80 and 1980-81 to 1988-89 on a basis consistent with the figures given in table 2.3 of the 1989 FSBR are 43·75 and 44·5 per cent. respectively. In the earlier period the ratio peaked at 48·5 per cent. in 1975-76. The highest level in the later period was 46·75 per cent. in 1982-83; and ratio in 1988-89 was 39·5 per cent.

SCOTLAND

Exports

71. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of Scottish exports in the latest year for which information is available; and what was the comparable figure in the previous five years.

72. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of exports from Scotland in the latest year for which information is available; and what was the figure for each of the previous five years.

73. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of exports from Scotland in the latest period for which information is available; and what was the comparable figure in the previous five years.

74. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of Scottish exports in the latest year for which information is available; and what was the comparable figure in the previous five years.

Mr. Lang: There are no official figures for Scottish exports since overseas trade statistics are compiled on a United Kingdom basis only. This is because United Kingdom export statistics are collected at ports of exit and Scottish-produced goods can and do leave the country from ports throughout Britain. The Scottish Council (Development and Industry) carries out an annual survey of Scottish manufactured exports. This is a voluntary survey of manufactured exports only, and the preliminary results for 1988 indicate Scottish manufactured exports of £7,166 million. The comparable figures for the previous five years are set out in the table.

	£ million
1983	4,254
1984	4,953
1985	5,522
1986	5,300
1987	6,393

Birds (Isle of Islay)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many birds, by species, were illegally killed by poisons on the Island of Islay for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A total of 17 birds were killed by the illegal use of pesticides on Islay, as confirmed by the wildlife incident investigation service, from 1979 to the current date. Details are as follows.

1979	Gyr Falcon
1980	—
1981	Buzzard
1982	Golden Eagle
1983	Crow
1984	—
1985	—
1986	Buzzard
1987	Buzzard; Crows (5)
1988	Buzzard; Raven; Golden Eagles (2)
1989	Raven; Buzzard

Correspondence

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why the Minister of State responsible for industry the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, (Mr. Lang) has not replied to the letter on the Clyde port authority and the Rothesay dock in Clydebank from the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie.

Mr. Lang: I regret that I have no record of having received the letter to which the hon. Member refers until he sent me a copy under cover of his letter of 3 October. I have arranged for the correspondence to be passed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport who will send a reply.

Public Sector Rented Homes

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial help the Government propose to give to councils to build new public sector rented accommodation in areas where there is a shortage of such accommodation, including Tweeddale.

Mr. Rifkind: It is for individual housing authorities to determine their own policies and priorities, based on their own assessment of housing needs in their districts, and to programme capital expenditure accordingly within the resources made available. If councils identify a particular need for additional rented accommodation in the public sector then they should in the first instance include proposals for remedying any such housing shortage in the housing capital programme due to be submitted to the Scottish Development Department by Friday 3 November. Next year's capital allocations will be determined, as in previous years, in the light of the aggregate resources available and the competing requirements of all 56 housing authorities.

Rents to Mortgages Scheme

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to promote his rents to mortgages scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland announced on 30 October that Scottish Homes is now able to consider applications to purchase under the rents to mortgages scheme. This is a pilot scheme scheduled to run for three years during which time its results will be monitored carefully to ensure that any promotional opportunities are quickly identified and acted upon.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the amount a tenant, paying an average Scottish council home rent, would pay if the tenant participated in his Department's rents to mortgages scheme, showing the method of calculation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The scheme introduced by Scottish Homes does not apply to tenants of local authorities. The method of calculation would follow that outlined in the Scottish Homes booklet on rents and mortgages placed in the Libraries of the House of Lords and House of Commons. However the calculation following demonstrates the notional financial arrangements which would apply to a tenant of a local authority house (rather than flat) paying rent at the level of the average council house tenant, whose discount entitlement is that of the average council house tenant and whose home has a market value of the sale of the average council house in Scotland.

	Average
Market Value of House	£23,975·00
RTM Discount (Equivalent RTB discount less 15 per cent. points)	36 per cent.
Therefore Purchase Price	£15,344·00
Weekly Rent[1]	£18·79
Sum Available for Mortgage Repayment (weekly) (Rent + 10 per cent. less £5 per week)	£15·67

	Average
Amount of Mortgage Supportable (Assumes interest at 13·75 per cent.)	£6,668·00
Deferred Financial Commitment	£8,676·00

* This is the average rent for all council homes in Scotland.

Forensic Science

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many scientifically qualified persons work in the forensic science departments of each Scottish police force.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Four police forces have forensic science laboratories in which the following numbers of scientifically qualified staff are employed:

	Number
Grampian	7
Lothian and Borders	8
Strathclyde	25
Tayside	3

The remaining four forces use these laboratories for forensic science services.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will increase the funding of the independent forensic unit of the department of forensic science at Strathclyde university in the light of the requirement on police forces to pay for forensic services.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Funding for the Strathclyde university department of forensic science as for universities generally is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Official Stationery

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if any reimbursement to public funds has been made for his use of official Government stationery to write an undated letter to students of St. Andrew's university inviting them to consider joining the University Conservative Association;

(2) what is his policy towards the use by Ministers in his department of official Government stationery for party political purposes;

(3) what was the charge to public funds of his use of official Government stationery to write an undated letter to students of St. Andrew's university inviting them to consider joining the University Conservative Association.

Mr. Rifkind: I regret that, through inadvertence, a sheet of Government stationery was used for the issue from my office of a letter with this political purpose. This was contrary to normal practice and should not happen again. The cost of reimbursement would be disproportionate to the amount involved.

Roads

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* fatal and *(b)* serious road traffic accidents have occurred on the A98 Fochabers-Buckie road in each of the last five years, including 1989 to the latest available date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of fatal and serious accidents requested for the Fochabers to Buckie stretches of the A98 are as follows:

A98 Fochabers to Buckie

	Fatal	*Serious*
1985	2	1
1986	0	3
1987	0	2
1988	0	3
1989 (to June)	1	2

I understand there has been a further fatal accident in October this year but the Scottish Development Department has yet to receive formal notification of it.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many SDD funded road improvement schemes have been completed on the Fochaber-Buckie stretch of the A98 in each of the last five years; how many proposals for SDD funded improvement schemes on that route are currently under consideration; and if he will give the costs involved in each instance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There has been one improvement carried out in the last five years. This was at Tulloch Farm corner and was undertaken during the financial year 1988-89 at a cost of £108,000. Three further improvement schemes are planned for this section and will be started after completion of the statutory procedures and when available resources and other priorities permit. These are Portgordon crossroads, Arradoul to Barrhill road and Swiss Cottage corner and are estimated to cost £122,000, £238,000 and £650,000 respectively.

Nurses

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of enrolled nurses who undertook bridging courses in each of the past two years, giving a breakdown per health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Only certain health boards offer such courses. The numbers for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are set out in the table.

Nurses Undertaking Bridging Courses

	1987-88	*1988-89*
Argyll and Clyde	5	16
Ayrshire and Arran	10	19
Dumfries and Galloway	10	4
Fife	18	32
Forth Valley	14	13
Grampian	47	49
Greater Glasgow	142	152
Highland	3	12
Lanarkshire	28	38
Lothian	45	36
Tayside	31	21
Total	353	392

Mortgage and Rent Arrears

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the number of owner-occupiers whose homes were repossessed, *(b)* the number of owner-occupiers whose mortgages were six to 12 months in arrears and *(c)* the number of owner-occupiers whose mortgages were over 12 months in arrears for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is available only for building society loans, for the United Kingdom as a whole. The most recent figures were published by the Council of Mortgage Lenders in the 9 September issue of its newsletter "Mortgage Finance Monthly", a copy of which is in the Library.

Hospitals (Self-governing Status)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by what method he intends to consult staff and patient representatives or local communities before awarding self-governing status to hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1989]*: Our proposals are set out in the document "Self Governing Hospitals: An Initial Guide" which was issued when we debated the health service in the Scottish Grand Committee estimates debate on 25 July.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what action he is taking this year to promote or publicise the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations; and what estimates he has of the costs involved for the agricultural industry in complying with these regulations;

(2) what estimates he has of the costs involved in implementing the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations for *(a)* industry and *(b)* small businesses in Scotland; and what steps he is taking in the current year to promote or publicise these regulations for those sectors.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

Where substances hazardous to health were adequately and reliably controlled and where there was full compliance with existing legislation, the costs of implementing the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations should be marginal; they will arise mainly from reviewing and formalising existing arrangements. The Health and Safety Executive estimated in its cost-benefit analysis for the COSHH proposals that for a typical small firm, the additional costs arising would amount to no more than about one quarter of a percentage point of the firm's net output. This estimate included the costs of monitoring of exposure and health surveillance which apply to only a minority of firms. For most larger firms, the costs will be substantially smaller in relation to net output.

No special analysis for any particular geographical region, nor for any sector of activity, including agriculture, has been carried out.

The Health and Safety Executive has promoted and publicised the regulations by a variety of means, including national and trade advertising and the distribution of some 3·5 million introductory leaflets. Many activities have been particularly geared to the need to reach small firms, including the provision of information to the principal small firms advisory organisations.

Standards Register

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what finance was provided by or what participation the Scottish Office had in producing the United Kingdom standards register; and what steps he is taking to promote it.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

The publication "Standards significant to health and safety at work", launched by the Health and Safety Executive on 22 June 1989, updates a similar publication first produced in 1983. It is a list, published for information, of those standards to which frequent reference is made by HSE in its advisory and enforcement work.

A press release was issued by HSE at the time of publication of the list and the British Standards Institute has co-operated with the publicity.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much plutonium has been recovered from the uranium dioxide breeder fuel pins and pellets integral in the Dounreay prototype fast reactor core fuel sub-assemblies; and if this matter was reprocessed with, or separately from, the uranium/plutonium dioxide fuel pellets incorporated into the same core sub-assemblies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the UKAEA. I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list the number of export licences granted for the export of plutonium to the Federal Republic of Germany for each year since 1959;

(2) if he will list the number of export licences granted for the export of plutonium to Japan for each year since 1959;

(3) if he will list the number of export licences granted for the export of plutonium to Canada for each year since 1959;

(4) if he will list the number of export licences granted for the export of plutonium to Belgium for each year since 1959;

(5) if he will list the number of export licences granted for the export of plutonium to Italy for each year since 1959;

(6) if he will list the number of export licences granted for the export of plutonium to *(a)* Sweden, *(b)* the Netherlands, *(c)* Switzerland, *(d)* the United States of America and *(e)* Austria, for each year since exports of plutonium to each country began;

(7) if he will list the number of plutonium export licences granted for the export of plutonium to France for each year since 1985.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It has been the standard practice of successive Governments not to make public the number of export licences granted for the various categories of goods controlled.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether, under existing arrangements one export licence for the export of plutonium is sufficient to cover more than one contract for the supply of plutonium, or more than one load of plutonium; and what information is required to be supplied by the applicants for such an export licence to be granted.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Export licences for plutonium are issued for a specific quantity of material destined for a specific purpose. Multiple shipments can be made under an individual licence.

Applications must be made on the Department of Trade and Industry's official export licence application form which calls for detailed information, including the end-use and user. Additional information may be requested in support of a particular application depending on the circumstances of the case.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has assessed the proposals contained in the two volume report "Energy Technologies for Reducing Emissions of Greenhouse Gases", from an experts' seminar at the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris in April.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A number of copies of the report have been received by my Department and the energy technology support unit. Members of the Department and the energy technology support unit attended the seminar, and subsequently have been assessing some of the more significant of the many technical papers that were then presented.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he, any other Minister, or any official of his Department was present at, or presented a paper to, the seminar on the greenhouse effect at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers on 29 September.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Officials from this Department and the energy technology support unit (ETSU) attended the seminar. An official from the chief scientist's group within ETSU gave a short paper at the meeting.

Earthquakes (Nuclear Plants)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make available to the state of California the expertise of the nuclear installations inspectorate team which evaluated the Calder hall and Wylfa nuclear plants in the United Kingdom after earthquakes, in order to assist in the assessment of the safety of nuclear plants in California following the earthquake on 17 October.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate would, if asked, be willing to provide assistance.

Conservation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to evaluate the applicability to the United Kingdom of energy saving and energy efficiency proposals contained in the United States National Appliance Energy Conservation Act (1987).

Mr. Peter Morrison: As I stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on 10 July 1989 at column *378*, my energy efficiency office has already commissioned a study of domestic electrical appliances. The United States National Appliance Energy Conservation Act (1987) is among the matters to be examined in this study.

Solar Energy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he, any departmental Minister or departmental official, was present at, or presented a paper to, the conference on energy policy and the environment at the Geological Society, London, on 9 October.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No Minister or official from this Department attended the meeting "Energy Policy and the Environment" organised by the United Kingdom section of the International Solar Energy Society on 9 October.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department, or the energy technology support unit at the Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Harwell, has studied the development of the Rheinische-Westfaelische Elektrizitaetswerke 340 kilowatt photovoltaic solar power plant at Kober-Gondorf, to judge the applicability of this technology to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Preliminary results from the photovoltaic plant at Kober-Gondorf were presented at the ninth European Commission solar photovoltaic energy conference in September 1989. A representative of the energy technology support unit attended the conference. The 340 kW peak, array covering 15,000 square metres has just completed its first year of operation since commissioning in October 1988. It produced a little over 73,000 kWh against an expectation of 250,000 kWh when fully available.

A review of solar technologies is currently being undertaken within the United Kingdom renewable energy R & D programme and the results are expected to be published shortly.

World Energy Conference

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what Ministers and officials of his Department were present at the world energy conference held in Canada in September; what papers his Department contributed; and if he will make a statement on the beneficial outcome of the conference in regard to *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the European Community.

Mr. Wakeham: Three officials from my Department accompanied me to Canada last month where, inter alia, I addressed the World Energy Conference on "Sustainable energy development, possible or impossible?" The main purpose of my speech was to alert the conference to the need to adapt energy strategies to take account of environmental consequences, particularly in relation to climate change. I outlined some possible responses, in particular market-related measures and sought the world energy community's help in resolving the problems which I see as critical to increasing the well-being of all countries, particularly developing nations. My speech was distributed as a conference document. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. The Department contributed no other papers.

The conference provided a valuable opportunity for scientists, engineers and industrialists from the western, eastern and developing nations to explore new ideas for meeting global energy needs in an environmentally responsible fashion.

Geothermal Energy Projects

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has evaluated the research undertaken by the Federal German Ministry for research and technology since 1982, on geological research in Bavaria into hot dry rocks, in terms of its relevance for the United Kingdom geothermal energy projects.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The British geothermal hot dry rock research team is fully aware of the German research and assisted with the early experimental work. The Falkenberg project in north-east Bavaria was operated by the Federal Republic of Germany Ministry of Research and Technology between 1978 and 1987. Investigations were made into the hydraulic and heat-transfer properties of fractured granite at depths between 300 and 500 metres. The British team conducted comparable work at Rosemanowes quarry in Cornwall between 1977 and 1980 with similar results to those obtained later in Germany. The British team has of course gone on to more advanced work at greater depth in Cornwall.

Decommissioning Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what volumes of decommissioning waste will be sent from Sellafield to that Federal Republic of Germany arising from section 2*(a)*(iii) of the joint declaration between the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, signed in Bonn on 25 July; and how this will be calculated.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Contractual negotiations are still proceeding regarding the reprocessing in the United Kingdom of further quantities of German spent fuel. Therefore it is not possible to estimate the volume of waste which will be returned following reprocessing.

North-West Hutton Platform

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy at what time crew members were mustered to emergency or lifeboat stations during evacuation of the north-west Hutton production platform; how many crew members were evacuated; how many crew members were left on board after the evacuation; and why these crew members were left on board.

Mr. Peter Morrison: At 10.38 hours on 3 September 1989 the crew were mustered to emergency stations; 108 persons were evacuated as a precautionary measure. There was no immediate danger and 77 crew members remained on board to continue the well controlled operation.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether during the drilling programme prior to the evacuation of the north-west Hutton production platform, full mud returns were recorded while setting the casing and cementing it into place; whether a cement bond log was run after the casing was set; what was the equivalent mud weight recorded during the formation integrity test; what was (i) the expected and (ii) the actual formation pressure at the depth at which the kick or unexpected increase in pressure originated; and what was *(a)* the programmed and *(b)* the actual mud density and weight.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Full mud returns were recorded while setting and cementing the casing. A cement bond log was not run after the casing was set. Formation integrity tests measured at two points in the well bore were 14·1 pounds per gallon at 6,837 ft. and 13·3 pounds per gallon at 6,892 ft. The expected and actual formation pressures were 7,800 psi and 9,600 psi respectively. The programmed and actual mud weights were 12·8 pounds per gallon.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many previous wells had been drilled in the structure, including exploration and appraisal wells, where drilling operations were taking place prior to the evacuation of north-west Hutton production platform.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A total of 55 exploration, appraisal and development wells have been drilled in the north-west Hutton field.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the well in the drilling operations prior to the evacuation of north-west Hutton production platform production was shut in using the blowout preventers; if the choke above the blowout preventers was open when the well was shut in; after the blowout preventers were closed what well head shut in pressures were recorded; if a formation higher up the well from the kick zone fractured or broke down, allowing the uncontrolled movement of gas or fluid from the kick zone via the well bore into the fractured formation; if an underground blowout occurred; and at what depth the formation fractured.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The blow-out preventer and the choke were closed simultaneously to shut in the well. Drill pipe pressure of 500 psi was recorded which fell to 375 psi indicating that a zone higher up in the well formation had fractured and an underground blowout had occurred. It is not possible to be precisely certain at what depth the formation fractured.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy in which well drilling was taking place on the north-west Hutton production platform prior to evacuation; and what was the rig activity at the time of the kick or unexpected upsurge of pressure in the well.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Drilling was taking place on well 211/27-A42. At the time of the well incident, drilling was being undertaken with a 12.¼" bit at a measured depth of 13,113 feet below the kelly bushing and a true vertical depth of 11,710 feet.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made in relation to the north-west Hutton production platform of the possibility of an abnormally pressured formation in the field, charged by gas or fluid from another formation, and of the hazard posed thereby in respect of other wells which may be drilled in the formation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The possibility of encountering an abnormally pressurised formation is present in all drilling operations. Before consent is given to any well operation, my Department must be satisfied that the drilling programme has been designed to provide safeguards against this eventuality.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what remedial action was taken to stabilise the well at the time of evacuation of the north-west Hutton production platform; at what times pumping of cement into the well *(a)* commenced and *(b)* ceased; at what time all movements of gas or fluids through the well bore ceased; if the well is now safe; and if it has been re-entered since the incident which led to the evacuation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: After the well was closed in, attempts were made to kill it by circulating mud of a higher density. The first cementing operation commenced at 23.00 hours on 4 September 1989. Operations continued for several days. The first occasion when movement of gas and fluids appeared to have ceased was 12.00 hours on 4 September 1989 although subsequently there was some further movement. It is not possible to be precise about when movement actually ceased. The well is now considered safe and has been re-entered.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the diameter of the last casing set around the drill hole in the drilling operations prior to the evacuation of north-west Hutton production platform; at what depth, measured and true vertical, the casing was set around the drill hole; how many attempts had been made by the operators to set the casing around the drill hole; and at what depth, measured and true vertical, the casing was programmed to be set around the drill hole.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The diameter of the casing set was 13⅜ in at a measured depth of 6,823 ft and a true vertical depth of 6,102 ft. No difficulty was experienced in setting and cementing the casing. It was programmed to be set at 150 ft into the cretaceous formation but a re-evaluation of the indicators used to determine the setting depth suggests that the casing was set just in the top of the cretaceous.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the immediate reason for the evacuation of the north-west Hutton production platform; at what time the evacuation took place; what was the sequence of events leading to the evacuation; and at what time each of these took place.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Evacuation was undertaken as a precautionary measure to reduce the number of persons at risk because the well was not responding to measures to regain full control using normal procedures. At 18.27 hours on 2 September 1989 the well was closed in by the use of the blow-out preventer. Thereafter attempts were made to kill the well by the circulation of mud. At 09.00 hours on 3 September it was concluded that the well could not be killed in this way. At 10.30 hours the decision was taken to reduce the numbers on the platform and at 10.38 hours the platform was shut down and the crew mustered to emergency stations.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the measured and the true vertical depth of the hole in the drilling operations prior to the evacuation of north-west Hutton production platform; if, in the drilling operations, the reservoir had been reached; and if, prior to the drilling operations, or concurrent with them, the reservoir had been recently pressurised, through gas, or water injections, or by any other means.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The measured depth of drilling was 13,113 ft and the true vertical depth was 11,710 ft. A reservoir had been reached. The reservoir had been subjected to water injection.

Nuclear Plants (Security)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how many members of the Atomic Energy Authority constabulary have applied for voluntary early retirement on the special terms circulated on 26 May;

(2) how many staff employed by the Royal British Legion security division are currently engaged at the Sellafield site; and if he will list by site the numbers of Royal British Legion Association staff engaged elsewhere on United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority sites;

(3) if he will list the number of Atomic Energy Authority constabulary employed at the Sellafield site, West Cumbria on 1 July for each of the last 10 years; and what is the projected number for July 1990;

(4) if he will show for each relevant site the proposed reduction in posts of the Atomic Energy Authority constabulary.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the UKAEA. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list those areas of the Sellafield site which are patrolled by staff of the security division of the Royal British Legion Association;

(2) if he will state when Royal British Legion Association security officers were first engaged at the Sellafield site; how many were initially engaged; and what is the projected number for July 1990;

(3) what qualifications are required of people applying for employment as Royal British Legion Association security officers at the Sellafield site, west Cumbria.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for BNFL. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

ENVIRONMENT

Pendle (Financial Support)

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will summarise the financial support provided by his Department to Pendle in each year since 1979 divided as between the different programmes.

Mr. Chope: The following financial support has been provided by the Department to the borough of Pendle since the 1979-80 financial year.

Table 1
Non-housing

£ (cash)

	Rate support[1, 3] *grant*	*Urban*[3] *programme*	*Derelict land grant*	*Clean air grant*	*Public open spaces grant*
1979-80	10,706,558	18,542	73,016	—	254
1980-81	12,055,507	22,477	263,762	—	254
1981-82	4,430,147	31,245	180,420	—	254

	Rate support[1][2] grant	Urban[3] programme	Derelict land grant	Clean air grant	Public open spaces grant
1982-83	4,438,542	47,183	207,408	—	254
1983-84	4,351,523	63,991	82,393	2,502	254
1984-85	4,395,197	81,776	95,503	—	254
1985-86	4,171,795	83,102	51,940	4,632	2,519
1986-87	4,330,327	94,673	39,005	—	—
1987-88	4,502,649	97,597	349,719	—	—
1988-89	4,712,923	92,878	372,239	—	—
1989-90	4,971,859	36,146	Not available	—	—

[1] 1979-80 and 1980-81 figures include grant towards county council expenditure, paid direct to the county council in subsequent years.

[2] 1979-80 and 1980-81 figures comprise needs, resources and domestic elements; figures for subsequent years comprise block grant and domestic rate relief grant.

[3] The 1988-89 and 1989-90 figures are on account and have not been finalised.

Table 2

Housing

£ (cash)

	Housing Subsidies and Grants							
	Main housing	Modified rent rebate	Rent allowance	Slum clearance	Homes insulation	Improvement contributions	Improvement for sale	Housing efects
1979-80	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
1980-81	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
1981-82	710,585	456,978	33,492	171,255	52,002	711,486	7,827	—
1982-83	95,694	599,181	47,320	257,079	77,671	873,906	30,607	—
1983-84	—	—	—	330,841	78,741	1,151,830	16,700	—
1984-85	—	—	—	433,117	70,590	1,528,366	26,107	—
1985-86	—	—	—	584,125	50,544	1,782,609	27,835	—
1986-87	—	—	—	628,778	55,686	1,877,589	40,160	
1987-88	—	—	—	691,253	41,234	1,960,378	17,575	3,918
1988-89	—	—	—	742,594	13,820	2,030,063	65,216	13,885
1989-90	—	—	—	810,000	10,840	2,222,910	—	[2]—

Notes:

All figures are those claimed by the local authority in the relevant years.

1981-82 to 1987-88 figures are from the audited claims for those years.

1988-89 figures are from the unaudited final claims for that year.

1989-90 figures are taken from the advance claim, subject to adjustment on audit.

[1]— Figures for 1979-80 and 1980-81 are not readily available.

[2]— Cannot be claimed for in advance.

Table 3

European Regional Development Fund

The Borough also received the following payments from the European Regional Development Fund.

	£ (cash)
1979-80	84,453
1980-81	84,243
1981-82	5,380
1982-83	—
1983-84	4,480
1984-85	1,779
1985-86	89,567
1986-87	35,604
1987-88	52,579
1988-89	57,040
1989-90	[1]—

[1] No payments have been made to date.

Table 4

Capital Allocations

In addition, the Department made the following capital expenditure allocations[1] to the Borough of Pendle during the period:

£ thousands (cash)

	Housing	Urban programme	[2]Other
1979-80	3,378	—	—
1980-81	2,954	—	—
1981-82	4,079	16	492
1982-83	5,163	166	869
1983-84	4,469	85	543
1984-85	3,815	211	400
1985-86	3,157	82	340
1986-87	2,980	69	280
1987-88	3,191	468	272
1988-89	3,196	372	307
1989-90	2,574	n/a	416

[1] Comparable data before 1981-82 not available except for Housing.

[2] Includes waste collection and disposal, sport and recreation, planning and economic development.

n/a. – Not available.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the threatened legal action by local authorities against the water and sewerage plcs on the flotation of the companies.

Mr. Howard: None.

On the basis of legal advice, including advice from leading counsel, we are confident that the threatened action is groundless and that there is no legal foundation for it. It was Parliament's clear intention in 1973 that all the pre-1974 local authority assets connected with the functions of the new water authorities should be vested in the water authorities. Similarly, in 1989, the vesting schemes under the 1989 Act were designed to ensure that such of those assets remaining in the ownership of the water authorities and not required for the functions of the

National Rivers Authority should be vested in the water service companies. We are satisfied that in both cases the legislative provisions fully achieved those objectives.

None the less my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales and I have today put before Parliament departmental minutes describing indemnities which the Government propose to grant to the water and sewerage companies appointed under the Water Act 1989. Under these, the companies would be indemnified against any material additional expenditure incurred as a result of legal claims, of the kind understood to be planned by a consortium of local authorities, against the proceeds of sales of assets which cease to be used for water and sewerage functions.

We believe that such indemnities are extremely unlikely to be called upon. But we nevertheless feel duty bound to protect the interests of taxpayers by securing flotation on the basis that Parliament intended.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to make an order specifying the amounts eligible for capital allowances to successor water companies under section 95 of the Water Act.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I propose, and Her Majesty's Treasury consents, to make an order today under section 95 of the Water Act, specifying the amounts eligible for capital allowances on plant and machinery and on industrial buildings in respect of the qualifying assets transferred from the water authorities to the successor companies.

The total amounts eligible to be specified for each company will be:

	Industrial buildings £'000s	*Plant and machinery £'000s*
Anglian Water Services Limited	80,681	1,149,424
Northumbrian Water Limited	56,348	344,428
North West Water Limited	83,748	1,076,092
Severn Trent Water Limited	43,995	1,018,365
Southern Water Services Limited	36,710	559,525
South West Water Services Limited	33,695	281,621
Thames Water Utilities Limited	58,016	1,031,962
Wessex Water Services Limited	6,575	460,925
Yorkshire Water Services Limited	63,825	783,952
Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig	48,262	451,387

These amounts have been determined after consultation with the companies and Inland Revenue.

In the same way as other businesses the water service companies are subject to corporation tax and are entitled to capital allowances on their qualifying assets including those transferred to them from predecessor water authorities. As the predecessor authorities were exempt from tax and no consideration passed on transfer of the assets, it was necessary to determine opening figures of eligible expenditure for capital allowances purposes. The amounts shown represent the depreciated historical cost of the qualifying assets and are a fair measure of their value for tax purposes.

Eligible expenditure incurred after the transfer date will be agreed with the Inland Revenue in the normal way.

Community Charge Rebates

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has of the income levels up to which community charge rebates will be payable on hypothetical 1989-90 community charges of (i) £250, (ii) £300 and (iii) £350; and what the income levels will be for (i), (ii) and (iii) for actual 1990-91 community charges.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply. The levels of income at which community charge benefits will be payable will be dependent upon the personal circumstances of the claimant. The information requested is set out in the table for various representative groups of claimants. The figures in the table assume that: claimants under pension age are working and the standard disregard has been applied; claimants over pension age are not working; all claimants have savings of less than £3,000; and no member of the household is disabled.

Community charge benefit: Net income at which minimum CCB of 50 pence is payable

Annual Community Charge	*Single under 25 working*	*Single 25 to 29 working*	*Single Pensioner aged 60-74 not working*	*Pensioner Couple aged 60-74 not working*	*Couple 2 children under 11 working*
1989-90 Benefit rates					
£250	54·72	62·22	68·42	119·81	142·76
£300	59·85	67·35	73·55	130·07	153·02
£350	64·98	72·48	78·68	140·32	163·27
1990-91 Benefit rates					
£250	56·11	64·06	70·86	123·58	147·68
£300	61·26	69·20	75·97	133·78	157·90
£350	66·36	74·26	81·06	144·05	168·15

Landmark Trust

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to meet Bryn Jones, the director of the Landmark Trust.

Mr. Trippier: No. I understand that the director is, in fact, Mr. Robin Evans.

Toxic Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the environment if, following Her Majesty's Government's signing of the Basel convention on transfrontier transport of hazardous toxic waste, on 6 October, he will make it his policy to refuse entry to the United Kingdom of any hazardous waste cargo originating in a state that has not signed the convention.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Basel convention prohibits a party from importing hazardous waste from a non-party. An exception to this is permissable where there is a bilateral, multilateral or regional agreement or arrangement with a non-party. The Government urge all countries to ratify the convention.

Only if there are sound environmental reasons would the United Kingdom contemplate entering into agreements or arrangements with non-parties to allow imports of hazardous waste.

GRID and GEMS

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what involvement with the United Nations global resource information database and the global environmental monitoring system his Department has had over the past year.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Government policy is to support the work of UNEP. Departmental statisticians have been closely involved in the production of the second edition of UNEP's environmental data report (EDR) which became available last week. The EDR is the main vehicle for presenting the data from GEMS and GRID to a wider audience. The Department also supports UNEP's global monitoring efforts through GEMS. Data are supplied to GEMS annually from the United Kingdom national air pollution monitoring network and from the harmonised monitoring network on water quality. The co-ordinator for the water monitoring programme in GEMS is in DOE.

Environmental Assessments

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each case where an application for direction has been made since 15 July 1988 what further information has been requested from the developers, local plannng authorities or others; and what additional scientific or technical advice has been sought before determining whether environmental assessment is required.

Mr. Moynihan: In most cases in which the Secretary of State has been asked for a direction on the need for environmental assessment, he has been able to make a decision on the basis of information already available to him. In a few cases he has informally sought further advice from the local planning authority or from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. In one case, a proposed incinerator for medical and hospital wastes at Kirkby, Merseyside, the developer was formally asked for further information under regulation 6(3) of the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988; the developer subsequently withdrew the related planning application and no direction was given.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those developments where a direction whether environmental assessment is required has been given without application by the developer, and the effect of each decision.

Mr. Moynihan: A direction has been given without an application by the developer in the following case which concerned a local authority's own development proposal:

LPA	*Proposed development*	*Date of direction*	*Effect of direction*
Lincoln City Council	Business Park, Bishop's Bridge, Lincoln	13 April 1989	EA required

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to monitor and assess the quality of environmental impact statements which have been required subsequent to the implementation of the European Community directive on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

Mr. Moynihan: We are about to commission research to monitor the operation of the regulations which implement the EC directive in respect of projects requiring planning permission. The research will include some assessment of the adequacy of environmental statements submitted by developers.

Yachting

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the implications for participation in the sport of the International Yacht Racing Union's proposals to categorise yachtsmen into professional and amateurs.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received no such representations though I am aware of the Royal Yachting Association's concerns. This is a matter for the governing bodies of the sport.

Plastics

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce a coding system for grading plastics similar to that used in the United States of America to encourage the development of efficient plastic collection and recycling programmes involving the general public.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently announced our aim to improve the level of recycling of domestic waste. We are, in conjunction with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, looking at the possibility of establishing a coding scheme to assist in the post-consumer recycling of plastic.

Rosehaugh Self-build Housing Initiative

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make an assessment of the Rosehaugh self-build housing initiative and issue recommendations to district councils on the applicability of this initiative to those who are unemployed or on low incomes in their areas and could be thus assisted to build their own homes.

Mr. Chope: The first scheme under this initiative is still under way; so it is too early to make an assessment. I understand a number of similar schemes are in prospect, which give people the opportunity to harness their energy and commitment to provide a home for themselves. I very much hope that they will be successful, and I would encourage local authorities to consider whether this initiative would be of help in their own areas.

Partridges

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the extension of the open general licence to release chukar and hybrid partridges into the wild;

(2) whether his Department is aware of any research into the impact on partridge populations of the release of chukar and hybrid partridges into the wild.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Last year the Game Conservancy produced a paper "The Chukar Report" dealing with the 'impact of releasing hybrid partridges on wild populations of red-legged partridges'. The main conclusion was that releases of Chukar partridges and their hybrids have an adverse conservation effect on the native partridge and should be phased out. General licences which expire at the end of 1992 have therefore been issued. This will enable game farmers to phase out releases of Chukars and their hybrids.

Myopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will commission research into the incidence of myopathy in wild deer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have no plans to do so.

Housing Policies (Monitoring)

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he has put in hand to ensure that councils monitor the effectiveness of their housing policies and publish the results.

Mr. Chope: The Local Government and Housing Bill will require every local housing authority in England to publish information about their housing management performance, for their tenants. We are consulting the local authority associations at the moment on the type and extent of information to be provided. The consultation paper, issued on 10 October, has been placed in the Library.

Building Land

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied that councils will be able to provide sufficient land for five years' building requirement in the light of his new planning guidance note; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Yes. While we propose to end the special presumption in favour of housing development which currently operates in certain circumstances, the draft guidance nevertheless stresses the need for adequate planned provision for new housing, and for regular monitoring of land availability.

Parkinson Homes

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many owner-occupied Parkinson homes remained unrepaired at the latest available date; and how many of these were built in Bristol.

Mr. Chope: By April 1989, all but 187 of the 730 privately owned Parkinson houses identified by local authorities had been repurchased; of these, 178 were built in Bristol, of which 17 have either been repaired or are registered for repair under the PRC Houses Ltd warranty scheme.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his latest actions to try to prevent the build-up of chlorofluorocarbons.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Co-ordinated international action is the only effective answer to this global problem. The United Kingdom proposals for strengthening the Montreal protocol would require a complete phase out of chlorofluorocarbons by the end of the century. These proposals, which have now been adopted by the European Community, will require a faster phase out than proposals made by any other country.

Sewage Discharges (Bristol Channel)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to refuse permission to water authorities or water companies to construct or maintain long sea outfalls delivering raw sewage into the Bristol channel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Applications for consent to discharge sewage into the Bristol channel are matters in the first instance for the National Rivers Authority. Each application will be considered on its own merits.

United Nations Environment Programme

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to distribute copies of the United Nations environment programme's environmental data report for 1987-89 to interested bodies in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The environmental data report was prepared for the United Nations environment programme by the monitoring and assessment research centre at King's college, University of London, in association with the World Resources Institute, Washington and the Department of the Environment. It is a valuable contribution to UNEP's global environmental monitoring programme and an important and authoritative source of environmental information. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House. The report will be publicised at a seminar on environmental awareness on 10 November organised by the United Kingdom committee for UNEP which will be attended by a wide range of interested Government and non-governmental organisations, including industry, the media and the academic community.

Ministerial Visit

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the visit of the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities.

Mr. David Hunt: As I mentioned in my letter of 19 October to the hon. Member, I was able to visit his constituency on 27 October. I am writing to the hon. Member with details of my tour of the Brunswick enterprise centre on that day.

Downing Street (Barricade)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated scrap value of the gates to be erected across Downing street.

Mr. Chope: Less than £1,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated total cost of the permanent gates to be erected across the end of Downing street.

Mr. Chope: It is not the Government's practice to comment on the costing of individual security measures.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when Downing street ceased to be a public thoroughfare.

Mr. Chope: Access to Downing street is controlled under police common law powers which allow them to take reasonable steps to preserve the peace and prevent threats to it.

The present barriers at the Whitehall entrance to Downing street, which the demountable gate will replace, have been in place since 1982.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the permanent gates to be erected across Downing street are expected to provide more security than the present barrier.

Mr. Chope: Yes.

EMPLOYMENT

Skills Shortages

97. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the industries and the areas where he has been advised that there are significant shortages of skills such as to present a risk to effective or planned industrial production; and what action he proposes to take in response.

Mr. Nicholls: The detailed information is not available in the form requested.

It is for employers to assess their future skills needs in the light of their overall business plans and take the appropriate action. Details of the Government's sizeable contributions are set out in the White Paper "Employment in the 1990s" (Cd 540).

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the increase in average and median earnings of full-time adult male manual workers in manufacturing and non-manufacturing workers since April 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information from the new earnings survey is provided in the table:

Increase in weekly earnings April 1979–April 1[illegible]

Percent.

	Average	*Median*
Manufacturing	139	134
Non-manufacturing	138	137

Note: Full-time adult male manual employees in Great Britain whose earnings were not affected by absence.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the average earnings of full-time adult male manual workers in the motor vehicle industry and *(b)* the average earnings of full-time adult male non-manual workers generally at (i) the latest available date, (ii) for 1959 and (iii) for 1972; and what information he has as to the nearest comparable figures for 1972 and the latest available date in West Germany.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information is provided in the tables:

1. Average gross hourly earnings of adult male employees in Great Britain: pay not affected by absence, April of each year

	1972 £	*1989* £
(a) Manual employees in the motor vehicle industry	0·93	5·69
(b) All non-manual employees	1·11	8·23

Source: New Earnings Survey

2. Manual workers in the motor vehicle industry in West Germany, October of each year

	1972 DM	*1988* DM
Average gross hourly earnings	8·55	21·79

Source: Eurostat

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in *(a)* 1959 to 1968, *(b)* 1968 to 1979 and *(c)* 1979 to date in weekly and hourly earnings of (i) full-time adult male manual workers in manufacturing and all other full-time adult males excluding those working in the public sector and (ii) for manual workers and other workers in the public sector.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information from the new earnings survey is provided in the table:

Earnings of full-time adult employees in Great Britain whose earnings were not affected by absence; April of each year

			Percentage increase	
	Weekly earnings		*Hourly earnings*	
	1970–79	*1979–89*	*1970–79*	*1979–89*
(i) *Males*				
(a) Manuals in manufacturing	243	139	249	142
(b) Non-manuals not in public sector	226	200	n/a	200
(ii) *Males and Females*				
(a) Manuals in public sector	267	126	n/a	137
(b) Non-manuals sector	226	169	n/a	171

Note: n/a denotes not available.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each of Training Agency's areas within Greater London, Birmingham and Greater Manchester, what are the latest available monthly statistics since September 1988, showing for each month *(a)* the number of referrals to employment training from Restart interviews, *(b)* the number of employment training action plans completed, *(c)* the number of starts with employment training training managers, *(d)* the number of employment training filled places, and *(e)* the number of profiled or contracted employment training places.

Mr. Nicholls: As the information requested is contained in a number of tables I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each of the Training Agency's areas within Greater London, Birmingham and Greater Manchester, what are the latest available statistics for employment training showing the number of trainees in each monthly period who *(a)* have entered employer-based work placements and the cumulative total of how many are in employer placements at the latest available date and *(b)* the number of trainees in each monthly period who entered project-based work placements and the cumulative total of how many are in project-based placements at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: Reliable statistics on the number of trainees on employer and project placements are not currently available at an area office level.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training places, at the latest available date, in each Training Agency area have been filled with starts with training managers; and what percentage that is in each case of total employment training places contracted in each training agency area, for the latest available four months.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 25 October 1989]:* The figures are given in the following table.

Table 1

Number of employment training places: June-September 1989

Area office	*June*	*July*	*August*	*Sept.*
South East Region				
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	1,267	1,544	1,502	1,603
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	1,729	2,152	2,027	2,234
Essex	1,750	2,194	2,144	2,238
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	2,260	2,898	2,836	2,793
Kent	2,060	2,536	2,476	2,422
Surrey	499	594	610	752
Sussex	1,926	2,618	2,652	2,759
London Region				
Inner London North	6,054	6,362	6,434	6,986
Inner London South	3,302	3,485	3,429	3,556
London East	2,338	2,519	2,523	2,502
London North	3,704	3,772	3,922	4,180
London South	1,759	1,698	1,598	1,798
London West	1,186	1,152	1,086	1,186
South West Region				
Avon	2,675	2,616	2,567	2,841
Devon and Cornwall	5,654	5,696	5,706	5,681
Dorset and Somerset	1,889	1,907	1,769	1,909
Gloucester and Wiltshire	1,568	1,563	1,529	1,604
West Midlands Region				
Birmingham and Solihull	7,677	7,894	8,151	8,119
Coventry and Warwickshire	2,674	2,768	2,777	2,831
Dudley and Sandwell	2,907	2,937	3,020	3,029
Staffordshire	3,635	3,693	3,698	3,513
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	2,702	2,781	2,865	2,908
Wolverhampton and Walsall	3,161	3,141	3,129	3,004
East Midlands and Eastern Region				
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	1,703	1,759	1,736	1,793
Derbyshire	2,962	3,089	3,157	3,072
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	2,830	3,000	3,105	3,297
Lincolnshire	1,389	1,475	1,519	1,483
Norfolk and Suffolk	3,230	3,272	3,329	3,333
Nottinghamshire	3,428	3,779	3,911	3,907
Yorkshire and Humberside Region				
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	4,590	4,616	4,630	4,561
Humberside	5,231	5,214	5,187	5,040
North Yorkshire and Leeds	4,494	4,404	4,397	4,632
Sheffield and Rotherham	5,492	5,475	5,515	5,575
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	5,389	5,496	5,390	5,368
North West Region				
Cheshire	3,192	3,405	3,330	3,227
Cumbria	1,399	1,524	1,518	1,563
Lancashire	4,202	4,201	4,489	4,464
Central Manchester	4,136	4,327	4,060	4,136
Greater Manchester North	2,810	2,983	2,963	2,899
Greater Manchester East	2,560	2,642	2,433	2,546
Merseyside	9,266	9,882	9,885	10,249
Northern Region				
Cleveland	6,312	6,448	6,500	6,375
County Durham	5,535	5,732	5,884	5,854
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	4,607	4,878	4,929	5,249
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	6,531	6,793	6,875	6,740
Wales				
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	4,404	4,613	4,607	4,749
Gwent	2,237	2,344	2,410	2,552
Gwynned, Clwyd and Powys	3,222	3,620	3,654	3,889
Mid and South Glamorgan	4,957	5,186	5,289	5,285
Scotland				
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	3,144	3,182	3,239	3,431
Central and Fife	2,870	2,891	2,794	2,884
Glasgow City	4,739	4,807	5,042	5,304
Grampian and Tayside	2,522	2,516	2,598	2,655
Highlands and Islands	993	1,149	1,133	1,175
Lanarkshire	2,628	2,697	2,971	2,901
Lothian and Borders	3,492	3,549	3,590	3,542
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	2,817	2,941	3,064	3,161

Table 2

Number of employment training filled and contracted places at 30 September 1989

Area office	*Filled places*	*Contracted places*	*Percentage of contracted places*
South East Region			
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	1,603	2,269	71
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	2,234	2,201	101
Essex	2,238	2,324	96
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	2,793	3,108	90
Kent	2,422	3,232	75
Surrey	752	964	78
Sussex	2,759	2,560	108
London Region			
Inner London North	6,986	7,974	88
Inner London South	3,556	4,286	83
London East	2,502	2,620	95
London North	4,180	4,398	95
London South	1,798	1,965	92
London West	1,186	1,604	74
South West Region			
Avon	2,841	3,393	84
Devon and Cornwall	5,681	6,125	93
Dorset and Somerset	1,909	1,855	103
Gloucester and Wiltshire	1,604	2,109	76
West Midlands Region			
Birmingham and Solihull	8,119	8,725	93
Coventry and Warwickshire	2,831	3,553	80
Dudley and Sandwell	3,029	3,735	81
Staffordshire	3,513	4,286	82
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	2,908	4,095	71
Wolverhampton and Walsall	3,004	4,110	73
East Midlands and Eastern Region			
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	1,793	1,968	91
Derbyshire	3,072	3,412	90
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	3,297	3,559	93
Lincolnshire	1,483	1,536	97
Norfolk and Suffolk	3,333	3,250	103
Nottinghamshire	3,907	4,100	95
Yorkshire and Humberside Region			
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	4,561	5,147	89
Humberside	5,040	6,315	80
North Yorkshire and Leeds	4,632	5,195	89
Sheffield and Rotherham	5,575	7,080	79
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	5,368	5,350	100
North West Region			
Cheshire	3,227	4,245	76
Cumbria	1,563	1,619	97
Lancashire	4,464	5,874	76
Central Manchester	4,136	6,876	60
Greater Manchester North	2,899	3,505	83
Greater Manchester East	2,546	3,269	78
Merseyside	10,249	11,383	90
Northern Region			
Cleveland	6,375	6,861	93
County Durham	5,854	5,474	107
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	5,249	6,315	83
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	6,740	8,323	81
Wales			
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	4,749	5,220	91
Gwent	2,552	3,719	69
Gwynned, Clwyd and Powys	3,889	5,216	75
Mid and South Glamorgan	5,285	6,703	79
Scotland			
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	3,431	4,200	82
Central and Fife	2,884	3,124	92
Glasgow City	5,304	7,010	76
Grampian and Tayside	2,655	3,754	71
Highlands and Islands	1,175	1,249	94
Lanarkshire	2,901	3,585	81
Lothian and Borders	3,542	3,619	98
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	3,161	4,695	67

Note: Contracted places figures only available for end September.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many starts have been undertaken at employment training training managers on a monthly basis *(a)* nationally and *(b)* by training agency area, since May.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 23 October 1989]:* The figures are provided in the following table.

Starts with Employment Training managers 1989

Area office	*In month figures*			
	June	*July*	*August*	*Sept.*
South East Region				
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	253	428	199	378
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	308	614	310	492
Essex	406	786	264	508
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	494	915	342	572
Kent	365	762	283	491
Surrey	128	155	92	248
Sussex	433	876	382	679
London Region				
Inner London North	1,005	1,073	955	1,638
Inner London South	543	542	469	823
London East	452	452	290	467
London North	549	544	592	999
London South	399	261	216	530
London West	198	206	138	307
South West Region				
Avon	325	326	261	681
Devon and Cornwall	971	733	623	882
Dorset and Somerset	297	221	180	344
Gloucester and Wiltshire	328	218	148	354
West Midlands Region				
Birmingham and Solihull	1,254	1,079	1,033	1,461
Coventry and Warwickshire	449	454	415	641
Dudley and Sandwell	452	426	467	622
Staffordshire	597	499	389	647
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	455	414	388	615
Wolverhampton and Walsall	609	598	489	550
East Midlands and Eastern Region				
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	254	260	249	396
Derbyshire	510	444	430	512
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	476	571	733	960
Lincolnshire	264	271	334	196
Norfolk and Suffolk	549	526	395	540
Nottinghamshire	740	1,062	929	964

Area office	*In month figures*			
	June	*July*	*August*	*Sept.*
Yorkshire and Humberside Region				
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	906	730	745	953
Humberside	847	748	653	1,167
North Yorkshire and Leeds	911	727	639	1,230
Sheffield and Rotherham	927	810	808	1,171
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	901	776	704	991
North West Region				
Cheshire	839	666	416	548
Cumbria	228	272	175	325
Lancashire	876	652	946	978
Central Manchester	965	871	643	937
Greater Manchester North	871	589	569	609
Greater Manchester East	588	516	458	588
Merseyside	1,969	1,753	1,323	2,193
Northern Region				
Cleveland	1,360	719	838	1,226
County Durham	919	790	704	931
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	874	810	668	1,003
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	1,037	1,014	734	1,427
Wales				
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	807	807	596	1,068
Gwent	322	358	327	622
Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys	558	651	682	983
Mid and South Glamorgan	959	850	741	1,019
Scotland				
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	603	366	481	694
Central and Fife	534	297	402	700
Glasgow City	991	636	1,005	1,122
Grampian and Tayside	535	364	457	713
Highlands and Islands	269	295	173	282
Lanarkshire	638	465	677	611
Lothian and Borders	692	565	781	703
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	558	437	554	732
Residential Training Colleges	105	92	31	314
Great Britain Total	36,642	34,342	29,924	44,337

[1] Cumulative since 1 April 1989.

Parliamentary Answers (Drafting)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many individuals were employed by his Department whose primary role it was to draft answers to parliamentary questions in November of each of the last five years; and how many he expects will be so employed at the end of November.

Mr. Eggar: My Department does not employ any individuals whose primary role is to draft answers to parliamentary questions. Answers are drafted by officials employed with policy responsibility for the subject area to which the question relates; it is part of their normal range of duties.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he plans to take regarding the Health and Safety Executive office at Baynards house.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no plans regarding the Health and Safety Executive office at Baynards house.

Health and Safety (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, for each Health and Safety Executive area, on how many occasions in the last three years Health and Safety Executive inspectors have arranged for letters to union appointed safety representatives to be translated into the appropriate mother-tongue language.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Service Men's Wives

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has, for the latest year for which records exist and for the preceding three years, on the number of wives of service men seeking but unable to find employment *(a)* in the United Kingdom, *(b)* in the British Army of the Rhine and *(c)* elsewhere.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* This information is not available.

YTS

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons aged 16 and 17 years have not been offered places on YTS schemes in their own localities in each of the past 12 months.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* The Government guarantee the offer of a suitable YTS place to all young people under the age of 18 who are not in full-time employment or in full-time education who apply for one.

The guarantee continues to be met nationwide. At the end of September there were over 500,000 YTS places in contract, of which 110,821 were still unfilled.

Training (Statistics)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the monthly statistics for the latest available four months for Great Britain and each standard training agency area for employment training showing *(a)* entrants in each monthly period and the number of cumulative entrants since the scheme started, *(b)* the total number of currently filled places, *(c)* the number of trainees in each monthly period, on employer based work placements and on project-based placements and *(d)* the number of trainees who left the scheme in each monthly period and the number of cumulative leavers since the scheme started.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 20 October 1989]:* The figures for entrants and filled places are provided in tables 1 and 2. Information about trainees on employer and project-based training on a particular day is not available at area office level. The figures are collected quarterly; the most recent figures for Great Britain are given in table 3. Information on leavers is not available at area office level. The figures for Great Britain are given in table 4.

Table 1

Starts with Employment Training training managers 1989

Area office	*In month figures*				
	June	*July*	*August*	*September*	*Cumulative since 1 September 1988*
South East Region					
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	253	428	199	378	3,325
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	308	614	310	492	4,238
Essex	406	786	264	508	4,793
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	494	915	342	572	6,224
Kent	365	762	283	491	5,361
Surrey	128	155	92	248	1,519
Sussex	433	876	382	679	4,789
London Region					
Inner London North	1,005	1,073	955	1,638	13,526
Inner London South	543	542	469	823	7,364
London East	452	452	290	467	5,220
London North	549	544	592	999	8,430
London South	399	261	216	530	3,784
London West	198	206	138	307	3,054
South West Region					
Avon	325	326	261	681	5,121
Devon and Cornwall	971	733	623	882	11,464
Dorset and Somerset	297	221	180	344	3,893
Gloucester and Wiltshire	328	218	148	354	3,630
West Midlands					
Birmingham and Solihull	1,254	1,079	1,033	1,461	15,915
Coventry and Warwickshire	449	454	415	641	5,949
Dudley and Sandwell	452	426	467	622	6,769
Staffordshire	587	499	389	647	7,622
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	455	414	388	615	6,241
Wolverhampton and Walsall	609	598	489	550	7,503
East Midlands and Eastern Region					
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	254	260	249	396	3,920
Derbyshire	510	444	430	512	6,668
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	476	571	733	960	7,087
Lincolnshire	264	271	334	196	2,992
Norfolk and Suffolk	549	526	395	540	6,988
Nottinghamshire	740	1,062	929	964	9,708
Yorkshire and Humberside Region					
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	906	730	745	953	11,175
Humberside	847	748	653	1,167	12,212
North Yorkshire and Leeds	911	727	639	1,230	11,073
Sheffield and Rotherham	927	810	808	1,171	14,027
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	901	776	704	991	12,160
North West Region					
Cheshire	839	666	416	548	7,999
Cumbria	228	272	175	325	3,230
Lancashire	876	652	946	978	11,483
Central Manchester	965	871	643	937	10,644
Greater Manchester North	871	589	569	609	7,886
Greater Manchester East	588	516	458	588	7,327
Merseyside	1,969	1,753	1,323	2,193	21,064
Northern Region					
Cleveland	1,360	719	838	1,226	13,665
County Durham	919	790	704	931	10,778
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	874	810	668	1,003	9,541
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	1,037	1,014	734	1,427	13,349
Wales					
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	807	807	596	1,068	10,349
Gwent	322	358	327	622	5,092
Gwynned, Clwyd and Powys	558	651	682	983	7,622
Mid and South Glamorgan	959	850	741	1,019	11,456
Scotland					
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	603	366	481	694	6,203

Area office	*In month figures* *June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*Cumulative since 1 September 1988*
Central and Fife	534	297	402	700	6,269
Glasgow City	991	636	1,005	1,122	11,146
Grampian and Tayside	535	364	457	713	6,682
Highlands and Islands	269	295	173	282	2,217
Lanarkshire	638	465	677	611	7,323
Lothian and Borders	692	565	781	703	8,867
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	558	437	554	732	6,459
Residential Training Colleges	105	92	31	314	[1]707
Great Britain Total	36,642	34,342	29,924	44,337	451,102

[1] Cumulative since 1 April 1989

Table 2

Number of Employment Training filled places: June-September 1989

Area Office	*June*	*July*	*August*	*Sept.*
South East Region				
Berkshire and Oxfordshire	1,267	1,544	1,502	1,603
Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire	1,729	2,152	2,027	2,234
Essex	1,750	2,194	2,144	2,238
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	2,260	2,898	2,836	2,793
Kent	2,060	2,536	2,476	2,422
Surrey	499	594	610	752
Sussex	1,926	2,618	2,652	2,759
London Region				
Inner London North	6,054	6,362	6,434	6,986
Inner London South	3,302	3,485	3,429	3,556
London East	2,338	2,519	2,523	2,502
London North	3,704	3,772	3,922	4,180
London South	1,759	1,698	1,598	1,798
London West	1,186	1,152	1,086	1,186
South West Region				
Avon	2,675	2,616	2,567	2,841
Devon and Cornwall	5,654	5,696	5,706	5,681
Dorset and Somerset	1,889	1,907	1,769	1,909
Gloucester and Wiltshire	1,568	1,563	1,529	1,604
West Midlands Region				
Birmingham and Solihull	7,677	7,894	8,151	8,119
Coventry and Warwickshire	2,674	2,768	2,777	2,831
Dudley and Sandwell	2,907	2,937	3,020	3,029
Staffordshire	3,635	3,693	3,698	3,513
The Marches, Hereford/Worcester	2,702	2,781	2,865	2,908
Wolverhampton and Walsall	3,161	3,141	3,129	3,004
East Midlands and Eastern Region				
Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	1,703	1,759	1,736	1,793
Derbyshire	2,962	3,089	3,157	3,072
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	2,830	3,000	3,105	3,297
Lincolnshire	1,389	1,475	1,519	1,483
Norfolk and Suffolk	3,230	3,272	3,329	3,333
Nottinghamshire	3,428	3,779	3,911	3,907
Yorkshire and Humberside Region				
Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	4,590	4,616	4,630	4,561
Humberside	5,231	5,214	5,187	5,040
North Yorkshire and Leeds	4,494	4,404	4,397	4,632
Sheffield and Rotherham	5,492	5,475	5,515	5,575
Wakefield, Doncaster and Barnsley	5,389	5,496	5,390	5,368
North West Region				
Cheshire	3,192	3,405	3,330	3,227
Cumbria	1,399	1,524	1,518	1,563
Lancashire	4,202	4,201	4,489	4,464
Central Manchester	4,136	4,327	4,060	4,136
Greater Manchester North	2,810	2,983	2,963	2,899
Greater Manchester East	2,560	2,642	2,433	2,546
Merseyside	9,266	9,882	9,885	10,249
Northern Region				
Cleveland	6,312	6,448	6,500	6,375
County Durham	5,535	5,732	5,884	5,854
Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle	4,607	4,878	4,929	5,249
Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead	6,531	6,793	6,875	6,740
Wales				
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	4,404	4,613	4,607	4,749
Gwent	2,237	2,344	2,410	2,552
Gwynned, Clwyd and Powys	3,222	3,620	3,654	3,889
Mid and South Glamorgan	4,957	5,186	5,289	5,285
Scotland				
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	3,144	3,182	3,239	3,431
Central and Fife	2,870	2,891	2,794	2,884
Glasgow City	4,739	4,807	5,042	5,304
Grampian and Tayside	2,522	2,516	2,598	2,655
Highlands and Islands	993	1,149	1,133	1,175
Lanarkshire	2,628	2,697	2,971	2,901
Lothian and Borders	3,492	3,549	3,590	3,542
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	2,817	2,941	3,064	3,161
Residential Training College	512	560	528	730
Great Britain	194,201	202,969	204,111	208,069

Table 3

Employment Training

Percentages of Trainees on Placements with Employers and on projects as at 30 June 1989

	Employer Percentage	*Project Percentage*
Great Britain	25	50

Table 4

Employment Training Leavers (Estimated)

Month	*Leavers*
June	31,000
July	25,000
August	28,000
September	40,000

Cumulative (since September 1988) 239,000

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Consumer Protection

6. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce new legislation or regulations on consumer protection.

31. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce new legislation or regulations on consumer protection.

Mr. Forth: We intend to improve the protection given to consumers in a number of ways including the introduction of regulations under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 on price indications and unit pricing about which we are currently engaging in public consultation, and changes to other legislation affecting consumers' interests.

55. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce new legislation or regulations on consumer protection.

Mr. Forth: We intend to improve the protection given to consumers in a number of ways including the introduction of regulations under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 on price indications and unit pricing about which we are currently engaging in public consultation, and changes to other legislation affecting consumers' interests.

Imports

11. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the rise in import penetration in manufactured goods from 1979 until the first quarter of the current year.

Mr. Ridley: Import penetration in manufacturing industry rose from 27 per cent. in 1979 to 36 per cent. in the year ending March 1989.

Petrol Retailing

18. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to respond to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on petrol retailing.

38. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to respond to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on petrol retailing.

46. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to respond to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on petrol retailing.

69. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to respond to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on petrol retailing.

Mr. Redwood: The deadline for completion of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report has been extended to 20 December. The nature and timing of the response will depend on the findings of the report.

Competition Policy

19. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans for a review of competition policy.

34. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans for a review of competition policy.

Mr. Redwood: We are in the process of implementing the conclusions of our wide-ranging review of competition policy, which were published last year, and have no plans for a further review.

21. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans for a review of competition policy.

Mr. Redwood: We are in the process of implementing the conclusions of our review of competition policy, which were published last year, and have no plans for a further review.

28. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans for a review of competition policy.

Mr. Redwood: We are in the process of implementing the conclusions of our review of competition policy, which were published last year, and have no plans for a further review.

EC Meetings

22. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet his EEC counterparts; and what matters will be discussed.

50. **Mr. Geoffrey Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet his EEC counterparts; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Ridley: I intend to maintain close contact with all my EC counterparts, and a whole range of matters will be discussed.

Trade Statistics

23. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have a trade surplus, or a smaller trade deficit as a proportion of gross domestic product, than the United Kingdom.

47. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have a trade surplus, or a smaller trade deficit as a proportion of gross domestic product, than the United Kingdom.

70. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have a trade surplus, or a smaller trade deficit as a proportion of gross domestic product than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: All OECD countries except Portugal, Greece and Spain were in one or other category in 1988, the latest year for which complete figures are available.

Textiles (False Labelling)

24. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received over the question of false labelling of textiles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Representations have been received from the west Yorkshire trading standards service and a number of hon. Members in west Yorkshire expressing concern about overstatement of the wool content in imported carpets, and in garments made from Italian reclaimed fabric. Responsibility for enforcing the regulations which require the fibre content of textile products to be accurately described rests with local authority trading standards departments.

Footwear Industry

25. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current state of the footwear industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department is fully aware of the difficulties facing United Kingdom footwear manufacturers and of their continuing concern over low-cost imports, particularly from the far east. We expect the Commission to publish the findings and recommendations of its Community-wide investigations into imports of footwear from Taiwan and South Korea shortly and we will give these prompt and serious consideration.

Labelling

26. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new plans for the labelling of consumer goods.

62. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new plans for the labelling of consumer goods.

65. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new plans for the labelling of consumer goods.

Mr. Forth: Additional labelling requirements will come into force over the next year for toys and all-terrain vehicles. The Government has made clear its support for the early introduction of a Community-wide voluntary eco-labelling scheme. In addition my Department is supporting work designed to establish a certification trademark which could be awarded to goods which consistently meet high specifications, although launch of such a scheme would depend on adequate support from industry.

Regional Assistance

27. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to conduct a review of the way regional selective assistance has operated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: An evaluation of the operation and effects of regional selective assistance in the period 1980 to 1984 has recently been completed and will be published in the first part of next year. The findings will be taken into account in the future operation of the scheme.

35. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many individual firms and undertakings in the north west have benefited in the last 12 months as a result of funds made available through the regional selective assistance programme.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During the period 1 October 1988 to 30 September 1989, payments of regional selective assistance were made to 483 firms and undertakings in the north west region.

39. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new plans for stimulating industry in Britain's regions.

60. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any new plans for stimulating industry in Britain's regions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Changes in the focus of our regional policies were made early last year. There are no plans for further changes.

Internal Market

29. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further help is being given to companies to enable them to take full advantage of the establishment of the internal market in 1992.

Mr. Redwood: My Department's own "Europe Open for Business" information service is continually updated and expanded. Practical help is available through our enterprise initiatives—the consultancy initiative and the export initiative are particularly relevant to firms preparing for the single market.

There is also a growing range of information and advice available from private sector organisations and my Department will continue to work with such organisations to help enhance the services they offer.

Competitiveness

30. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the competitiveness of British industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Most contacts which my Department has with industry and commerce involve matters having a bearing on United Kingdom competitiveness.

59. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the competitiveness of British industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Most contacts which my Department has with industry and commerce involve matters having a bearing on United Kingdom competitiveness.

"British Business"

32. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why he has ceased publication of *British Business*.

43. **Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why he has ceased publication of *British Business*.

56. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why he has ceased publication of *British Business*.

Mr. Forth: Following the decision that responsibility for the statistical series with which DTI was previously concerned should transfer to the Central Statistical Office, *British Business* magazine lost much of its market and was no longer viable.

I understand that the CSO are about to launch a series of business bulletins containing most of the new data previously published in *British Business*.

Consumer Councils

33. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what effect nationalised industry consumer councils have had in protecting the consumer against above inflation price increases and poor service.

Mr. Forth: The national industry consumer councils are consulted by their respective industries on price increases. The industries concerned take a number of factors into account in arriving at a decision on such increases, and the national industry consumer councils play a valuable role in ensuring that the consumer view is adequately presented. The councils also have an influential role so far as standards of service are concerned, seeking improvements where experience shows this to be needed; and they are able to take up individual complaints with their industries where the consumer has failed to resolve the matter direct with the industry.

British Telecom

36. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any estimate of the number of people who own shares in British Telecom.

Mr. Forth: British Telecom's annual report and accounts indicate that at 31 March this year there were 1,203,243 shareholders.

Furniture (Safety)

37. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to receive the British Standards Institute's recommendations with regard to revising relevant furniture standards to specify the use of toughened or safety glass in low-level locations and methods of fixing glass panels in furniture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: A Committee of the British Standards Institution is preparing a specification for testing glass used in furniture and it is expected that a draft standard will be issued for consultation by mid-1990.

Securities and Investments Board

40. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received in response to proposed changes in the conduct of business rules at the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Redwood: I have received a number of representations about proposals by the Securities and Investments Board to amend its rules. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the questions raised in these representations are, however, a matter for the board.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many meetings he or the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) has had since 31 July with *(a)* the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board, *(b)* the chairmen of each of the self-regulating organisations recognised by the Securities and Investments Board and *(c)* the chairman or president of each of the professional bodies recognised by the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Redwood: Since 31 July I have met the chairmen of the Securities and Investments Board and four of the five self-regulating organisations. I shall meet the chairmen of other bodies as and when necessary. My right hon. Friend will meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board shortly.

Inward Investment

41. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies announced inward investment projects in the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available; and which regions benefited the most.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: According to the latest figures readily available to the Invest in Britain Bureau, on a regional basis as distinct from a national total, 330 inward investment decisions were made during 1988 to locate in the United Kingdom. These include the establishment of a new business, expansion or acquisition of an existing business and involvement in joint venture. The projects were expected to create about 27,500 new jobs and to have safeguarded a further 18,000. The figures are based on information provided by the companies themselves at the time of the investment and do not take into account subsequent developments. The table lists the details of the number of projects and jobs on a regional basis:

Region	*Projects*	*New jobs*	*Safeguarded jobs*
Scotland	58	5,392	1,978
Wales	55	5,856	2,085
Northern Ireland	22	2,610	916
North East	22	2,041	31
North West	24	1,604	3,169
Yorkshire and Humberside	14	1,507	250
East Midlands	16	836	880
West Midlands	66	3,656	7,824
South East	45	2,240	983
South West	5	479	0

Knitwear and Textile Industries

42. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next proposes to meet representatives of the knitwear and textile industries to discuss current difficulties facing the industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have no immediate plans to meet representatives of the industry although I take a close interest in matters of concern in the textile, clothing and knitwear sectors.

However, my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Trade met with the Apparel, Knitting and Textile Alliance on 4 October to discuss in some depth the difficulties faced by the three industries. He is also meeting a delegation from the TUC to discuss trade in textiles this afternoon.

Business Confidence

44. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has commissioned any research into the current level of business confidence and the implications for manufacturing industry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on business confidence is regularly collected by a number of private organisations, and the results are among the economic indicators available to the Government. I have no plans to duplicate the work of these independent organisations.

Barlow Clowes

45. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress he is able to report regarding repayments to investors affected by the Barlow Clowes collapse; what steps he has taken and will take to ensure fair treatment to both those who invested in the United Kingdom-based funds and those who invested in the Gibraltar-based funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The matter of payments to investors in Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Ltd. and Barlow Clowes International Ltd. is one for the joint receivers and joint liquidators, Cork Gully and Ernst and Young respectively. I refer the hon. Gentleman to my letters of 16 August and 30 October to all Members, copies of which I have placed in the Library.

Import Penetration

48. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the delay in publishing his Department's figures for import penetration.

58. **Mr. McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the delay in publishing his Department's figures for import penetration.

Mr. Redwood: In 1988 a new commodity coding system was introduced by Customs and Excise resulting in a complete revision and renumbering of the existing tariff codes.

Each of these new codes had to be allocated, whole or in part, to industries of the standard industrial classification before import penetration figures could be derived. The size and complexity of this task has resulted in an interruption to the normal publication timetable.

49. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the rise in import penetration in manufactured goods for 1979 until the first quarter of the current year.

53. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the rise in import penetration in manufactured goods from 1979 until the first quarter of the current year.

67. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the rise in import penetration in manufactured goods from 1979 until the first quarter of the current year.

Mr. Redwood: Import penetration in manufacturing industry rose from 27 per cent. in 1979 to 36 per cent. in the year ending March 1989.

Ferranti

51. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions his Department has had with representatives of Ferranti; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The company has informed my Department of its financial difficulties. However, it is for the company to explore the various solutions that may be open to it.

68. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he or his officials has met representatives of Ferranti International Signal plc to discuss the company's current financial difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Trade has listened to the views of Ferranti and senior management of the company have met officials of my Department.

However, it is for the company to explore the various solutions that may be open to it.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has had concerning the recent difficulties of Ferranti Limited; what replies he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: A number of hon. Members have expressed concern about the position of Ferranti. However, it is for the company to explore the various options that appear open to it.

Exchange Rate

52. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice his Department is giving to export industries regarding the exchange rate of pound sterling.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 17 May, *Official Report*, column *233.*

Takeovers and Mergers

54. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made among European Community partners in agreeing a takeover and mergers regulation.

Mr. Redwood: Significant progress was made in discussions on the draft EC merger control regulation at the most recent Council of Internal Market Ministers on 10 October. However, a number of important issues remain to be resolved, including the turnover thresholds, the criteria for assessing mergers and the review mechanism for the EC system. These and other issues will be the subject of further discussions at the next Internal Market Council on 23 November.

British Shipbuilders

57. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the chairman of British Shipbuilders; and what was discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I met the Chairman of British Shipbuilders on 16 October1989 to discuss the disposal of the assets of North East Shipbuilders Ltd. We also both gave evidence at the Trade and Industry Select Committee hearing on British Shipbuilders on 18 October.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the most recent information he has as to the level of outstanding British Shipbuilders' commercial borrowing.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 26 October 1989]*: Government funding of British Shipbuilders is designed to keep the Corporation's commercial borrowing requirements to a minimum. As at 13 October, actual commercial loans amounted to £3 million. On a year on year basis, however, total net aid provided over the course of the year is subject to the terms of the European Community's sixth directive on aid to shipbuilding. Limitations on Government funding under this Directive necessitated British Shipbuilders borrowing some £90 million in the market in December 1988. By December 1989, it is estimated that this level of borrowing liability will have fallen to about £65 million against the sixth directive's parameters.

Estate Agents

61. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to bring forward his proposals designed to regulate the activities of those estate agents engaging in undesirable practices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My proposals to underpin a code of practice for estate agents by an order under section 3 of the Estate Agents Act 1979 were announced to the House of Commons and published in the report of my review of estate agency on 21 June. I have asked the Director General of Fair Trading to develop the code of practice with the industry, consider the scope of the proposed order under section 3 of the Act and report back to me early next year. When I have considered his advice I shall circulate for consultation proposals for an order, as is required under section 30 of the Act.

Japanese Market

63. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received regarding British access to the Japanese market.

Mr. Redwood: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by the right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade on 19 July. In the first nine months of this year our exports to Japan increased in value by 28 per cent.

Sub-post Offices

64. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will meet the chairman of the Post Office to discuss the future of small rural sub-post offices.

Mr. Forth: I meet the chairman of the Post Office regularly to discuss a wide range of issues of mutual interest and concern.

CBI

66. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I met the Confederation of British Industry on 24 October 1989 when the main topic of discussion was the preparation by British business for the European single market.

Counterfeit Electrical Products

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to investigate the production of counterfeit electrical products being produced by Taiwan and sold under English company names to Third-world countries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the absence of diplomatic relations between the UK and Taiwan, formal representations cannot be made there. UK companies experiencing difficulties with counterfeit products from Taiwan are referred to the Anglo-Taiwanese Trade Committee, which will give advice. Nevertheless, the UK Government regularly make representations to countries where counterfeits are known to be sold and will continue to do so.

I would be pleased to receive more information, particularly about the volume and destination of counterfeit products, in order that the most effective representaions can be made.

Business Development Consultancy Initiative

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications for the business development consultancy initiative received between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, in cash and constant prices, for each of the standard Department of Trade and Industry regions, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 30 October 1989]*: In the period from 1 April 1988 to 30 September 1989, 31,415 applications were received for the business development consultancy initiatives. In the same period 24,081 applications were approved for assisted consultancy. The Department's contribution to the cost of completed consultancies totalled £27·1 million. It is estimated that those consultancies not completed by 30 September 1989 will cost the Department a further £29·3 million. A breakdown of numbers and cost of consultancy projects for each DTI region and for Scotland and Wales is as follows:

DTI region/country	*(a)* *Number of applications received*	*(b)* *Number of applications approved for assisted consultancy*	*(cI)* *DTI expenditure on completed consultancies (£'000)*	*(cII)* *Estimated expenditure on outstanding consultancies (£'000)*
North East	1,590	1,225	1,300	1,404
North West	4,453	3,780	4,945	5,032
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,878	2,254	2,932	3,042
West Midlands	3,325	2,427	2,966	3,218
East Midlands	1,957	1,530	1,839	2,048
South West	2,990	1,995	1,820	2,136
East	2,568	1,725	1,398	1,726
South East:				
London	3,818	2,871	2,669	2,867
Reading	1,861	1,486	1,427	1,726
Reigate	1,910	1,487	1,349	1,580
Scotland	2,293	1,976	2,860	2,779
Wales	1,772	1,325	1,585	1,697
Total	31,415	24,081	27,090	29,235

The total amount of expenditure on the business development consultancy initiatives in 1988-89 was £43·1 millions. The Estimates provision for 1989-90 is £80 millions. Plans for future years will be reflected in the 1990 Public Expenditure White Paper. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of total expenditure or provision on the consultancy initiatives for each DTI region or for Scotland or Wales.

Rain Forest Timber

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what guidelines he has laid down for the import of timber from tropical rain forests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Guidelines for sustainable forest management would need to be established at the international level. The United Kingdom itself and the EC as a whole are promoting work on this issue at the International Tropical Timber Organisation's current meeting in Japan.

Interest Rates

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment his Department has made of the effect of high interest rate levels on manufacturing industries in the north-west.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: North West industry is very diverse which means that the impact of present interest rates may vary. My Department's assessment is that the current policy is having its desired effect in the region. Industry is performing well, profits are satisfactory and essential investment by companies intended to secure their position in the market is being maintained. The region's manufacturing companies recognise the importance of defeating inflation and are responding well to the present situation.

Co-operation Initiatives

Mr. Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what initiatives have been taken to encourage firms to work together, particularly on new technologies; how many projects have been supported; and at what cost.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The research and technology initiative was launched in January 1988 to provide support for research and development in collaborative projects under four main schemes:

—LINK, which encourages firms to collaborate with universities and polytechnics in pre-competitive research.

—EUREKA, which encourages firms to enter collaborative ventures with firms in other European countries.

—Advanced technology programmes (ATP), which assist companies to collaborate in selected fields of new technology.

—General industrial collaborative programmes, which provide support for projects at research and technology organisations and for other collaborative projects not covered under the above headings.

These schemes build on previous experience of supporting collaborative research and development: on the LINK scheme was a wholly new initiative.

Both the LINK and the ATP schemes seek to promote advanced technology. Under these schemes 29 programmes have been initiated. The areas of technology that will benefit are:

LINK
Electronics and IT
Molecular electronics
Advanced semiconductors
Personal communications
Opto-electronics
Power electronic devices

Biosciences and Food
Eukaryotic genetics
Biotransformations
Food Processing
Protein engineering
Plant metabolism
Selective drug delivery

Engineering and measurement
Industrial measurement
Nanotechnoloty
Ventilation, airconditioning and refrigeration
High speed machinery
Molecular sensors
Analytical and physical measurement
Construction and refurbishment
Biochemical engineering

Materials and chemicals
Structural composites
Catalytic processes

ATP

High temperature superconductivity
Gallium arsenide
Information engineering
Electronics
Systems technology and integration
Computer aided engineering
Advanced robotics
Wealth from the oceans

The number of collaborative projects that have started since January 1988 and the expected contribution to those projects by the DTI are set out in the table:

Scheme	*Number of projects*	*DTI support (£m)*
LINK	40	[1]12·0
ATP	80	19·7
EUREKA	43	17·5
General industrial	187	27·6
Total	350	76·8

[1] Contributions by DTI and other Departments.

In addition there are over 600 collaborative projects under discussion between the Department and industry. Strong growth is expected in particular in numbers of new LINK projects. Small and medium-sized enterprises are well represented, particularly in the general industrial collaborative category.

It is expected that DTI expenditure in support of collaborative industrial research and development in 1990-91 will be about £85 million.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimates he has of the costs involved in implementing the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations for *(a)* industry and *(b)* small businesses and what steps is he taking in the current year to promote or publicise those regulations for those sectors.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

Where substances hazardous to health were adequately and reliably controlled and where there was full compliance with existing legislation, the costs of implementing the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations should be marginal; they will arise mainly from reviewing and formalising existing arrangements. The Health and Safety Executive estimated in its cost/benefit analysis for the COSHH proposals that for a typical small firm the additional costs arising would amount to no more than about one quarter of a percentage point of the firm's net output. This estimate included the costs of monitoring of exposure and health surveillance which apply to only a minority of firms. For most larger firms, the costs will be substantially smaller in relation to net output.

The Health and Safety Executive has promoted and publicised the regulations by a variety of means, including national and trade advertising and the distribution of some 3·5 million introductory leaflets. Many activities have been particularly geared to the need to reach small firms, including the provision of information to the principal small firms advisory organisations.

[illegible]

[illegible] Regulations

Mr. [illegible]

[illegible]

Mr. [illegible]

[illegible]

Written Answers to Questions

[illegible]

Mr. [illegible]

[illegible]

In making the [illegible] between the Government and [illegible] of special importance [illegible]

[illegible] expected [illegible]

[illegible]

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 2 November 1989

HOME DEPARTMENT

Gaelic Television Services

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from organisations and individuals supporting an expansion of Gaelic television services.

Mr. Mellor: We have received representations from a number of organisations, from Members of Parliament and from members of the public in support of an increase in the provision of Gaelic television programmes.

Traffic Offences

Mr. Tebbit: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many alleged traffic offences within the Metropolitan police area are currently under consideration for prosecution; whether that number is increasing or decreasing; and what was the position two and four years ago.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tebbit: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the longest time between the commission of an alleged traffic offence and notification of the intent to prosecute during the past two years;

(2) what is the average time between the alleged commission of a traffic offence and the notification of the driver concerned of whether a prosecution will be brought.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information his Department has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. Waddington: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him on 30 October 1989 at column *38*.

Forensic Services

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in the light of new regulations involving payment by the police forces for forensic services, he will consider establishing independent forensic units, along the lines of that based on Strathclyde university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no such regulations, but we have accepted the recommendations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs that the police should pay directly for the forensic science services they use. The establishment of forensic science units independent of the Government is a matter for private initiative, and the police would be free to use such units if they wished to do so.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many cases are pending with the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the latest date;

(2) how many cases have been dealt with by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the latest available date.

Mr. John Patten: On 30 September 1989, the number of applications resolved since the board's inception was 433,276 and 94,113 cases awaited resolution.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons whose cases were referred to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board subsequently died before determination.

Mr. John Patten: The board does not collate this information.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much compensation has been paid in *(a)* Liverpool and *(b)* Merseyside by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the latest available date;

(2) what is the highest payment by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to a claimant from Liverpool at the latest available date.

Mr. John Patten: The board does not keep information on the payment of compensation by locality. Details of the highest award made each year are given in the board's annual reports, copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much has been paid in compensation by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the latest available date;

(2) what is the amount of compensation awarded by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the most recent date.

Mr. John Patten: Between 1 April 1964 and 30 September 1989, the board paid £389,718,739 in compensation. The board does not keep a running total of awards made but not yet paid.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any proposals to improve the working of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has plans to put the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board on a statutory basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are in close touch with the chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board about the means of tackling the board's acknowledged problems of delay and the increased workload and backlog of cases of which it is the result. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 provides for a criminal injuries compensation scheme closely resembling the present non-statutory arrangements, but the most pressing task is to overcome the board's immediate problems. This must take priority over the introduction of the statutory scheme.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will include deaths or injuries caused by joy riders within the cover of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. John Patten: Compensation will generally be available under the owner's insurance or arrangements made by the Motor Insurers' Bureau for injury or death caused by either an uninsured driver or an untraced driver. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board will entertain claims where death or injury is caused by a driver who intentionally drives at the victim. We therefore see no need to extend the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in resolving the claim of Mr. Terence Anthony Lafferty of Liverpool to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. John Patten: As the board is independent in its day-to-day operations I have asked the board to write to the hon. Member about this case.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to include victims of rape as possible claimants to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. John Patten: They are already included.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is the practice of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to answer letters from solicitors acting for people who have made an application to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. John Patten: I understand from the board that it is its normal practice to reply to letters which require an answer as soon as possible.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the average waiting time for cases to be decided by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the most recent convenient date;

(2) what is the longest waiting time for a case to be accepted by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the latest date.

Mr. John Patten: The board does not keep information about waiting times in cases now disposed of. Information about the percentage of cases resolved by the board within certain periods from registration is shown in paragraph 6 of its latest annual report (Cm. 536), a copy of which is in the Library.

DNA Testing

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce a centrally organised DNA testing scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government's intention to introduce DNA testing into the entry clearance process was announced earlier this year. We will shortly be inviting tenders for the work of carrying out DNA tests. We will make a further announcement about the implementation of the Government scheme when the necessary arrangements have been completed.

Firearms Certificates

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the proposed directive on the national regulations of firearms certificates; and if it will be determined by majority vote.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My hon. Friend is no doubt referring to the Commission's proposals for a Council directive on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons. The Commission has signalled its intention to put forward a revised draft of the directive, but it has not yet been formally submitted to us. We will of course look at any new proposals very closely, including the legal basis, to ensure that the Commission's plans do not weaken in any way our ability to carry out those checks which we believe necessary to preserve security and maintain public safety.

British Summer Time

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what powers have been given to the EEC in relation to the determination of British summer time after the three-year period of consultation permitted to the United Kingdom in terms of EEC document 7876/88.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The position of the EC will be same for the sixth directive on summer time arrangements covering 1993 onwards as for the current fifth directive covering the period 1990 to 1992 inclusive.

Drugs

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those places which have been selected for locally-based drug prevention teams.

Mr. Mellor: We are not yet in a position to do so.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many representations (i) he and (ii) immigration officers received from Members of Parliament during *(a)* the first quarter of 1988 *(b)* the first quarter of 1989 to delay the removal of passengers refused entry at British ports of entry; and, for both periods, how many representations resulted in (i) the delay of the passenger's removal for up to a week, (iii) the delay of the passenger's removal for more than a week and (ii) reversal of the immigration officer's decision.

Mr. Waddington *[pursuant to the reply, 28 July 1989, c. 1057]:* I regret that the information contained in that reply was incorrect. In the first quarter of 1988 representations received by Ministers resulted in deferment of removal of passengers refused entry in 382 cases. The rest of the information requested is not available centrally.

TRANSPORT

Hong Kong Shipping Register

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the strategic implications for the United Kingdom of the transfer of the Hong Kong shipping register to the Chinese flag.

Mr. McLoughlin: On the transfer of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China in 1997 vessels on the Hong Kong shipping register will not be available to the United Kingdom for defence purposes.

Studies (Costs)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total cost to date of the London assessment studies and, separately, the central London rail study.

Mr. Portillo: The total cost of the four London assessment studies to date is about £8½ million. The central London rail study is expected to cost about £800,000.

Pedestrian Footbridges

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice his Department offers to local authorities seeking to build pedestrian footbridges with transport supplementary grant from his Department with regard to access for the disabled.

Mr. Atkins: We recommend that for schemes supported by TSG local highway authorities should use the technical design standards issued by the Department. The Department's design criteria for footbridges are contained in departmental standard BD29/87. This standard lays particular emphasis on the importance of ensuring that the needs of disabled people are taken into account. It specifies "enhanced criteria" which should be adopted as far as practicable for the benefit of disabled people, such as the provision of both ramps and stairs and a minimum clear width of 2m.

I am arranging for a copy of the standard to be placed in the Library.

A5 (Shropshire)

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce a start date for the A5 road improvements in Shropshire.

Mr. Atkins: The inspector's report on the recent inquiry into the final statutory orders for the A5/A49 Shrewsbury bypass is being considered. The decision will be announced later this month. Subject to that being favourable I hope construction will start next April.

Road Accidents

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what figures are available on the makes of cars involved in fatal and serious injury accidents on Britain's roads over the past two years.

Mr. Atkins: No information is available on makes of cars involved in fatal and serious injury accidents on Britain's roads over the past two years. However, arrangements are now in hand to ensure that this information is recorded for future years.

Aircraft Incident (Edinburgh)

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, he will discuss with him the incident involving British Midland Airways flight BD 057 at Edinburgh on Sunday 22 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority. The incident will be the subject of a mandatory occurrence report submitted by British Midland Airways to the authority, and on receipt of that report, the authority will decide what action needs to be taken. I have drawn the hon. Member's question to the attention of the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority.

Learner Drivers

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider changing the regulations relating to learner drivers so that no passengers may be carried other than the experienced driver accompanying the learner driver.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to impose a maximum speed limit on drivers in the first 12 months following the date on which they obtained a full United Kingdom driving licence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We have a major programme of research in hand to cast light on the accident record of learner and newly qualified drivers. As the results become available we shall be considering whether there are any aspects of the driver licensing regime that need to be improved.

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to change the regulations concerning the driving experience of those who accompany learner drivers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I am reviewing whether there is any case for this.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to require those supervising learner drivers to *(a)* have attained a prescribed minimum age or *(b)* have held a full driving licence for a specified number of years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I am reviewing whether there is any case for this.

Radioactive Material

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to study the recent critical appraisal of the safety of flasks designed for the air transport of plutonium, presented to the annual conference of the Safety and Reliability Society in Bath in October.

Mr. McLoughlin: The International Atomic Energy Agency's regulations for the safe transport of radioactive materials are subject to continuous review and updating. Any relevant information on this transport will be studied.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information he possesses on the current considerations by the International Atomic Energy Agency's standing advisory group on the international safety regulations for the carriage of radioactive materials.

Mr. McLoughlin: The chairman's report of the seventh meeting of the group has been received and its conclusions and recommendations are being studied.

Air Traffic

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to open an east coast airway for commercial air traffic to serve areas between the north of Scotland and the south of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority and the National Air Traffic Services. I will draw the hon. Member's question to the attention of authority's chairman.

Mersey Tunnels

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the financing of the Mersey tunnels; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The financing of the Mersey tunnels is a matter for the Merseyside passenger transport authority. Over the last three years we have had extensive discussions with the authority about the debts of the Mersey tunnels and we have helped to produce projections of the tunnel's financial performance. If the PTA considers that it has a case for Government financial assistance we will be prepared to consider it.

Roll-on Roll-off Vessels

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many roll-on roll-off vessels have been lost at sea since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: Between 1 January 1981 and 31 December 1988, a total of 23 roll-on roll-off vessels have been lost at sea worldwide. The figures for earlier years do not identify losses of roll-on roll-off vessels.

Manchester Ship Canal Company

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to announce his decision on the inspector's report on the public inquiry into the harbour revision order applied for by the Manchester Ship Canal Company.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been considering, in the light of the inspector's report, whether all the provisions sought in the order properly could and should be included in a harbour revision order, and hope to be able to reach a decision in the reasonably near future.

Port Authorities

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what means of redress or appeal exists in the case of maladministration or inefficiency by a body such as a port authority.

Mr. McLoughlin: Harbour authorities that are companies or statutory trusts are autonomous bodies running commercial undertakings. Any complaint should be made to the chief executive or chairman, and if satisfaction is not obtained the complaint can ultimately be pursued through the courts. For harbours run by local authorities there are also the usual channels for seeking a remedy from the actions of a local authority. In addition, there are two statutory rights of appeal to the Secretary of State: in respect of all harbour authorities, against their dues and, if they are competent harbour authorities under the Pilotage Act 1987, their pilotage charges; and in respect of a few authorities whose local legislation contains power to license works in the harbour area, against their licensing decisions.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to abolish the Clyde port authority and to replace it with another body.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. But I understand that the authority has been considering the possibility of seeking a change in its status.

Vehicle and Component Approvals Division

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the latest annual report of the vehicle and component approvals division is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The report for 1988-89 was published at the end of September. Copies are available in the Library.

The certification work carried out by VCA staff makes an important contribution to road safety through checks on vehicle and equipment design and quality standards. During the year covered by the report, the VCA handled an increased workload and managed to better its first unit cost target.

Further steps were also taken to move to a businesslike footing with adoption of new accounting methods and the preparation of the first business plan. These will help provide a firm financial structure for the proposed move to executive agency status next spring.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Family Law

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the Government Departments represented on the interdepartmental working party established to oversee work on family law and business following the passage of the Children Bill.

The Attorney-General: The Government Departments represented on the family law and administration working party are as follows:

Lord Chancellor's Department
Home Office
Department of Health
Her Majesty's Treasury
Department of Social Security
Welsh Office

Traffic Offences

Mr. Key: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the criteria used by the Crown Prosecution Service in deciding whether or not to prosecute in respect of traffic offences.

The Attorney-General: In deciding whether or not to prosecute in respect of traffic offences, as with all criminal offences, the Crown Prosecution Service has to satisfy the two criteria set out in the code for Crown prosecutors, promulgated under section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985. These require that there is sufficient admissible, substantial and reliable evidence to afford a realistic prospect of conviction and that the public interest requires a prosecution in the circumstances.

Northern Ireland Court Service

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Attorney-General whether any changes have been made to the cash limit and running cost limit for the Northern Ireland court service.

The Attorney-General: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XI vote 8 has been increased by £21,000 from £14,725,000 to £14,746,000 and the running costs limit by £21,000 from £11,700,000 to £11,721,000. This increase has been charged to the Reserve and will not add to the planned total of public expenditure. The increases arise from a policy decision which transferred responsibility for the funding of the PRAMIS computer project from Northern Ireland Departments 1 (NID 1) to individual Departments (including Northern Ireland Court Service). The corresponding decrease in NID 1's cash limit and running costs limit was announced on 13 July 1989.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Loans

42. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what annual level of inflation has been used to calculate the projected cost of the student loan scheme.

Mr. Jackson: The costings set out in annex E of Cm. 520 were expressed in constant 1990 prices. To estimate the pace at which inflation will erode the real value of the grant, an inflation rate of 3 per cent. per annum was assumed.

43. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the introduction of student loans.

Mr. Jackson: The preparatory work described in my right hon. Friend's statement on 19 June, *Official Report*, columns 21-22, is proceeding.

Schools (Data Protection Act)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton, *Official Report*, 17 October, column 87, how many schools he estimates are currently in breach of the Data Protection Act; and if he will place in the Library the guidance to schools he intends to publish.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department does not collect information about schools' compliance with the Data Protection Act. A copy of the promised guidance will be placed in the Library on publication.

Committee of Vice Chancellors

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the Committee of Vice Chancellors; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend discussed a wide range of higher education matters with the committee at its annual meeting on 27 September. We meet representatives of the committee from time to time in the course of normal business.

Teacher Training

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what grant assistance is provided by his Department to local education authorities to fund in-service training for teachers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The main source of grant assistance is the local education authority training grant scheme, details of which are set out in Department of Education and Science circular 20/89, a copy of which is in the Library. In 1990-91 the scheme will support expenditure of £214·7 million with grant of £125·7 million.

Teachers' Negotiating Rights

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure that teachers' negotiating rights are restored as soon as possible.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is currently engaged in a series of meetings with the teacher unions and the employers at which a range of possibilities for new permanent pay determination arrangements is being discussed.

European Research Council Meeting

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Research Council meeting in Luxembourg on 17 October.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

I represented Her Majesty's Government at the meeting of the Community's Council of Ministers (Research) in Luxembourg on 17 October.

The Council adopted a common position on a Community programme of research on the competitiveness of agriculture and management of agricultural resources. The programme will receive Community funding of 55 mecu (37 million) over five years. Priority will be given to research work which helps to identify alternative outlets for products and uses for land, conserves natural resources and develops production systems in harmony with the environment.

There was also a further exchange of views on several aspects of the Commission proposal for a framework programme of Community activities in the field of research and technological development (1990-1994).

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the total amounts raised by domestic rates in each of the years 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88, *(b)* the rate in the pound in each year and *(c)* the estimated number of domestic

hereditaments on which rates were payable for each year in the London boroughs of (i) Islington, (ii) Camden and (iii) Lambeth.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures sought are:

	Domestic rate income £m	*Average domestic rate poundage* Pence	*Number of domestic hereditaments* '000s
Islington			
1984-85	49·1	233·5	68·6
1985-86	46·9	229·1	69·0
1986-87	42·8	184·3	69·4
1987-88	41·5	172·1	70·5
Lambeth			
1984-85	62·3	233·1	104·6
1985-86	60·4	224·6	105·4
1986-87	58·4	217·2	106·6
1987-88	54·5	205·6	108·3
Camden			
1984-85	59·2	202·7	78·2
1985-86	60·9	209·0	79·2
1986-87	62·6	209·4	80·1
1987-88	65·1	213·2	81·5

Note: Figures for domestic rate income are net of rate relief grant and gross of rebates.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the current cost of a revaluation of domestic properties for rateable purposes.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government do not consider a revaluation of domestic property to be viable using rental values because of the lack of market rental evidence. I have therefore made no such estimate.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policy has applied since 1982 towards the revaluation of domestic properties for rateable purposes; what estimates he has of the number of domestic properties in the London boroughs of *(a)* Islington, *(b)* Camden and *(c)* Lambeth, which have been revalued for rateable purposes since 1982; and what are the general reasons for those revaluations having taken place.

Mr. David Hunt: Since the last general revaluation in 1973 rateable values of domestic properties have been altered most commonly because of a change in the physical state of the property or in its environment. I estimate that some 3,200,000 alterations have been made to the rateable values of domestic property in England since 1982. No estimates are available for particular local authority areas.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage registration for the community charge in the Cherwell district council area.

Mr. Chope: I understand that registration for the community charge is going ahead successfully in Cherwell and that to date some 98 per cent. of chargepayers have been registered.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the community charge.

Mr. Chope: I have received representations from individual local authorities and other bodies. My Department has also held a number of discussions with the local authority associations.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any consideration has been given to exempting foreign language assistants employed in the United Kingdom from paying the community charge.

Mr. Chope: It would not be appropriate to provide exemption for foreign language assistants. They will be subject to a personal community charge if they are solely or mainly resident in Great Britain. Foreign language assistants who fall within the definition of full-time students will be eligible for 80 per cent. relief of the charge. Decisions on whether an individual is solely or mainly resident in Great Britain, and is a full-time student, are initially for the community charges registration officer.

Property Revaluation

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has of the number of domestic properties in England that have been revalued for rateable purposes since 1982; and what are the general reasons for these revaluations having taken place.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today.

Chief Inspector of Pollution (Resignation)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek permission from the author to publish the letter of resignation submitted by Mr. Rod Perriman, the former chief inspector of pollution.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the then Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) on 29 November 1988 at column *135*.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has now reached his decision on the future of the Property Services Agency in Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The PSA is in the process of reorganising into two main businesses: PSA Projects dealing with major projects, and PSA Building Management dealing with maintenance, estate management and smaller projects. Both businesses intend to maintain offices in Cardiff, drawing their staffing initially from the existing PSA Wales Office.

Sellafield

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make an assessment of the recent report by Professor David Bowen of the University of Wales Institute of Earth Studies on the geological stability of the sub-seabed region off Sellafield and the geology below Sellafield with regard to plans to dispose of the radioactive waste underground near the British Nuclear Fuels Sellafield site.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In the first instance it is for UK Nirex Limited to consider such reports in submitting proposals to Government for the development of an underground radioactive waste disposal facility for low and intermediate level waste. In assessing these proposals, HMIP will take into account any relevant information.

Habitats

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the Government's response to the draft European Community directive on the protection of semi-natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora; whether he will seek to amend the draft directive *(a)* to provide funding to encourage individuals to adopt management and development practices and *(b)* to tackle the devastation and destruction of habitats outside the envisaged network of special protection areas; and whether he will seek to allow non-governmental organisations to attend meetings under the directive as observers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have made clear on several occasions that we, in common with all other member states, regard the present draft text as deeply flawed. The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities reached a similar conclusion in its scrutiny report published in August.

We are keen to see progress towards a worthwhile Community measure in the field of nature conservation. It is for the French Presidency to decide how to take things forward, and I understand that discussions are taking place with a view to breaking the deadlock. Matters such as funding, protection of habitats outside special protection areas, and observer status for non-governmental organisations can be expected to feature in these deliberations. We shall continue to contribute constructively to the discussions on all aspects of the dossier.

Homelessness

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new initiatives he will take to reduce the present level of homelessness in young people aged under 18 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The conclusions of our review of the homelessness legislation will be announced shortly.

Radioactive Waste Management

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has met the chairman or officials of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee to discuss *(a)* environmental management of and *(b)* international safeguards applicability to plutonium contaminated wastes at civil nuclear facilities and safeguardable nuclear material balance areas in dual-purpose facilities.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has not yet met the chairman and members of Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, but plans to do so in January. The agenda for the meeting has yet to be decided.

Estate Action

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total budget for the current year for Estate Action.

Mr. Chope: A total of £190 million is being made available for my Department's Estate Action programme in 1989-90. In addition, local authorities are normally expected to contribute about 50 per cent. of the total cost of approved projects as a measure of their commitment to those schemes.

Safety Glazing

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the consultation document on the standard of safety glazing to be included in the building regulations.

Mr. Chope: I hope to be in a position to publish the consultative document shortly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Share Ownership

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent changes have been made to the ceilings of percentage in shares of Rolls-Royce and British Aerospace respectively which may be held by persons or bodies not within the United Kingdom; what communications he has received from the Commission of the European Communities on this and the period within which any such new limitation shall operate; and if he will place copies of any such correspondence in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 3 August that the Government had decided that, following discussions with the European Commission on Rolls-Royce, the limit on foreign shareholdings could reasonably be increased for both Rolls-Royce and British Aerospace from 15 per cent. to 29·5 per cent. Extraordinary general meetings of the two companies held respectively on 11 September and 16 August approved special resolutions to raise the limit to the new level. In reaching this decision the Government took into account not only the concern expressed by the Commission about the effect of the restriction on other EC nationals wishing to buy shares in Rolls-Royce, but the wishes of Rolls-Royce and British Aerospace to have the limit increased given the international nature of their business. As the discussions with the European Commission were confidential, documents cannot be placed in the Library. The Government agreed with the Commission that it would review at the end of 1992 the limit on foreign shareholdings in the light of any changes in the structure of the European defence industry and in the pattern of defence procurement over the period.

North East Shipbuilders

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North, on 20 October, *Official Report*, columns *268-69*, if he will estimate the cost to Her Majesty's Government arising from the closure of North East Shipbuilders Ltd., excluding any costs incurred by British Shipbuilders but including *(a)* unemployment benefit to redundant employees, *(b)* housing and other social security benefits to redundant employees, *(c)* remedial measures taken by Her Majesty's Government and *(d)* any other costs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is very difficult to give an assessment of the Exchequer costs, because no one can reliably forecast the circumstances of Sunderland and other places that would have been affected had those decisions not been taken. For instance, had the Government decided not to close the yards at the end of 1988, very substantial redundancies would in any event have been necessary, and costs would have been incurred elsewhere, particularly on the Clyde, had other sales notified to the Commission in December 1988 been frustrated by delayed EC clearance.

Had the Government decided to notify new shipbuilding proposals in July, the likelihood would have been a delay to the economic recovery of Sunderland as a result of the uncertainty about the enterprise zone and other measures. On the other hand, talks are taking place between British Shipbuilders and interested parties about the use of various of the assets of NESL which in turn may generate additional employment to that likely to result from the enterprise zone.

My right hon. Friend announced on 7 December a remedial package for Sunderland estimated at £45 million. Of that sum, £10·5 million is being provided through British Shipbuilders, to fund the activities of Sunderland Enterprise and Training Ltd., including those being administered by the Wearside Opportunity.

Insurance Companies Act

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will now introduce regulations to require companies to report on their arrangements to meet the duty imposed by section 31A of the Insurance Companies Act 1982.

Mr. Redwood: I undertook on 26 July to consider introducing a new regulation requiring insurance companies to report on their arrangements to meet the duty imposed by section 31A of the Insurance Companies Act 1982. This section requires insurance companies to ensure that adequate arrangements are in force for securing that transactions affecting assets of the company (other than transactions outside its control) do not operate unfairly between different funds of the company. I have now made regulations, which come into effect on 1 March 1990, which have been laid before Parliament today. The regulations require a certificate to be signed by the directors, to be annexed to the annual report, which will state that for the past financial year the company has had in force arrangements to meet this duty.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications for regional selective assistance received between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 in cash and constant prices for each of the Department of Trade and Industry regions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 30 October 1989]*: The number of applications for regional selective assistance received between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989 was 2,542. The number of regional selective assistance applications approved between 1 April 1988 and 30 September 1989 was 1893 and the value approved was £165·2 million.

Expenditure on regional selective assistance in 1988-89 by the DTI region was as follows:

	£ million
North East	34
North West	22
Yorkshire and Humberside	21
East Midlands	1
West Midlands	25
South West	4
England	
Actual	129
at 1989-90 prices	137

At the regional level the figures include only industrial and training grants. The England total also includes some unallocated project grants and expenditure under the business improvement services and exchange risk guarantee schemes which it is not possible to provide on a regional basis. The figures are net of domestic receipts.

The forecast provision for 1989-90 is £145 million; this figure is contained in the Supply Estimates for 1989-90. The above figure is net of domestic receipts and includes expenditure on industrial and training grants, and the business improvement services and exchange risk guarantee schemes. Figures for future years will be reflected in the 1990 public expenditure White Paper.

Investment and Innovation Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications for investment grants and innovation grants from 1 April 1988 to 30 September 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 in cash and constant prices for each of his Department's regions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 30 October 1989]*: Regional enterprise grants (REGs) became available on 1 April 1988 in the development areas and on 1 September 1988 in South Yorkshire. The information requested, for the English regions for which the DTI is responsible, for 1 April 1988 to 30 September 1989 is as follows:

	Number of applications	*Number of offers*	*Value of offers £000*
North East	968	692	4,880
North West	857	502	4,240
Yorkshire and Humberside	516	320	3,289
East Midlands	78	56	612
South West	279	197	1,191
Total England	2,698	1,767	14,212

"Total expenditure for regional enterprise grants in 1988-89 was £0·9m (£0·95 million at estimated constant 1989-90 prices).

The provision for investment and innovation grants as published in the June revised supply estimates, for 1989-90 is £27·6m.

Plans for future years will be reflected in the 1990 public expenditure White Paper.

The amount of expenditure which will be paid out in any particular area will depend on demand for the scheme and the appraisal of individual applications."

Regional Development Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications for regional development grants outstanding at 31 March 1988, *(b)* the total number of applications processed by 30 September 1989, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 in cash and constant prices for each of his Department's regions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[Holding answer 30 October 1989]:* The information requested in respect of the revised regional development grant scheme with regard to applications outstanding at 31 March 1988, the number of those processed by 30 September 1989 and the amount approved to date on those applications, is as follows:

	North East	*North West*	*Yorkshire & humberside*	*East Midlands*	*South West*
Number of applications outstanding at 31 March 1988	3,260	2,740	830	240	540
Number of those applications processed by 30 September 1989	3,251	2,736	830	240	540
Amount approved £m	55	36	9	7	4

Expenditure in respect of the original and revised regional development grant schemes in 1988-89 by DTI region is as follows:

	£ million
North East	79
North West	50
Yorkshire & Humberside	19
East Midlands	8
South West	6
England	
Actual	162
1989-90 prices	170

Notes:

The figures shown are net of domestic receipts.

Planned provision in respect of both schemes for 1989-90 is £125 million (as contained in the Supply Estimates for 1989-90). This figure is net of domestic receipts.

The level of provision is expected to be reduced in the forthcoming winter supplementary estimates. Figures for future years will be reflected in the 1990 public expenditure White Paper.

Industrial Output

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will supply figures on the level of industrial output, in constant terms, for each standard planning region of the United Kingdom for every year since 1979 and for each month since 1 January.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 23 October 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

The information is not available in the form requested. However current price estimates of regional gross domestic product by industry are published annually in *Economic Trends.* The latest published figures may be found in *Economic Trends* No. 421, November 1988 pages 92 and 93: a copy is available in the Library. Constant price estimates are not made because there are no regional price indices.

Investment Spending

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will supply figures on spending on investment expressed in constant value terms, for each standard planning region of the United Kingdom for every year since 1979 and for each month since 1 January.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 23 October 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

The information is not available in the form requested. However current price estimates of regional investment by selected industries and by the Government are published annually in *Economic Trends.* The latest published figures may be found in *Economic Trends* No. 421, November 1988 pages 97 and 98: a copy is available in the Library. Constant price estimates are not made because there are no regional price indices.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Incomes

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each year since 1974 the average annual increase in real income for *(a)* a married man with two children, *(b)* a single person and *(c)* a retired person, including tax changes and price rises.

Mr. Lilley: Consistent information since 1974 is available only for pensioners. This is given in table 1. A more limited range of years is available on a constant basis for the other family types and the average annual growth rates in real incomes are given in table 2. Figures are derived from the family expenditure survey and are subject to sampling variation.

Table 1

Percentage annual change in average real net income of pensioners

	per cent.
1974	6·2
1975	−0·5
1976	−0·3
1977	−1·1
1978	7·0
1979	−1·7
1980	1·9
1981	4·9
1982	−0·9
1983	10·5
1984	−1·1
1985	1·7
1986	4·5

Notes:

1. The figures show, for the each year, the percentage increase over the previous year in average real net incomes (ie incomes net of tax, adjusted for changes in the Retail Price Index).

2. Pensioners are defined as all single people over the statutory retirement age together with married couples where the husband is over retirement age.

Table 2

Percentage change in average real net income at an annual rate

	Married man with two children (non-retired) per cent.	*Single person (non-retired) per cent.*
1979-81	−2·3	−2·1
1981-85	3·1	0·6
1985-86	7·1	8·6

Note:

The figures express at an annual rate the increase between the years shown in average real net incomes (ie incomes net of tax and national insurance adjusted for changes in the Retail Price Index).

Equities

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of United Kingdom quoted equities are held by *(a)* pension funds, *(b)* unit trusts and *(c)* investment trusts.

Mr. Lilley: Reliable up-to-date figures are not available, but I understand that the stock exchange will shortly be publishing a survey giving the proportion of equities held by different types of investor. I will write to my hon. Friend and arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library in due course.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the annual yield of capital gains tax in each year since 1979 (i) at 1979 prices and (ii) at 1989 prices.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates of receipts of capital gains tax paid by individuals and trusts are as follows:

£ million

Year of receipt	*Actual receipts*	*At 1979-80 prices*[1]	*At 1989-90 prices*[1]
1979-80	431	430	860
1980-81	508	430	850
1981-82	526	400	800
1982-83	632	450	900
1983-84	671	460	910
1984-85	730	480	950
1985-86	908	560	1,120
1986-87	1,064	640	1,270
1987-88	1,379	790	1,560
1988-89	2,323	1,230	2,450
1989-90[2]	2,100	1,060	2,100

[1] Converted using the GDP market price deflator.

[2] Forecast.

Receipts in each year result from liabilities incurred over several previous years. These figures exclude receipts from capital gains of companies taxed within corporation tax.

Fiduciary Issue

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to amend the limit of the fiduciary issue as part of his anti-inflationary policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: No. Interest rates are the only way to deal with inflation.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information his Department has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. Ryder: Letters from hon. Members to Treasury Ministers receive a deadline for reply of not more than 15 working days. Most are replied to within this period.

Northern Region

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will estimate the number of shareholders in the northern region as a percentage of the adult population.

Mr. Lilley: The Joint Treasury-International Stock Exchange survey in January 1989 estimated that 13 per cent. of adults in the northern region were shareholders. This proportion will have increased as a result of the recent flotation of Abbey National plc.

Delors Report

Mr. Mans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in consideration of the Delors report on economic and monetary union in the European Community.

Mr. Major: The Delors report suggests a three-stage process leading to economic and monetary union. The Government's acceptance of stage I, which will start on 1 July 1990, was reported by the Prime Minister in her statement on 29 June, *Official Report,* columns 1107-22. I have today laid before Parliament, and placed in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office, copies of a paper entitled "An Evolutionary Approach to Economic and Monetary Union". This paper sets out the Government's views on an alternative approach to stages II and III as described in the report by the Delors committee, and will be a contribution to discussion at Ecofin on 13 November.

Interest Rates

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate *(a)* the impact of every 1 per cent. rise in interest rate on the costs to industry, *(b)* the estimated extra costs likely to have been incurred by industry in the period May 1989 to October 1989 as a result of interest rates rises and *(c)* the estimated costs to industry of the present interest rate level continuing for a period of three months, six months and 12 months.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 26 October 1989]:* The estimated direct cost to industrial and commercial companies of a one percentage point increase in United Kingdom bank base rates is about £0·5 billion in the first year after the change, based on industrial and commercial companies' current holdings of assets and liabilities with variable rates of interest linked to United Kingdom bank base rates. The estimate takes no account of possible changes in net borrowing following a change in interest rates or of consequential changes in tax liabilities.

By comparison a one percentage point interest rate increase costs industrial and commercial companies far less than a one percentage point rise in pay settlements.

It is not possible to answer parts *(b)* and *(c)* without making assumptions about the actual responses to interest rates and changes in borrowing for any other reason. But the key point is that industry would suffer much more from a general rise in inflation than from interest rate increases.

Voluntary Giving

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans or programmes he has for publicising schemes for voluntary giving, such as Work Aid, and other similar statutory arrangements; and what funds have been allocated from what votes for what specific purposes.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 17 October 1989]:* It is primarily for the voluntary sector to promote voluntary giving. Leaflets are available from the Inland Revenue explaining the tax reliefs for charitable giving. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has made a grant of £25,000 to the Payroll Giving Association to support its work on promoting the payroll giving scheme. The grant is on a matching pound-for-pound basis. A further grant of up to £25,000 may be made on the same basis. The payroll giving scheme is available to all civil servants and to Members of Parliament. This opportunity has been publicised.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to permit sterling to establish its value in the exchange markets without intervention directed to any particular exchange rates with other major currencies.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 31 October 1989]:* Foreign exchange intervention will continue to be used as necessary to check undue fluctuations in the exchange rate.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the net contribution to the EEC in 1989.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 31 October 1989]:* The Government's latest published estimate of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the Community budget in 1989 is £1,966 million. A new estimate of the United Kingdom's net payments to European Community institutions for the financial year 1989-90 will be published in the Autumn Statement.

Contingency Reserve

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what amount has been allocated from the contingency reserve so far in the current financial year; and whether he will list the amount by Department.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 1 November 1989]:* The Autumn Statement will show the estimated outturn for the 1989-90 planning total by Department, along with changes from the plans in the 1989 public expenditure White Paper.

WALES

Children with Special Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has made any estimate of the extra resources needed to enable children with special needs to participate fully in the national curriculum.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The cost of implementing the national curriculum will be met from the redirection of existing resources. However, the Government are making specific grants available to local education authorities to support the introduction of the national curriculum. In Wales, in this financial year, there is support for almost £7 million expenditure.

It is for authorities to decide how much to spend within this total to enable children with special educational needs to participate fully in the national curriculum where appropriate.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ask health authorities in Wales to review their adherence to WHSC(IS)117 and report back.

Mr. Grist: The 1989 manpower resource planning exercise currently being undertaken in the NHS in Wales includes an assessment by district health authorities of the demand for and availability of staff who are able to practise through the medium of Welsh. We will also be reviewing the guidance contained in WHSC(IS)117 "The Health Service and the Welsh Language" in the light of the Welsh Language Board's strategy document and proposals for the public sector.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ensure that those patients whose first choice of language is Welsh are adequately provided for.

Mr. Grist: The quality of service provided to all those who come into contact with the Health Service is of paramount importance. The Department recognises that there must be appropriate arrangements for those who are more fluent in Welsh than in English, and for many years the Health Service has been encouraged to adopt a language policy through guidance contained in WHSC(IS)117 "The Health Service and the Welsh Language". We will be reviewing that guidance in the light of the Welsh Language Board's strategy document and proposals for the public sector.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision is proposed for the professions allied to medicine, speech therapy and psychology to receive training in the Welsh language for those whose first language is Welsh, and if he will support the proposed establishment of a centre for health studies in University College of North Wales to develop such training.

Mr. Grist: The future extent, format and location of training provision for these professions in Wales and the proposal to establish a centre for health studies in north Wales are currently being considered in the light of the manpower resource planning exercise being undertaken within the NHS in Wales, the implications of the proposals contained in the White paper "Working for Patients" and the recommendations contained in the report of a review of the role of the combined training institute at Cardiff.

Environmental Research

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his Department's role in the radioactivity, research and environmental monitoring committee since its inception.

Mr. Grist: The Department has been represented on the committee since its inception in 1986 by a scientific adviser who reports to me its activities relevant to the Welsh environment.

Rents into Mortgages Scheme

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to promote his rents into mortgages scheme and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already written to every tenant of the Development Board for Rural Wales to explain the basis of flexi-ownership and the Department will be announcing the formal start of the scheme very soon.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the amount a tenant, paying an average Welsh council home rent, would pay if he participated in his Department's rents into mortgages scheme, showing the method of calculation.

Mr. Grist: The Development Board for Rural Wales will make two adjustments to rents when calculating how much tenants will need to pay when buying their homes under flexi-ownership. First, 10 per cent. will be added to the rent to reflict the greater benefit deriving from home ownership, then £5 (£7·50 in the case of flats) will be deducted as a notional allowance for insurance and maintenance costs. So, for example, if the rent was £21·84 (which is the current Welsh average council house rent) adding 10 per cent. and deducting £5 would give a figure of £19·02 per week. The amount of low start mortgage which this figure would buy is the amount the tenant would have to pay initially to buy his house under flexi-ownership. The balance between this amount and the market value of the home would be met by discount and deferred payment. Discounts will be 15 per cent. less than the right-to-buy discount entitlement.

Low-paid Workers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the total numbers of *(a)* male and *(b)* female workers in (1) Gwent and (2) the rest of Wales who are in receipt of wages below the wages council's recommended levels.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is not available in the form requested. In 1988, wages inspectors identified 897 workers in Wales who had been paid less than the statutory minimum due. Inspectorate records do not identify whether workers are male or female. Statistics are not compiled for areas smaller than Wales as a whole.

Environment in Trust

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many copies of the Environment in Trust leaflets and brochures were published by Her Majesty's Government; how many have been distributed in Wales since May; and if he will list all the titles of Environment in Trust literature published to date.

Mr. Grist: A total of 36,000 sets of the leaflets have been printed and about 700 sets have been distributed in Wales since March. Information on numbers issued since May is not available.

The titles are as follows:

Environment in Trust
Cleaner Seas
Air Quality
River Quality
Radioactive Waste Management—A Safe Solution
The Countryside
Pollution Control Systems

A further leaflet in the series entitled "One World" has recently been published and will be distributed in the near future.

Welsh Water

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that the land holdings of Welsh Water plc shall be transferred into a public trust prior to the sale of shares and that the trustees be obliged to oversee such land for the benefit of the people of Wales.

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman no doubt welcomed the announcement made by Welsh Water on Tuesday that a charitable trust has been set up to care for approximately 43,000 acres of its landholdings in the Elan valley. Much of the land remaining in the ownership of Welsh Water is in national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty or other areas of special scientific interest which are safeguarded by the provisions of the Water Act 1989.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that Welsh Water plc shall concentrate on providing high-quality wholesome water and an efficient sewerage service to the people of Wales.

Mr. Grist: The duties of water and sewerage undertakers are set out in the Water Act 1989. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has taken steps to ensure that these will be carried out by appointing Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig to be the water and sewerage undertakers for the area of the former Welsh water authority.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names, occupations and salaries of the board members of Welsh Water.

Mr. Ian Grist: The information requested concerning appointments to the Welsh Water plc is set out in the following table:

1. Executive Directors:
    John Elfed Jones—Group Chairman (£43,860)
    David Abbot Jeffrey—Group Managing Director (£59,125)
    Graham Alfred Hawker—Group Finance Director (£46,440)

2. Non-executive Directors:
    John Mansel James—(£5,375). Appointed group managing director of Laura Ashley Holdings in 1981 and promoted to chief executive and vice-chairman in 1988. He is also a non-executive director of Control Techniques.
    David Grant Hawkins—(£5,375). Chairman of Target Computer Group where he has been a director since 1980. Prior to this he was, for three years, finance director of Sterling Credit Holdings, a company in the Sterling Credit Group.
    Iain Richard Evans—(£5,375). A founding partner of the LEK partnership and is currently the senior partner in their London office.
    Timothy Knowles—(£5,375). He is a chartered accountant and was, until recently, group managing director of the HTV Group.

Small Bakeries

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy that food regulations affecting Wales shall take into account the operational needs of small bakeries and family bakers in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Consultations have recently been conducted with a number of interested organisations on draft amendments to the food hygiene regulations. The proposed amendments involve particularly extending temperature controls to certain foods for retail sale in order to safeguard public health. It is proposed there should be certain exemptions for bakery products, including pies, pasties and sausage rolls which are for sale within 24 hours of preparation. The comments which have been received in these consultations are currently receiving consideration.

Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list for Wales tables showing *(a)* the total amount bid for schools' capital expenditure by local education authorities, *(b)* the total amount allocated by his Department, and *(c)* the percentage of *(b)* over *(a)*, broken down by (i) county and voluntary-controlled schools, (ii) voluntary-aided schools, and (iii) all maintained schools for each financial year from 1974-75, and in constant and current prices, and showing the percentage of each year's allocation represented by (i) basic needs and (ii) re-organisations;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* tables showing the capital allocation for each local education authority in Wales made by his Department for capital expenditure for *(a)* county and voluntary-controlled schools, *(b)* voluntary-aided schools and *(c)* all maintained schools, the amount of the bid in respect of each such allocation, and the percentage which each allocation bears to its respective bid, in current prices and in constant prices for each year from 1984-85 to 1989-90.

Mr Wyn Roberts: The information is not available in the form requested as the system of capital allocations to local education authorities is formula rather than bid based. Capital allocations since 1984-85 are unhypothecated between services. The public expenditure provisions for education capital at an all-Wales level for those years is shown in table 1.

The system of allocation to voluntary-aided schools falls outside local authority block allocations. Table 2 shows allocations to voluntary-aided schools for new build, alterations and works of repair and maintenance. These figures are shown from 1982-83, which is the earliest year for which they are available, and can be given only on an all-Wales basis. Figures for earlier years and an analysis by local education authority could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Bids are required for major new build and alteration work only at voluntary aided schools. The total of those bids since 1982-83 are set out in table 3.

Table 1

Public Expenditure figures for Education Capital

£ million

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Cash	30	34	35	34	29	40	50	49	51
Constant Prices 1988-89	43	46	45	42	34	45	54	49	48

Table 2

Capital Allocations to Voluntary Schools

£ million

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Cash	1·00	1·10	1·20	1·30	1·60	2·50	2·10	2·70
Constant Prices	1·35	1·42	1·47	1·51	1·81	2·68	2·10	2·56

Table 3

Capital Bids for New Starts at Voluntary Schools

£ million

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Cash	0·87	1·38	2·96	[1]	6·05	4·00	5·00	7·00
Constant prices	1·17	1·78	3·64	[2]	6·83	4·29	5·00	6·64

[1] No bids required as levels of outstanding commitment pre-empted available resources.

[2] Constant prices revalued to 1988-89 prices using GDP.

Health Service

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total spending per head on the National Health Service for Wales for the most recent 10 years.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is set out in the following table:

National Health Service Expenditure per Capita (£)

Year	*Amount*
1979-80	171
1980-81	220
1981-82	251
1982-83	277
1983-84	294
1984-85	318
1985-86	339
1986-87	363
1987-88	401
1988-89	445

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his proposals for the implementation of the community charge transitional relief scheme.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am completing my talks with local authorities.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cambodia

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will withdraw United Kingdom recognition from any Cambodian delegation at the United Nations which derives support from the Khmer Rouge; and if he will make a further statement on United Kingdom policy towards Cambodian representation at the United Nations.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on 25 October.

Mr. Waring: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the various factions contesting for power in Cambodia.

Mr. Maude: We support the non-Communist factions of the Cambodian resistance. We do not support the Khmer Rouge and have made clear our abhorrence of Pol Pot. Neither do we have dealings with the Phnom Penh regime. Our aim is a comprehensive political settlement in which the Cambodian people can elect a Government of their choice.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. Maude: As a general rule, letters from hon. Members should receive a substantive reply within a three-week period. In practice, the large majority of letters will receive a reply within two weeks. Exceptionally, replies to some letters about complicated immigration cases or matters receiving considerable public attention at the time of writing, may be delayed until a substantive reply can be sent. In most cases the delay should be no longer than four weeks.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to implement those provisions of *(a)* the Genocide Act 1969, *(b)* the Geneva Convention Act 1957, *(c)* the Nuremberg principles, *(d)* the Geneva protocal 1977 and *(e)* all other customary and conventional law which would make it an offence to use, or to plan to use, weapons of mass murder; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: While the use of certain weapons of mass destruction is controlled or prohibited by international treaty, there is no treaty dealing specifically with the use of nuclear weapons. However, any such use would be governed by the applicable laws of war, as is the case with other weapons. Since the use of nuclear weapons would, according to the circumstances, be lawful, so the deterrent threat of their legitimate use is similarly lawful. The enforcement of the Acts of Parliament referred to is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will support the proposed referral of the question of the legality of the deployment of nuclear weapons to the International Court of Justice through the United Nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are not aware of any proposed referral of this question to the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department was represented at *(a)* the International Congress of Scientists in London in April; *(b)* the conference in Brighton in September of the International Peace Bureau; and *(c)* the conference in The Hague in September of the International Associations of Lawyers against nuclear arms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Human Rights

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the members of the Commonwealth that have not ratified the international convention on human rights.

Mr. Maude: Thirty Commonwealth countries have not yet acceded to or ratified the international covenant on civil and political rights or the international covenant on economic, social an cultural rights: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belize, Botswana, Brunei, Dominica, Ghana, Grenada, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Nauru, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Swaziland, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa and Zimbabwe.

The Solomon Islands and Uganda have ratified the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights but not the international covenant on civil and political rights.

Conventional Forces Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to publish the report on the verification of a conventional forces treaty in Europe, commissioned jointly from the Verification Technology Information Centre and the United Kingdom Council for Arms Control, and delivered to his Department on 29 September; how many copies of the report will be printed; and to which organisations and bodies he intends to circulate the report.

Mr. Waldegrave: The report was commissioned by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on a classified basis, for use by British officials in formulating policy, both nationally and in consultation with our allies, on the verification of a conventional arms control agreement. The authors are aware that should they wish to produce an unclassified version of the report, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office would be prepared to publish it.

Environmental Protection Conference

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what involvement Ministers and officials of his Department have had in the conference on environmental protection in Sofia in October organised by the conference on security and co-operation in Europe; what papers were presented on behalf of the United Kingdom; and if any official United Kingdom representatives at the conference have had any meeting with the unofficial Ecoglasnost Bulgarian environmentalist organisations.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have sent a delegation to the CSCE meeting in Sofia on the protection of the environment which includes officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department of the Environment and the Health and Safety Executive. A member of the Green Alliance was also in the delegation. Our delegation has not itself submitted any proposals to the meeting, but has played an active part in the processing of ideas advanced during the meeting. It has co-sponsored a proposal drawing attention to the role of independent organisations and individuals in the field of the environment.

Members of the delegation have had a number of contacts with representatives of Bulgarian non-governmental organisations interested in the environment, including Ecoglasnost. Her Majesty's ambassador in Sofia and the head of the United Kingdom delegation jointly hosted a reception at the embassy on 25 October which was attended by representatives of these organisations.

Conventional Forces Reductions

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the prospect for further talks on the reduction of conventional forces in Europe after the conclusion of the current round of negotiations on conventional forces being held in Vienna.

Mr. Waldegrave: The third round of the negotiations on conventional armed forces in Europe (CFE) concluded on 19 October. Progress to date has been encouraging and there is a good prospect of a treaty being achieved by the end of next year.

PRIME MINISTER

Fishing Vessels (Registration)

Q51. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if, following the recent interim injunction of the European Court of Justice, Her Majesty's Government have any proposals to repeal section 14 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, relating to the registration of British fishing vessels; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: An Order in Council was made yesterday to give effect to the interim order of the president of the European Court of Justice on 10 October 1989. This Order in Council removes the British citizenship requirements (but not the residence and domicile requirements) of section 14 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1989, so far as they relate to fishing vessels which were fishing under the British flag up to 31 March 1988 and were owned by nationals of member states of the European Communities.

Environmental Protection

Q97. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on recent initiatives by the Government to protect the environment.

The Prime Minister: The Government have taken a wide range of initiatives to protect the environment. Nationally this includes the creation of the National Rivers Authority to control water pollution and approval of a major programme of investment by the water industry over the next 10 years. We have recently submitted to the EC a programme for full compliance with the EC bathing waters directive in the 1990s costing £1·1 billion. We have now one of the largest programmes in Europe to control airborne pollution by sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides.

Internationally this Government have taken a lead in securing commitments to cut down ozone damaging chemicals, and in proposing in the United Nations a conference on global climate change.

We shall build on these achievements in the years to come. At the centre of our efforts will be environmental protection legislation, and a White Paper on the environment to guide policy in the last decade of the century.

West Yorkshire

Q103. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next proposes to visit West Yorkshire.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Q117. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to a textile mill in West Yorkshire.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Education Reform

Q106. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the progress of the Government's education reforms.

The Prime Minister: Substantial progress has been made in implementing the Government's education reforms which will improve the quality, relevance and efficiency of education at all levels.

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Prime Minister on what date she was informed of the difficulties that existed between the Strathclyde police investigating the crash at Lockerbie and the West German federal police; and what action she took to facilitate a speedy resolution of the problems.

The Prime Minister: The Dumfries and Galloway constabulary, who are carrying out the investigation with the assistance of Strathclyde and other forces report to my noble and learned Friend, the Lord Advocate, who has confirmed that a good working relationship has been maintained with the West German police and prosecution authorities.

From very early in this investigation arrangements have been in place to enable the police to obtain the Government's assistance in international aspects of their inquiries. These arrangements have operated very satisfactorily and it has not been necessary for any matters to be referred to me.

Homelessness

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister if she will convene an inter-departmental committee to promote action to reduce the number of young people under 18 years of age who are homeless.

The Prime Minister: There is already good liaison between the Ministers and Departments with relevant responsibilities, who will continue to keep this area under review.

Engagements

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

SCOTLAND

Environmental Protection

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding has the Scottish Office devoted specifically to environmental protection matters in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not possible to provide a breakdown of all Scottish Office expenditure on environmental protection except at disproportionate cost. However, the actual expenditure on *(a)* the running costs of Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate and of the hazardous waste inspectorate within the Scottish Development Department, and *(b)* grant paid to local authorities and other bodies are as follows:

Table 1

Year	*HMIPI* £	*HWI* £
1983-84	—	20,000
1984-85	—	30,000
1985-86	—	50,000
1986-87	624,630	119,000
1987-88	819,628	124,000
1988-89	920,728	194,000

Note: Until 1987-88 the running costs of HMIPI were partly met by the Health and Safety Commission. The Scottish Office contribution in those years cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Table 2

Year	*Clean Air Grants* £	*Special Environmental Grants* £	*UK 2000* £
1979-80	65,148	—	—
1980-81	65,938	—	—
1981-82	83,978	—	—
1982-83	94,320	—	—
1983-84	54,442	—	—
1984-85	105,843	—	—
1985-86	164,535	—	—
1986-87	130,967	—	55,970
1987-88	178,222	150,000	249,959
1988-89	52,991	200,000	200,000

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to secure the founding of the European Environment Agency in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The funding of the proposed European Environment Agency is not a matter for the Scottish Office. However, its location is under consideration and siting it in Scotland is one of the options advanced on behalf of the United Kingdom.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average time taken to decide planning appeals submitted to him; how many such appeals are outstanding for the district of Angus; and how long each such appeal has been before him.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average time during 1988 was 34 weeks. There are 14 planning permission appeals currently being processed for the district of Angus. Of these four were accepted as valid appeals in July; two in August; two in September and the remainder in October.

Acid House Parties

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to co-ordinate action against acid house parties; and if he is considering the introduction of a police special intelligence unit similar to that set up in England.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend, in consultation with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, is keeping this matter under careful review. The policing of parties of this nature is an operational matter for chief constables. They are well aware of the problems which these events might cause and will take whatever action is necessary.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 24 October 1989, at column *456*.

European Environment Agency

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Scottish Council for Development and Industry seeking Government action to persuade the European Community to locate the proposed European Environment Agency in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The council's north-east area committee has sent to the Secretary of State a copy of its submission to the Secretary of State for the Environment proposing a location for the agency in the Grampian region.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has made a study of the relevance to the Scottish nuclear industry of the 1989 report "Plutonium Fuel: An Assessment" by an expert group of the Nuclear Energy Agency at the Organisation for Environment Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Lang: I am aware of the report. Plutonium fuels are currently in use in Scotland in the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's prototype fast reactor at Dounreay. For technical reasons mixed uranium-plutonium oxide (MOX) fuel is unsuitable for use in Magnox reactors. I am advised that, for economic reasons, it is unlikely to be used in advanced gas-cooled reactors (AGRs) in Scotland.

New Towns

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish the full details of the surveys on the transfer of housing assets and related matters undertaken in the new towns of Cumbernauld, Glenrothes, Livingstone and Irvine.

Mr. Lang: It is intended that the full results of the tenants' survey will be published on 30 November 1989 as a Scottish Office central research unit paper. I will place a copy in the Library of the House. Further copies will be available from The Librarian, Room 144, New St. Andrew's House, Edinburgh, priced £3.

Homelessness

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of young people under 18 years of age who are currently homeless; and how these estimates have changed over the last three years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department does not make such estimates, and the information is not available in that form.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new initiatives he will take to reduce the present level of homelessness in young people under 18 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government's continuing concern with the problem of homelessness in relation to young people has been demonstrated by the various initiatives taken to ensure that housing needs in Scotland are more closely matched by housing availability. In particular, the Government have pursued policies to introduce more choice in the housing market, including the revival of the private rented sector and the expansion of the housing association sector, both of which will benefit young people.

The Government are committed to maintaining an effective legislative framework for dealing with homelessness. Section 25 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 makes it clear that homeless families with dependent children have a priority need for accommodation. It is for local authorities to deal with cases of homelessness and the Scottish Development Department has emphasised to them in its code of guidance on the exercise of their homelessness functions that homeless young people who are at risk of sexual or financial exploitation should also have a priority need.

We have also been concerned to ensure that local authorities and other bodies which deal with homelessness are adequately resourced. We have provided grant aid to voluntary bodies such as the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless which are particularly concerned with homeless young people. Local authorities have been encouraged to take additional measures to deal with homelessness, including the adoption of cash incentive schemes to encourage their tenants to move into the private sector, thus releasing houses for homeless families.

The Government will continue to monitor the problems of homelessness and will bring forward new initiatives when appropriate.

Noise

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what statutory powers are available to environmental health officers to take action to prevent noise made by commercial premises situated in residential areas disturbing members of the public who live in the vicinity; what plans he has to strengthen those powers; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities' duties and powers in relation to noise are defined in Part III of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and include provision to take legal action against the perpetrators of a noise nuisance. The Act also allows private individuals to take similar action on their own account.

I am not aware of any serious criticism of the noise provisions of the Act.

Glasgow Community Conference

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Scottish Office received a request from the organisers to provide a speaker at the Glasgow east end community conference on 28-29 October; whom the Scottish Office provided; what was the cost to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: A request for a speaker was made to the Scottish Conservative party rather than to the Scottish Office. No Scottish Office representative took part in the conference.

NHS Spending

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total spending per head on the national Health Service for Scotland for the most recent 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Total gross expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland per head of population, since 1979-80, is set out in the table:

Total gross NHS expenditure per head of population in Scotland

	£
1979-80	205
1980-81	259
1981-82	296
1982-83	321
1983-84	344
1984-85	369
1985-86	392
1986-87	419
1987-88	455
1988-89	504

Skye Bridge

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans for further consultations with residents throughout Skye and Lochalsh over the provision of Skye bridge; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is proposed that promotion of the Skye bridge will follow procedures similar to those for a publicly financed scheme in Scotland. There will therefore be the usual scope for discussion and comment on the scheme.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye of 18 October, *Official Report*, columns *163-64*, he will now, in the light of Highland Regional Council's recent decision concerning a Skye bridge, announce approval for replacement ferries on the Kyle of Lochalsh-Kyleakin route; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Caledonian MacBrayne and the Scottish Development Department have already begun a detailed appraisal of the case for replacement ferries in the light of Highland regional council's decision. This will take into account up-to-date information on all relevant factors, including the significant increase in traffic this summer. An announcement will be made as soon as the appraisal has been completed.

Vacant Dwellings

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will show vacancy rates as a proportion of the total stock of dwellings in each tenure in 1989, or in the latest year available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 November 1989]*: It is estimated that at 31 March 1989, 3 per cent. of the public sector stock was vacant. Comparable figures for the private sector are not collected centrally.

Respiratory Disease

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has of the incidence of respiratory disease among the Scottish agricultural work force; and what steps he is taking to promote improvement in this situation.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

Only one case of occupational respiratory disease occurring in agricultural workers in Scotland was reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985, in the two years 1986-87 and 1987-88, the two years for which information is available. However, data collected under the regulations is regarded as an incomplete measure of the true incidence of occupational disease.

The Executive's employment medical advisory service is about to begin a publicity campaign lasting 12 months, on occupational lung disease with the objective of increasing the awareness of employers, employees and the medical community to this group of diseases. Also, the Executive is currently supporting a project on the surveillance of occupational lung disease from reports of consultant chest physicians and occupational physicians.

ENERGY

Nuclear Plants (Robots)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what research is sponsored by his Department on the use of robots for remote intrusive maintenance of nuclear plants; what consultations he or officers of his Department have had with the United States Department of Energy over its research programme in this field; and whether he has any information on developments in Japan and France in this specific use of robots.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department contributes towards the costs of certain UKAEA programmes which cover a number of robotics and remote handling applications, particularly in the areas of radioactive waste management and decommissioning. My Department is also participating in a European Community research and training programme (TELEMAN), which is concerned with the contribution that robots and remote handling equipment can make to nuclear safety in routine inspection and maintenance, in accident management, and in decommissioning. This programme keeps us in touch with the programmes of our Community partners, including France. (Further details of this programme are available in the Official Journal of the European Communities dated 3 August 1989 and 22 September 1988, copies of which are available in the Library of the House).

Consultations with the United States Department of Energy (USDOE) are carried out under a formal co-operation agreement with the UKAEA. There have also been discussions on the application of robotics to decommissioning with USDOE, both as part of a bilateral agreement and as part of the OECD/Nuclear Energy Agency exchange agreement on decommissioning.

Information on developments in Japan is received through published documents and through the atomic energy counsellor in the British Embassy in Tokyo.

Plutonium Fuel

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has made a study of the relevance to the United Kingdom's nuclear industry of the 1989 report, "Plutonium Fuel: an assessment", by an expert group of the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Michael Spicer: For technical reasons, mixed uranium/plutonium oxide (MOX) fuel is not suitable for use in Magnox reactors. As stated in the report, its possible use in advanced gas-cooled reactors (AGR) and pressurised water reactors (PWR) has been examined by the Central Electricity Generating Board in conjunction with British Nuclear Fuels Limited. The results suggest that there is more to be gained from MOX use in PWRs than in AGRs. However, it is not envisaged that the recycle of plutonium could be undertaken in the United Kingdom on any significant scale before the turn of the century.

Electricity Boards

Mr. Michael Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Doncaster, North of 30 October, if he will list the individuals appointed to the electricity boards and their respective backgrounds.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The individuals appointed to the electricity boards since 1 October 1987, in chronological order, are as follows:

J. F. Harris
J. C. Smith, CBE
R. W. Gurney
The Rt. Hon. Baroness Gardner of Parkes, JP
A. Crowder
J. A. Harmsworth
Mrs. V. Pollard
J. M. Griffiths, OBE, JP
M. J. Calvert, JP
A. G. Stoughton-Harris
Mrs. J. M. Wilson
R. T. Gales
I. D. Coutts, CBE
Professor R. J. Eden, OBE
G. A. Squair
R. V. Giordano
W. Waring
D. H. Jones
P. D. Nicholson
Dr. R. H. Cummings, OBE
A. G. Schroeder
J. W. Evans
D. A. Ross
D. J. Prosser
J. N. Hardman
G. M. W. Owen
J. A. Rigg, CBE
K. G. Harvey
G. H. Wilson
R. A. Cox, CBE
D. A. Davis
D. R. Morris
Mrs. D. J. Parker
A. P. Hichens
A. N. Thatcher
C. M. Fisher
D. S. Barber
R. N. Gunn
Sir Ian McLeod JP
P. W. L. Morgan
C. A. Prendergast CBE
A. N. R. Rudd
Mrs. D. C. Eccles
J. N. Duncan
M. S. Schreiber
Sir Graham Wilkins
J. O. Gough MBE
F. C. Graves OBE
L. W. G. Priestley
Sir Keith Stuart
D. B. Clark CBE
J. Porteous

In addition four appointments have been offered but not yet announced, and Mr. Harvey has been appointed twice to different boards.

It is not possible without disproportionate cost to provide details of each appointee's background.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the price of nuclear-generated electricity after privatisation.

Mr. John Wakeham: Negotiations on contracts for the supply of nuclear-generated electricity are currently taking place between National Power and the area electricity boards. I cannot pre-empt their outcome.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has made an assessment of the impact of privatisation on prices of electricity to industry.

Mr. Wakeham: Prices for large industrial users of electricity will depend on the outcome of individual negotiations between customers and suppliers or generators, subject to relevant statutory and licence requirements. The resulting prices are likely to depend on a number of factors, including the degree of load management that the customer is prepared to accept.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has made an estimate of job losses in the coal industry as a result of electricity privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: The coal industry will need to ensure that its future output and prices meet the needs of its main customers including the privatised electricity generators. Employment in the industry will depend both on demand for coal and on future productivity gains.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has made an estimate of the sale proceeds of National Power, Power Gen, the area boards and the national grid.

Mr. Wakeham: The level of proceeds from the electricity industry sales will depend on a number of factors including the overall capital structure of the individual companies, and the state of the market at the time of flotation. It is therefore too early to speculate on the outcome.

Electricity Industry (Coal)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the tonnage of British coal agreed between National Power, Power Gen and British Coal for the next triennial year.

Mr. Wakeham: This is a matter for commercial negotiation between each of the generators and British Coal.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Ministerial Visits

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the occasions on which he has visited the Duchy of Lancaster since he took office.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In the course of my duties with the Duchy of Lancaster I have attended upon Her Majesty on her visit to the Whitewell estate in Lancashire on 7 August.

I have also attended upon my magisterial duties in Birkenhead on 27 September, and have of course visited the Duchy Office in London.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the number of accidents on employment training, fatal, major and minor, for each month since the start of the scheme to the latest available date; and in that same period how many employer-based work placements and how many project-based work placements have either been rejected or closed on health and safety grounds.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training accident figures are collected quarterly the same as for YTS. Table A gives the accident figures.

Table A

		Accidents[1]	
	Fatal	*Major*[2]	*Minor*
5 September to 31 December 1988	Nil	24	91
1 January to 31 March 1989	Nil	31	161
1 April to 30 June 1989	Nil	53	276
1 July to 30 September	Nil	52	286

Separate figures for closures and rejections for employer-based and project-based work placements are not kept. However table B gives the figures of closures and rejections on health and safety grounds from 5 September 1988 to the present date. These figures are provisional.

Table B

Closed	*Rejected*
15	Nil

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[1] Training Agency figures have been compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, the Training Agency's figures will include a number of accidents to trainees in educational establishments and road traffic accidents which may not have been reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had the individuals been employed.

[2] Major injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the number and proportion of employment training leavers who have obtained a recognised qualification on their course and on the nature of the qualifications gained.

Mr. Nicholls: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 7 July, *Official Report*, column *318*.

Construction Industry Training Board

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy on the future of the construction industry training board and its levy.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 31 October 1989. My right hon. Friend hopes to be in a position to make an announcement shortly.

Wages Council Inspectors

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of wages council inspectors per 1,000 workers for each year from 1974 to 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: Statistical returns of the numbers of workers employed in establishments within scope of wages councils are not collected but periodic estimates are made. The information in the following table uses those estimates.

Average number of wages inspectors

Year	*per 1,000 workers*
1974	0·04
1975	0·04
1976	0·04
1977	0·05
1978	0·05
1979	0·06
1980	0·06
1981	0·04
1982	0·04
1983	0·04
1984	0·04
1985	0·04
1986	0·03
1987	0·03
1988	0·03

Figures for 1989 are not yet available.

The reduction in the inspector/worker ratio for the last three years reflects the simpler and quicker task of checking compliance with wages orders following the reform of the wages council system in 1986.

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* number per 1,000 claimants of Department of Employment staff employed to investigate benefit fraud by unemployed people claiming benefits in each year from 1978 to the latest available date.

Mr. Eggar: This Department's fraud investigation work was reorganised in 1984 and comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

The number of fraud investigators and the number of fraud investigators per 1,000 claimants are as follows:

	Number of fraud investigators	*Number of fraud investigators per 1,000 claimants*
1984-85	450	0·15
1985-86	650	0·20
1986-87	720	0·23

	Number of fraud investigators	*Number of fraud investigators per 1,000 claimants*
1987-88	785	0·29
1988-89	820	0·39

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the amount of money recovered from successful prosecutions of unemployed claimants, in current and constant prices in each year from 1978 to the latest available date.

Mr. Eggar: Actions to recover compensation awards and overpayments are undertaken by the courts and/or local benefit offices. In consequence, the information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what was the number and proportion of unemployed claimants successfully prosecuted for benefit fraud who were prosecuted for claiming benefit whilst working in each year from 1978 to the latest available date;

(2) what was the number and proportion of unemployed claimants successfully prosecuted for benefit fraud in each year from 1978 to the latest available date.

Mr. Eggar: This Department's fraud investigation work was reorganised in 1984 and comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

The number of legal proceedings instituted by this Department are as follows:

	Girocheque fraud	*Benefit fraud*	*Total*
1984-85	253	1,997	2,250
1985-86	639	2,161	2,800
1986-87	1,139	2,511	3,650
1987-88	924	3,036	3,960
1988-89	571	3,474	4,045

This Department does not collect information centrally on the outcome of prosecutions and the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Young Workers

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the employers who have indicated that they are employing young people whom they would not otherwise have employed because of the removal of young people from wages council protection in 1986.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not this Department's practice to disclose the authorship of correspondence that it receives.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what, in percentage terms, was young workers' pay relative to their adult counterparts in each year from 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The information from the new earnings survey is provided in the table:

Earnings of those aged under 18 as a percentage of the earnings of those aged 18 and over

	Percentage
1979	43·7
1980	43·0
1981	42·9
1982	42·4
1983	40·1
1984	38·8
1985	39·8
1986	39·6
1987	40·0
1988	40·8
1989	40·0

Note: Average gross weekly earnings of all full-time employees working a full week, April of each year.

New Claimants (Cumnock)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new claimants signed on each week of 1989 at the Cumnock unemployment benefit office; what delays there are in interviewing them; what requests have been received for additional staff; and what has been his response.

Mr. Eggar: The number of new claimants who signed on each week of 1989 is shown in the table. Claimants are generally interviewed within three days of making an appointment.

The area manager responsible for Cumnock met with the trade union side on 2 October to discuss issues including staffing numbers throughout the area including Cumnock. It was subsequently agreed that an additional executive officer would be posted into the Cumnock office from 13 November 1989.

Claims taken at Cumnock UBO from January 1989 to present

Week ending:	*Number of claims taken*
6 January	28
13 January	185
20 January	78
27 January	67
3 February	68
10 February	68
17 February	38
24 February	49
3 March	85
10 March	54
17 March	56
24 March	48
31 March	46
7 April	48
14 April	79
21 April	56
29 April	48
5 May	39
12 May	47
19 May	78
26 May	52
2 June	100
9 June	78
16 June	103
23 June	129
30 June	86
7 July	129
14 July	49
21 July	46
28 July	71
4 August	51
11 August	53

Week ending:	*Number of claims taken*
18 August	83
25 August	46
1 September	73
8 September	74
15 September	71
22 September	50
29 September	42
6 October	91
13 October	67
20 October	69

Note: These figures represent the numbers of new claims for which a national insurance number if readily available input to the Computer. Details of the number of non-computer claims are not available.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current establishment, at each grade, of the unemployment benefit office at Cumnock; how many deal directly with interviewing of new claimants; what representations he has received concerning the lack of staff to deal with claimants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The number of staff in each grade is as follows:

	Number
Higher executive officer	1
Executive officer	[1]3
Administrative officer	14
Administrative assistant	5
Casual administrative assistant	1

[1] Of which one is an administrative officer on temporary promotion.

One executive officer deals directly with new claimants, with a second executive officer having an element of interviewing within his post. Area management met with the trade union side on 2 October to discuss area issues including staffing requirements. It has subsequently been agreed that the third executive officer post would be filled on a permanent basis.

Health and Safety (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, in relation to each of the occupational categories identified in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys occupational mortality decennial supplement, what proportion of each occupational category, by sex, are drawn from ethnic minority groups.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

Information on ethnicity is not available for the occupation categories identified in Office of Population Censuses and Survey's occupational mortality decennial supplement, since questions on ethnic origin were not asked in the 1981 census and are not asked at time of death registration.

The nearest available information on ethnicity by occupation is derived from the labour force survey, a sample survey conducted by Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on behalf of the Department of Employment. From this survey, the Department of Employment publish aggregated years data on ethnicity by broad occupation group. The most recent published data covers the years 1985 to 1987, and can be found in the Department of Employment *Gazette*, December 1988, page 638. A copy of this and the latest edition of the labour force survey (1987), can be found in the Library.

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women aged 60-65 years there are *(a)* in the United Kingdom, *(b)* in Scotland, *(c)* in full/part-time employment, United Kingdom and Scotland and *(d)* married, and receiving their full state pension entitlement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply. The information requested in parts *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* of the question is supplied in the table. Information is not available as to the number of married women who receive their full state retirement pension.

Since 1 October 1989 women aged 60-65 years are now able to choose to continue working and claim their own, category A, state retirement pension.

Women aged 60-64 years inclusive (thousands, spring 1988)

	United Kingdom		*Scotland*	
	All (000s)	*of which: married (000s)*	*All (000s)*	*of which: married (000s)*
All women aged 60-64	1,515	1,031	141	88
of which:				
in employment	282	196	24	15
full time[1]	86	53	10	–[2]
part time [1]	196	143	14	–[2]

Source: Department of Employment, preliminary 1988 labour force survey estimates.

[1] Based on the respondent's own assessment, not on the number of hours actually worked.

[2] Estimates not shown: less than 10,000 in cell.

HEALTH

Funding

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether additional funding will be given to Oxford regional health authority to ensure a growth range of between 1·25 and 1·75 per cent. is maintained, in view of the higher level of inflation than forecast at the time of this commitment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The range of 1·25 per cent. to 1·75 per cent. to be assumed for real terms growth nationally in 1990-91, published in the Resource Assumptions and Planning Guidelines (HC(89)24), was provided to assist authorities in their short-term planning. The figures form a largely technical part of the planning process and are to be used as a basis for cautious and prudent planning. Actual allocations for 1990-91 have yet to be decided and are dependent on the outcome of this year's public expenditure survey.

Burnley General Hospital

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will call for a report from the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority regarding the emergency closure at Jackson ward in the Edith Watson maternity ward unit at Burnley general hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no requirement upon district health authorities to report to the Secretary of State for Health when implementing temporary closures or changes in the use of hospital wards. We have been advised that the temporary closure of one of the three maternity wards at Burnley general hospital reflects a reduction in the number of maternity cases since last year and was not undertaken until detailed discussions had taken place with the consultant obstetricians and directors of midwifery services. The situation is being kept under review and the ward will be reopened if there are sufficient patients to justify that decision.

Insulin

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of doctors who have transferred their patients from animal to human insulin.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not collect this information centrally.

Spending

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest comparative figures on health spending per capita and as a proportion of gross domestic product for the United Kingdom and its European Community partners; and what is the effect on these figures of the distinction between public and private funding.

Mr. Freeman: The tables show public, private and total expenditure on health per capita and as a percentage of GDP for the United Kingdom and its European Community partners in 1986, the latest year for which comparative figures are available for most of the countries.

The source of these figures is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Per capita expenditure on health in EEC countries in 1985, £ sterling

	Public expenditure per head £	*Private expenditure per head £*	*Total expenditure per head £*
Belgium	357	107	464
Denmark	457	80	536
France	493	128	622
Germany	507	143	650
Greece[1]	99	5	104
Ireland	278	42	320
Italy	309	79	389
Netherlands	441	117	558
Portugal[1]	57	23	80
Spain[1]	131	52	183
United Kingdom	324	53	377

Source: OECD.

Note:

Luxembourg excluded due to reported inconsistencies in its national health accounts.

[1] Data for 1984.

Public, private and total expenditure on health as a percentage of GDP, 1986

	1986 Public	*1986 Private*	*1986 Total*
Belgium	5·5	1·6	7·1
Denmark	5·2	0·9	6·1
France	6·7	1·8	8·5
Germany	6·3	1·8	8·1
Greece	3·7	0·2	3·9
Ireland	7·0	0·9	7·9
Italy	5·2	1·5	6·7
Netherlands	6·6	1·7	8·3
Portugal	4·0	1·6	5·6
Spain	4·3	1·7	6·0
United Kingdom	5·3	0·9	6·2

Source: OECD.

Note:

Luxembourg excluded due to reported inconsistencies in its national health accounts.

Pay Review

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about pay review procedures for Health Service workers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Pay review bodies were established for doctors and dentists in 1969, and for nurses, midwives and the professions allied to medicine in 1983.

Health Service Review

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what latest representations he has received about the Health Service review; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received more than 12,000 representations regarding the Government White Paper "Working for Patients".

Female General Practitioners

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many female general practitioners are currently in practice; and what was the figure 10 years ago.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1988 there were 5,686 female general practitioners in England. This figure comprises unrestricted principals and assistants. In 1978 the equivalent figure was 3,273.

Alternative Medicine

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to bring suitable forms of alternative medicine within the scope of the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health is primarily responsible for medical treatment provided under the

NHS, and there is already provision for the use of complementary therapies within it. NHS practitioners can offer to use any form of treatment, including any of the complementary therapies, if they consider it to be in the interest of their patients and they feel competent to provide it.

The wider use of complementary therapies in the NHS depends on those doctors already practising these methods convincing more of their fellow practitioners of the benefits and effectiveness of these forms of treatment.

NHS Reform

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what safeguards for the future of medical education and research will be introduced to coincide with the implementation of the National Health Service White Paper; and what will be the effect of the changes to the National Health Service on *(a)* multi-centre clinical trials and epidemiological studies and *(b)* rapid dissemination of research results in the service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend explained in a speech on 10 July to leading members of the medical academic community how we will safeguard medical education and research. We have placed copies in the Library. We do not believe that multi-centre clinical trials, epidemiological studies, or the dissemination of research results will in general be harmed by our plans for a more efficient Health Service.

Welsh-speaking Patients

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps will be taken in the National Health Service White Paper to safeguard the linguistic rights of Welsh-speaking patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no plans to take any additional steps to safeguard the linguistic rights of Welsh-speaking patients in England. Nor are we introducing any changes that would adversely effect any existing safeguards. The question of appropriate measures for such patients in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Pharmaceuticals

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his estimates of the yield of the discount clawback levy imposed from 1 May 1988 on community pharmacists in respect of the assumed trade in parallel imports of pharmaceuticals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The most recent month for which information is available is July 1989. We estimate that in the period between May 1988 and July 1989 some £7 million has been recovered from pharmacies in England in respect of discounts obtained on parallel imports.

Counterfeit Medicines

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many incidents of counterfeit medicines reaching the United Kingdom distribution system have been reported to his Department in the last 12 months; what countries were the alleged sources of fake products; and what estimates he has of the number of National Health Service patients who have been dispensed counterfeit medicines in the current year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: During the past 12 months the Department has had one report of a counterfeit medicine entering the United Kingdom distribution chain. The product was a copy of Greek Zantac 150 mg. The source is under investigation.

The counterfeit was marked with a genuine batch number. The evidence suggests that only one importer may have been supplied with counterfeits. He distributed 240 packs from the batch in question, each containing 20 tablets. This would be sufficient for one month's supply for 80 patients. But it is not known what proportion of the 240 packs may have been counterfeit so no accurate figure can be given of the number of patients to whom counterfeits may have been dispensd. On analysis the counterfeit product appeared to present no hazard to patients. As a fast-moving product, it proved impossible to recall any of the batch from retail pharmacies.

A separate incident also involving counterfeiting of Greek Zantac was reported to the Department in which the importer recognised the product as outside specifications and returned it to his supplier before any of the product was distributed within the United Kingdom. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my hon. and learned Friend gave on 10 March at columns *718-19*.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he proposes to ensure that National Health Service patients are protected from receiving counterfeit medicines; and whether he has any proposals to tighten the regulations covering the licensing of parallel imports of pharmaceuticals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Existing controls involve;

(1) a sampling and testing programme operated by the Medicines Inspectorate with analysis undertaken by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's medicines testing laboratory at Edinburgh.

(2) An annual programme of inspection carried out by inspectors of the Medicines Control Agency and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. All manufacturers, importers, wholesalers and community pharmacists are inspected regularly.

(3) particular checks carried out by licensed importers to verify the identity of each batch of imported material.

We are considering whether any changes may be necessary to the United Kingdom parallel import licensing scheme. We have received proposals and need to consult with all interested parties, taking account of our European Community obligations.

Medicines (Imports)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to reconsider the discount clawback arrangements in respect of purchases of parallel imported medicines by community pharmacists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates he has of the number of community pharmacists who now trade in parallel imports of pharmaceuticals; and what was the figure up to 1 May 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not routinely collect information on the number of pharmacies which dispense parallel imported medicines. An inquiry conducted in 1986 showed that about 1,600 pharmacies were using parallel imports at that time. A further inquiry is taking place this year.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the value of imports of pharmaceuticals from Greece in 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 to the latest available figures.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that the information requested, which is contained in division 54 of table 2 of the overseas trade statistics of the United Kingdom, which is available in the Library, is as follows:

	£'000
1986	4,075
1987	6,728
1988	11,845
[1]1989	9,652

January to August

NHS Computer Programme

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest assessment of the cost of the National Health Service computerisation programme; and if he will give an estimate of the extra staff needed to run the system.

Mr. Freeman: In general, the responsibility for deciding how much to spend and how many staff to employ on hospitall computer systems rests with NHS managers. However, hospitals receiving computer based information systems as part of the hospital information and support systems and resource management programmes in 1989-90 will have a substantial part of the cost of those systems met centrally.

Food Temperature Control

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make it his policy that food temperature control regulations should be so set as to keep the controls on fresh-baked produce, such as sausage rolls, to the minimum consistent with public health requirements;

(2) whether he will make it his policy that food temperature regulations shall take into account the needs of small and family bakeries which produce traditional products such as pork pies.

Mr. Freeman: Draft amendments to the Food Hygiene Regulations, on which consultations have recently been conducted, propose extending temperature controls to certain foods for retail sale, consistent with the need to protect public health. Certain exemptions are proposed for bakery products, including pies, pasties and sausage rolls for sale within 24 hours of preparation. Comments received in the consultations on the amendments are currently being considered.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to make special provision for local authorities to enable them to offer a day place to every mentally handicapped person in their area who requires one.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's proposals for the future organisation and funding of community care announced by my right hon. and learned Friend on 12 July at columns 975-98, will create a unified source of funding for social care services. This will enable local authorities to plan and deliver these services so as to meet individual needs more effectively, but the extent of provision of any particular form of service will continue to depend on the resources available locally.

Acute Care at Home

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received a copy of the proceedings of the Kings fund conference on acute care at home held in June; and whether he will take steps to set up a national community care development agency to promote the idea of hospital at home.

Mr. Freeman: An advance copy of the report "Hospital at Home—the Coming Revolution" is being studied by officials. We have no plans to set up a national development agency for community care.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the total spending per head on the National Health Service for England for the most recent 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

	NHS spending per head (England) £s
1979-80	166
1980-81	216
1981-82	242
1982-83	264
1983-84	280
1984-85	300
1985-86	316
1986-87	340
1987-88	371
1988-89	411
1989-90	444

Medical Negligence

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in introducing a health authority indemnity scheme for medical negligence.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We announced on 25 July that, subject to a satisfactory resolution of the outstanding issues, the Government intended to introduce arrangements with effect from 1 January 1990 whereby health authorities would take financial responsibility for the negligent acts of their medical and dental staff in the course of their National Health Service employment. I am pleased to say that those issues have now been resolved and that the new arrangements will apply to claims for damages (in respect of negligent acts) which were initiated in earlier years as well as to new claims arising from 1 January 1990. This agreement is subject to the satisfactory conclusion of detailed discussions about the allocation of existing assets of the medical defence organisations to meeting liabilities which will be taken over by health authorities. The arrangements will apply to the hospital and community health services only. Detailed guidance on the operation of the new scheme, including the handling of both new and existing claims, will be issued to health authorities in due course.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the criteria for defining a bovine spongiform encephalopathy-free herd.

Mr. Curry: There is no official definition of a bovine spongiform encephalopathy-free herd.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the representatives of the National Farmers Union and the Scottish National Farmers Union with whom he met prior to the implementation on 30 July of new European Community animal health rules on bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Curry: My officials met representatives from the National Farmers Union and a number of other organisations on 27 July to discuss implementation of Commission decision 89/469. The Scottish National Farmers Union, although invited, was not represented. The composition of the delegations attending such meetings is a matter for the organisations concerned.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total money being spent by Government-funded institutions on research into the effects of bovine spongiform encephalopathy on *(a)* the hereditary chain and *(b)* the food chain.

Mr. Curry: It is estimated that Government-funded institutions will spend over £2 million on research into bovine spongiform encephalopathy in 1989-90, including some in relation to the hereditary and food chains.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many live cattle have been declared as unfit for export following upon the implementation on 30 July of new European Community animal health rules on bovine spongiform encephalopathy;

(2) how many live cattle, already cleared for export, were returned from exit ports to the farms of origin, as a result of the implementation on 30 July of new European Community animal health rules on bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Curry: I have received no reports of cattle, presented for export following implementation of Commission decision 89/469 on 30 July, being declared unfit for export to other member states because they failed to meet the certification requirements of that decision in relation to bovine spongiform encephalopathy. However, several export consignments had to be rejected before 30 July because the Republic of Ireland unilaterally imposed import restrictions on 25 July. I have no information about the number of live cattle involved.

Cereal Substitutes

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the total tonnage of cereal substitutes imported into the United Kingdom for each of the last five years, indicating the country of origin where possible.

Mr. Curry: The total tonnages of cereal substitutes imported in to the United Kingdom in each of the last five years (1984-88) were set out in columns *284-85* of the *Official Report* for 10 April 1989 in response to an earlier question.

The 1988 total tonnage has now been revised to 1,108,000 tonnes. Nearly half of the total consists of maize gluten feed, almost all of which comes from the United States of America.

Horses (Transporting)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the retention or amendment of the minimum values regulations governing the conditions under which live horses are transported from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The system of minimum values designed to prevent the export of horses for slaughter is a purely national agreement. As part of the single market programme the Commission has made a proposal for a Community regulation on the protection of animals during transport and as drafted this makes no provision for our controls on horse exports to continue. Our objective will be to ensure that there will be adequate welfare standards during all journeys and that these are implemented and enforced rigorously throughout the Community to protect horses and ponies.

Animal Feed

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the ban on the use of animal protein in animal feed is currently in force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: A ban on feeding ruminant-derived protein to ruminant animals is currently in force.

Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the activities that are carried out in his Department's *(a)* veterinary investigation centres and *(b)* farm and countryside service laboratories.

Mr. Gummer: The veterinary investigation centres provide laboratory and veterinary support to the field service of the state veterinary service in respect of my statutory animal and public health obligations and in the investigation of new and emerging diseases. They also provide diagnostic, advisory and consultancy services to the livestock industry through practising veterinary surgeons, liaise with medical and local authorities on the control of zoonotic disease and support approved research and development.

The farm and countryside service laboratories provide professional analytical chemistry, (covering crop husbandry, soil and animal nutrition), entomology, plant pathology, microbiology, and wildlife and storage biology services in respect of my statutory obligations, in support of research and development, and in the provision of advice on a direct commercial basis to the agricultural and related industries.

Food Advisory Committee

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the organisations with whom he consults prior to a Food Advisory Committee meeting about the subjects to be discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The agendas of the Food Advisory Committee meetings are published in advance of each meeting as a press release. This is distributed on a standard circulation list to nearly 900 individuals and organisations known to have an interest in food matters, including trade, academic, consumer and enforcement bodies. Any requests for addition to the list will be sympathetically considered.

Food Safety Directorate

Mr. Hind: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on the setting up of a food safety directorate within his Department.

Mr. Gummer: The food safety directorate that I am establishing in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, will bring together under the Minister responsible for food, my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. David Maclean) all the main aspects of food safety work for which the Minister is responsible. At the same time, I am setting up a consumer panel chaired by my hon. Friend to keep under review from a consumer's viewpoint, the implementation of policies on food safety and consumer protection. The food safety directorate, together with new arrangements for bringing to bear more directly and systematically the views of consumer organisations, will strengthen my Department's organisation for dealing with food safety issues.

The food safety directorate will consist of four main groups, each headed by a grade 3 under-secretary. The food safety group will have overall responsibility for policy on food safety and quality, including composition, labelling, additives, contaminants and new production processes. The food science group, headed by the chief scientist (Food) and staffed at senior levels by scientists, will provide the scientific back-up on food safety issues. This group includes the new food science laboratory at Norwich which will carry out necessary analytical and research work in support of food policy additional to that commissioned from other laboratories. The third group will deal with pesticide safety approvals, veterinary medicines and biotechnology issues. Finally, the fourth group will handle meat hygiene, animal health and the related public health issues, and animal welfare. The initial complement of the food directorate is 695. The resources devoted to this work have been increased and will be kept under review.

The consumer panel will provide a forum in which the Minister will be able to hear directly from representatives of consumers their views on food safety and consumer protection issues. The consumer panel will include representatives nominated by each of the main consumer bodies. The panel will provide a more formal and systematic means of maintaining contact between my Department and the consumer organisations. I shall make an announcement shortly on the membership and terms of reference of the consumer panel.

These new arrangements do not diminish in any way the continuing need for advice from the existing expert and independent committees, namely the food advisory committee, the advisory committee on pesticides and the veterinary products committee, as well as the Department of Health committees on medical aspects of food, toxicity, carcinogenicity and mutagenicity and the joint MAFF/DoH Committee on novel foods and processes. The food safety directorate will work closely with the state veterinary service and will be advised on public health questions by the Government's Chief Medical Officer.

These changes will focus my Ministry's resources more effectively on to maintaining the safety and quality of the nation's food supplies. The food safety directorate will be responsible for keeping the public informed on food safety matters.

Export of Animals

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will undertake to ban all export of animals for scientific purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The Government have no plans to introduce such a ban.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received concerning discrimination on grounds of sex and the state pension age; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We received a total of 274 representations between 19 October 1988 and 17 October 1989.

Young People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment has been made of the minimum income after paying rent and rates required by single people below *(a)* 25 years, and *(b)* 18 years to meet other costs of living.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No such assessment has been made. The level of support approved by Parliament for those receiving income-related benefits varies according to personal circumstances, including factors such as disability.

Service Pensions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cumulative total number of those service men who have been in receipt of a war pension or allowance from his Department because their deaths were attributable to their service in the armed forces who died *(a)* in service, *(b)* after retirement from the armed forces and *(c)* after being invalided out of or medically discharged from the armed forces for each year from 1959 to the latest available date; and, for each of the above categories for the latest year for which records exist, what was the number of war widows' pensions in payment from his Department.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. A total of 57,571 war widows pensions were in payment at the end of 1988.

Homelessness

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what new initiatives he will take to provide additional benefit to young people who are under 18 years of age and who are homeless.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Homeless people, including 16 and 17-year-olds, continue to be entitled to claim a range of benefits in the usual way.

The need for most 16 and 17-year-olds to rely on benefit was removed in September 1988 when a youth training scheme place, with a training allowance, was guaranteed for all those not in a job or full time education. Certain groups of young people may receive income support. These include lone parents, the disabled and the long-term sick who may claim at any time. Young people forced to live independently can claim income support during the child benefit extension period while they look for work or a youth training scheme place. They can also receive housing benefit. Moreover, a package of changes was introduced in July which recognised the special difficulties being experienced by some 16 and 17-year-olds with no option but to live away from home. An important element of this was to pay them higher rates of both income support and housing benefit.

We have an important safety net which enables those 16 and 17-year-olds who would otherwise not be entitled to be paid income support to prevent severe hardship.

Those who are homeless may claim a social fund crisis loan to enable them to secure accommodation.

We continue to monitor the 1988 Social Security reforms including those affecting young people.

Family Credit

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications there have been for family credit in each month since April 1988; and how many awards have been made.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is as follows:

1988	*Claims*	*Awards*
April	96,505	40,213
May	41,721	
June	52,293	36,145
July	46,100	37,912
August	46,376	40,249
September	47,759	24,158
October	56,373	44,944
November	57,850	46,234
December	44,834	35,797
1989		
January	63,638	42,712
February	60,318	45,180
March	68,637	47,184
April	96,752	43,300
May	123,038	39,187
June	107,276	73,778
July	66,075	50,004
August	62,397	48,158
September	80,792	54,498
October	80,670	50,510

Notes:

1. The figures are for the four or five weeks ending on the last Friday of the month.

2. The figures for claims received include those made to renew existing awards and those made more than four weeks before the expiry of an existing award (and therefore invalid).

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what proportion of family credit recipients are women.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A total of 315,000 comprising over 98 per cent. Apart from lone parent families headed by a man, family credit is almost invariably paid to women, since in two-parent families the claim is made by, and payment is made to, the woman unless the circumstances are quite exceptional.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the number of families and *(b)* the number of children receiving family credit and what proportion each makes up of those entitled to family credit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest comprehensive information is for July 1989 when over 320,000 families, containing 671,000 children, were receiving family credit. Estimates of the total eligible population at that stage cannot be made until information from the 1989 family expenditure survey becomes available.

Income Support

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social security how many children are in families receiving income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available information is that there are 2,092,000 children in families receiving income support.

War Widows

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was his Department's total expenditure, at 1979 prices, on war widows' pensions in the years 1978-79 to 1988-89.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 October 1989]:* The information requested is in the table.

	Actual expenditure £	*Expenditure at 1978-79 prices* £
1978-79	116,705,438	116,705,438
1979-80	128,840,466	110,455,980
1980-81	145,803,473	105,437,973
1981-82	165,598,881	109,115,611
1982-83	174,091,975	107,127,120
1983-84	177,358,000	104,304,650
1984-85	176,325,000	98,814,576
1985-86	192,859,160	102,449,032
1986-87	191,496,000	98,563,466
1987-88	189,581,000	92,716,484
1988-89	199,695,000	91,020,184

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Statutory Instrument 1989/1824 was referred to the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council; and what advice the council gave.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 31 October 1989]:* The proposals relating to the regulations in this statutory instrument were referred to the council in January this year. They did not raise any formal objection.

Child Benefit

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children are in families that will receive child benefit in 1990-91.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to table 15.6 of the Public Expenditure White Paper (Cm 615) published in January this year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Relations

16. **Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on recent developments in Anglo-Irish relations.

Mr. Brooke: There have been three recent meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental conference, at which issues affecting the confidence of the community in the security forces figured prominently. Copies of the joint communiques issued after each meeting have been placed in the Library of the House and the Vote Office. As a result of recent events a number of measures have been set in train by the Government. The recent difficulties in Anglo-Irish relations have illustrated the value of the agreement in permitting discussion of the issues involved, with a view to resolving differences.

UDR Soldiers (Murder Convictions)

18. **Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to discover if an injustice may have been done to four Ulster Defence Regiment soldiers convicted of the murder of Adrian Carroll; and if, in the light of experience gained from the Guildford case, he will seek to have examined a radio statement by the main witness that she was deceived into giving incorrect evidence.

Mr. Cope: All the representations made and documents presented in this case to date, along with the transcript of the radio programme, have been carefully examined. No grounds have been found to justify referring the case to the Court of Appeal, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider any new evidence or representations which may be made to him.

Animal Experiments

19. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the use of animals for experiments at Queen's university; how many animals are presently kept at the university; what is the nature of the experiments; and what level of pain and suffering is estimated to be inflicted on the animals.

Mr. Needham: It is not the practice to disclose information about experiments authorised under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 at any particular establishment.

Long-term Unemployment

20. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the impact of the Social Security Order (1989), on the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Needham: It is too early to assess the impact.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

22. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether a further date has been arranged for the next meeting of the signatories to the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) earlier today.

Intergovernmental Conference

23. **Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was discussed at the last Intergovernmental Conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Intergovernmental Conference last met on 18 October. Discussions continued on a range of issues relating to confidence in the security forces and the system of justice. Security co-operation, cross-border economic co-operation and the implementation of the conclusions of the review of the working of the conference were matters also discussed. The joint statement issued after the meeting was placed in the Library of the House and the Vote Office.

31. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on recent meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

33. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the discussions he has had within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Brooke: There have been three recent meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference, and copies of the joint statements issued after each have been placed in the Library of the House and the Vote Office. A large part of the meetings was taken up with issues affecting the confidence of the community in the security forces in Northern Ireland, and further discussions are likely at future conference meetings.

Unemployment

24. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he intends to take to reduce unemployment in west Belfast.

Mr. Needham: Much action has already been taken to tackle the problems of unemployment in west Belfast. The Belfast action team and the "making Belfast work" initiatives have focussed attention and resources on encouraging employment and enterprise in west Belfast. To date these initiatives have proved successful in stimulating local enterprise. Further plans have been drawn up to build on the initial local successes which have been assisted by major private sector investments such as the choice by Montupet of the former De Lorean factory for its 1,000 job project.

28. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he intends to act upon the recommendations of the Phoenix West Belfast development trust.

Mr. Needham: I am pleased to say that many of the recommendations are already being implemented, particularly under the "making Belfast work" and Belfast action team initiatives. Contacts have also been made to enable Phoenix to discuss its proposals for jobs creation directly with IDB and LEDU.

29. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment in the Province.

Mr. Needham: On 14 September 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, seasonally adjusted unemployment in the Province stood at 103,000 which is its lowest level since November 1982.

UDR Recruits (Vetting)

25. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning vetting procedures for recruits to the Ulster Defence Regiment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Recent events have given rise to concern that a small minority of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment may have associations with members of illegal paramilitary organisations, or other associations, which are incompatible with membership of the security forces. This is unacceptable and the General Officer Commanding has therefore made improvements in the process of screening new recruits to the UDR, including transfers from other Army units, and for follow-up action such as re-screening in cases of doubt. Among the new measures is the establishment of a special unit for screening UDR recruits, which will be manned by members of the Regular Army. They will have advice from the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Some representations have been received which, in general, support these changes.

Local Government

26. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has received in relation to the consultative document on local government in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Over 60 responses to the local government consultative paper were received.

34. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in what ways he intends to change the system of local government in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government's proposals for changes in the system of local government in Northern Ireland were set out in the local government consultative paper last November. Responses to that paper are being considered.

EC Structural Fund

27. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to promote the types of cross-border developments eligible for European Community structural fund awards.

Mr. Cope: In anticipation of an EC Commission initiative to introduce a transfrontier programme, Ministers from the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland following a recent intergovernmental conference, instructed officials of both Governments to prepare proposals for submission to the Commission. A preliminary list of cross-border proposals has already been passed to the Commission, and further work is continuing. A formal application cannot be lodged until details of the EC programme become available.

40. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he is taking to further cross-border programmes eligible for support from the European Community structural fund.

Mr. Cope: In anticipation of an EC Commission initiative to introduce a transfrontier programme, Ministers from the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland following a recent intergovernmental conference, instructed officials of both Governments to prepare proposals for submission to the Commission. A preliminary list of cross-border proposals has already been passed to the Commission and further work is continuing. A formal application cannot be lodged until details of the EC programme become available.

Devolution

30. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from which constitutional political parties he has received a written submission as a framework for devolution in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I have been told by the leaders of all the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland that they support devolution and they have drawn my attention to ideas, expressed earlier in writing and orally, about how progress towards that objective might be achieved.

Home Helps

32. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he will take to prevent further cutbacks in the home help service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The level of resources devoted to particular services is a matter for Health and Social Services boards to determine. Northern Ireland provides the highest number of home helps per 1,000 population in the United Kingdom, and there has been no reduction in the level of funding for the home help service in 1989-90. There has however been increasing demand, and in order to avoid overspending, several boards have reassessed the need among individual clients for the number and extent of visits. In each case every effort has been made to minimise the effect on clients and to ensure that the service is targeted on those most in need.

Debt Payments

35. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has had seeking the repeal of the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971.

Mr Cope: In the last year there have been three questions from hon. Members and one written representation on this subject.

Transport

36. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the transport needs of Northern Ireland in the context of the single European market.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The transportation programme was submitted to the European Community on 25 September and the Government await a formal response.

Voters (Identification)

37. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take action to simplify the rules for identification of voters at polling stations.

Mr. Cope: The list of specified documents used for electoral purposes is kept under review. I should be pleased to consider any improvement which the right hon. Gentleman or other hon. Members would care to suggest.

UDR

38. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to alter the role of the Ulster Defence Regiment in relation to the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: No.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary has primary responsibility for the maintenance of law and order in Northern Ireland; the Armed Forces, including the Regular Army and Ulster Defence Regiment, will continue to operate in support of the police but only for so long as the threat from terrorism makes that support necessary.

Roadworks

39. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will specify the anticipated completion dates for *(a)* the Killead bypass and *(b)* the dualling of the A26.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is not possible, at this early stage, to specify the completion date for either of these schemes.

Arts

4. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of spending per capita on arts in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: Government spending per capita is £2·85.

Accident Statistics

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the level of public funding in each of the past three years for which figures are available to counter deaths and injuries as a result of *(a)* road accidents, *(b)* accidents in the home and *(c)* terrorist attacks.

Mr. Cope: It is not possible to separate out the precise level of public funding attributable to these purposes.

Maryfield Secretariat

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total cost of the Maryfield secretariat, including security, from the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to date; and what is the total cost of security for the same period.

Mr. Cope: The cost to the British Government in maintaining the Anglo-Irish secretariat since its establishment in December 1985 to 30 September 1989 was £3,132,000, of which £2,003,000 related to manpower costs for security. The cost to the Irish Government is a matter for them.

Mr. Paul Hill

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of transporting Paul Hill from the Old Bailey to Belfast on 19 October; and what method was used.

Mr. Cope: The cost of transporting Paul Hill from the Old Bailey to Maghaberry prison on 19 October 1989 was £2,890·78. He was flown from RAF Northolt to RAF Aldergrove. Connection journeys were by road.

Japanese Investment

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of investment in Northern Ireland by Japanese companies.

Mr. Needham: There are three manufacturing companies in Northern Ireland which are either wholly or partly owned by Japanese companies.

In addition a fourth Japanese company operates a marketing and distribution outlet there.

It is not possible to give precise figures for investment.

Further Education

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to extend further education in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Enrolment at colleges of further Education has increased by almost 40 per cent. over the last 10 years. The Department of Education and the area boards have responded to increased demands by the provision of new permanent and temporary accommodation, increased staffing and enhancement of equipment.

We will continue to respond to needs as they arise.

Political Parties (Discussions)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met representatives of the political parties in Northern Ireland; and what was discussed.

Mr. Brooke: Over the past three months I have had introductory meetings with the leaders of the Alliance party of Northern Ireland, the Democratic Unionist party, the Social Democratic and Labour party, the Ulster Unionist party, the Ulster Popular Unionist party and the Workers party, and with other elected representatives. My meetings with the party leaders covered a wide range of subjects, including especially the prospects for achieving political progress in Northern Ireland.

Education and Library Boards

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total membership of each of the five education and library boards; how many female members he has appointed to each of these boards; and if he will make a statement on the level of female representation on the education boards.

Dr. Mawhinney: The membership of each of the five Education and Library boards is:

	Membership	*Of whom: are female*
Belfast	35	7
South-Eastern	35	3
North-Eastern	35	6
Southern	35	7
Western	32	5

In making appointments to Education and Library boards the Department of Education is keen to ensure that boards are representative of a wide range of educational interests. Bodies which are asked to put forward names for consideration are encouraged to include the names of women.

DEFENCE

UDR

41. **Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ulster Defence Regiment is an indispensable element of the Army's efforts in support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland. I have every confidence that the overwhelming majority of the UDR will continue to carry out their duties professionally, loyally and impartially. The UDR will continue to play its part in the fight against terrorism and no changes are envisaged in its role.

Anti-tank Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the design of anti-tank weapons of the development of protective armour on Warsaw pact tanks.

Mr. Alan Clark: The implications of developments in the protective armour of Warsaw pact tanks are kept under review, and, where necessary, improvements made to the design of our anti-armour weapons.

Quality Assurance Headquarters

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will report progress on the relocation of the quality assurance headquarters and laboratories from London to a site in Teesside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: My Department is hard at work on a whole range of matters including the definition of user requirements, the selection of an external consultant to manage the design and construction work, negotiations for the purchase of land and the provision of utilities and road access, and various personnel aspects of relocation.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the policy of his Department in relation to the appointment of an external project manager with regard to the relocation of the defence quality assurance headquarters and laboratories to Teesside; what consideration is given to the appointment of local firms; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the policy of his Department with regard to the involvement of locally based companies in the process of relocation of offices and services out of London to the provinces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The Department's policy generally and in relation to the appoinment of external project managers is to follow the Government rules for fair and open competition. Successful bidders need to demonstrate that they have a clear understanding of departmental requirements, practical and efficient proposals to meet them and the necessary capacity and experience to manage projects of the size and complexity envisaged. Local knowledge is considered to be a useful additional asset.

Decentralisation

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy with regard to decentralisation of offices and services out of London to the provinces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: As has been stated in the House on several occasions, it remains our objective to see a more even spread of defence employment across the regions. We are currently examining a range of further relocation possibilities and shall continue to pursue every opportunity to relocate defence work. But all such moves must be justifiable in both operational and economic terms.

UKADGE

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who owns the intellectual property rights associated with the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member on 7 July at column *302*.

Service Pensions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men killed in action from 1 April 1973 to the latest date for which records exist, who were engaged on pensionable terms, failed to complete the minimum period of service required in their rank for the award of an occupational pension from his Department before being killed in action.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Pensions awarded under the occupational scheme for the Armed Forces include long-service pensions, invaliding pensions, and attributable invaliding pensions. Since 31 March 1973 there has been no minimum period of service required to qualify for the award of an attributable invaliding pension. Consequently, all married service men killed in action since that date have been able to qualify their eligible widow for an occupational pension from the Ministry of Defence.

However, I assume that the hon. Member, in referring to the award of an occupational pension, is concerned with those long-service pensions awarded on normal retirement or discharge. The minimum period of reckonable service normally required to qualify for such awards is, for officers, 16 years and, for other ranks, 22 years.

Information on the number of service men killed in action since 1 April 1973 who had not given these periods of service before their death is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cumulative total number of those service men whose deaths were attributable to their service in the armed forces who died *(a)* in service, *(b)* after retirement from the armed forces and *(c)* after being invalidated out of or medically discharged from the armed forces, from 1959 to the latest available date; and, for each of the above categories for the latest year for which records exist, what was the number of war widows' pensions in payment from his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested on the number of service men whose death was attributable to their service in the Armed Forces is not available. Where applicable, war widows pensions corresponding to those deaths are paid by the Department of Social Security.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the award to the widow of a service man of an attributable forces family pension does not assume the promotion of her husband beyond the rank in which he was killed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is normal practice in occupational pension schemes that benefits, whether payable on retirement or death in service, are based on the level of salary actually received by the scheme member at or preceding the last day of service. The Armed Forces pension scheme uses rank held as an alternative to actual salary.

Service Ranks

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average period of time for which a service man remains in the rank of private or equivalent, for the latest year for which records exist and for each of the armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The average times spent in the rank of senior aircraftman (SAC) for those leaving the rank on promotion or exit during 1988-89 are given in the table. The time does not include time spent as an aircraftman (AC) or leading aircraftman (LAC). Similar figures are given for promotions during 1988 from able seaman (not including time spent as an ordinary seaman) and marine 1 (not including time spent as marine 2). The average time spent in the ranks of able seaman and marine 1 for those leaving the RN or RM during 1988 are not readily available. Figures for the Army are not readily available.

Average time (in years) spent in the ranks of Able Seaman/Marine 1/SAC

	Total	*On promotion*	*On exit*
Able Seaman (1988)	n.a.	4·7	n.a.
Marine 1 (1988)	n.a.	5·7	n.a.
SAC (1988-89)	5·7	6·3	5·3

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the average period of time for which a service man remains in the rank of Army captain or equivalent, for the latest year for which records exist and for each of the armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The average times spent in the rank of flight lieutenant for those leaving the rank on promotion or exit during 1988-89 are given in the table. Similar figures are given for promotions during 1988-89 from Lt(R[illegible] and Lt(RM). The average times spent in the ranks of Lt(RN) and Lt(RM) for those leaving the Royal Navy or Royal Marines during 1988-89 are not readily available. Figures for the Army are not readily available.

Average time (in years) spent in the ranks of Lt(RN)/Lt(RM)/Fl Lt(RAF)

	Total	*On promotion*	*On exit*
Lieutenant (RN)	n/a	8·4	n/a
Lieutenant (RM)	n/a	7·3	n/a
Flight Lieutenant (RAF)	9·4	8·5	10·7

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average period of time for which a service man remains in the rank of corporal or equivalent for the latest year for which records exist and for each of the armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The average times spent in the rank of RAF corporal for those leaving the rank on promotion or exit during 1988-89 are given in the table. Similar figures are given for promotions during 1988 from leading hand (RN) and Royal Marines corporal. The average times spent in the ranks of leading hand and RM corporal for those leaving the RN and RM during 1988 are not readily available. Figures for the Army are not readily available.

Average time (in years) spent in the equivalent rank of corporal

	Total	*On promotion*	*On exit*
Leading hand (1988)	n/a	4·1	n/a
RM corporal (1988)	n/a	5·8	n/a
RAF corporal (1988/89)	5·7	6·8	4·7

Marconi Communications Sets

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Marconi 2955A radio communications test sets have been ordered for the Royal Air Force and Army; and for which services it is his intention to order more.

Mr. Alan Clark: A total of 330 of these sets were ordered in December 1988 after a competitive tendering action had produced an assessment that they represented the most cost-effective technically viable solution to a particular problem.

Future requirements, should they arise, may also be subject to a competitive tendering exercise.

Submergence Rescue Vehicle

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is his intention to publish the results of the recent trials by the Royal Navy of the deep submergence rescue vehicle.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our normal practice to publish the results of such exercises but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that this exercise, which is conducted at regular intervals, successfully achieved all its objectives.

Advanced STOL Aircraft

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the development of the advanced short take off and vertical landing aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: We are engaged with the United States Government in a bilateral programme of studies into the technologies which might be required for an advanced short take off and vertical landing aircraft. This programme, which began in 1986, is expected to take some five years to complete.

Battle Tanks

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the NATO future main battle tank.

Mr. Alan Clark: For a statement on plans to co-ordinate the development of the next generation of tanks I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave yesterday to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones).

Upholder Class Submarine

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the most up-to-date prediction of the date of delivery to the Royal Navy of the first type 2400 Upholder class submarine.

Mr. Neubert: We currently expect that the first type 2400 Upholder class submarine to be delivered to the Royal Navy next summer.

Anti-Air Warfare

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce his decision between the NATO anti-air warfare system and the family of anti-air missile systems for Royal Navy warships.

Mr. Neubert: An announcement will be made in the near future.

Army Equipment Exhibition

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where the 1990 British Army equipment exhibition will be held; and on which days it will be open to *(a)* overseas customers, *(b)* the press and *(c)* the British public.

Mr. Alan Clark: The British Army equipment exhibition will be held at Aldershot during the week 3 to 8 June 1990. 3 June is a press day which the national provincial and technical press may attend. Overseas customers may attend from 4 to 8 June 1989. The exhibition is not open to the general public.

Potton Island (Wastes)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what amount of *(a)* toxic wastes and *(b)* radioactive wastes arising from military experiments exist at Potton island in Essex; under what environmental regulations these wastes are managed; what is the long-term plan for the disposal of these wastes; and what is his estimate of the total cost of this disposal strategy.

Mr. Neubert: There are no known toxic or radioactive wastes at Potton island. The area is being cleared of residual conventional munitions and explosives. To date this has cost some £40,000.

Nevada Test Site

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total charge levied by the United States in collective historic pounds and in current pounds for United Kingdom use of the Nevada test site for the nuclear testing of United Kingdom warheads *(a)* since the programme began and *(b)* since 1979; and what arrangements have been made by the United States authorities for the management and disposal of radioactive wastes arising from these United Kingdom nuclear warheads.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not our policy to publish the costs of these tests. Arrangements for the management and disposal of radioactive wastes are included in the costs levied by the United States authorities. Such wastes are disposed of by the United States under recognised procedures.

Chemical Warfare Agents

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what volumes and what types of chemical warfare agents are maintained at the Porton Down chemical warfare research establishment as part of his Department's defensive prophylactic research programme; when the entire stocks of these chemical warfare agents will be destroyed; and under what conditions.

Mr. Neubert: As has frequently been stated in previous answers, the MOD does not possess a chemical warfare research establishment. The role of the Chemical Defence Establishment, Porton Down, is to provide effective protective measures for the United Kingdom Armed Forces against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. The United Kingdom abandoned all offensive chemical warfare work over 30 years ago.

As stated in my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member on 25 January at column *653*, the MOD holds small experimental quantities of agent, for research into protective measures against chemical and biological attack.

These small quantities will be maintained for as long as necessary. As stated in my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member on 23 March at column *754*, the MOD does not disclose details of the location of these small quantities for security reasons.

Military Aircraft Flights

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if flights by non-Royal Air Force military aircraft over the United Kingdom require prior authorisation; and if all such flights are recorded.

Mr. Neubert: It is standing operational practice for each flight undertaken by a military aircraft operating within the airspace of the United Kingdom to be authorised by a competent authority. No central record of such flights is maintained.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions, to the latest available date in 1989, and in each of the last three years, unauthorised flights by military aircraft have taken place over the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Reports of unauthorised flights are investigated by the appropriate authorities. No central records are kept of such flights.

Frigates

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if there has been any alteration in the last six months of the long-term plans to order type 23 frigates;

(2) if there has been any alteration in the level of funds available for future orders for the type 23 frigate.

Mr. Neubert: It is not our practice to comment on long-term planning assumptions. Decisions on orders will be announced as appropriate. The Government remain committed to maintaining a force of about 50 destroyers and frigates and will order sufficient new ships to achieve this target.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what ability those type 23 frigates not fitted with an automated command and control system will possess to identify aircraft as either friendly or hostile.

Mr. Neubert: The classification of an aircraft as friendly or hostile is based on information from a variety of sources including the ships identification friend or foe (IFF) system and other sensors. In T23 frigates not fitted with a command system this information will be available but will not be correlated automatically.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the average annual number of frigates that have been ordered between 1982 and 1988, excluding those vessels ordered to replace Falkland losses.

Mr. Neubert: Fourteen frigates were ordered in the period. Excluding the four ordered to replace Falkland losses, this gives an average annual number of 1·4.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what regard he has had to the employment implications of future orders for the type 23 frigate;

(2) what regard he has had to the industrial investment implications of future orders for the type 23 frigate.

Mr. Neubert: The Government's policy is to place orders for warships following competition, the aim being to secure best value for money for the defence budget. Tender prices and compliance with contract conditions will be the major considerations in the current competition for type 23 frigates.

However, as the MOD confirmed in its response to the 31 report from the Committee of Public Accounts (Session 1987-88), its strategy is to maintain sufficient warship-building capacity to meet likely future defence requirements and a competitive base and these twin objectives are always taken into account in the placing of individual ship and submarine orders.

RAF Flights

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Royal Air Force is able to account for all flights by its aircraft over the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mr. Neubert: No detailed account of such flights is required.

Destroyers

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the implications of the Government's withdrawal from the NFR90 collaborative project;

(2) what assessment has been made of the need to replace the type 42 destoyer.

Mr. Neubert: The Royal Navy has a continuing requirement for a replacement for the type 42 destroyer to come into service at the turn of the century. Following the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the NFR90 programme, we are now addressing how best to proceed with this requirement, including the possibility of alternative collaborative arrangements for elements of the programme.

Warship Building

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the amounts of Government subsidy provided to warship building yards in other NATO nations.

Mr. Neubert: None.

Thailand and Cambodia

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what military assistance has been provided to the Government of Thailand in the last 10 years;

(2) whether any Cambodian nationals have received military training or instruction from serving members of the British armed forces at any time in the last 10 years;

(3) whether any military assistance has been provided by the Government for Cambodian guerrillas at any time in the last 10 years;

(4) whether any service personnel, apart from those attached to the British embassy, have worked in Thailand at any time in the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 30 October 1989 at column *43*.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 3 November 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Staff Statistics

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* civil servants with higher education responsibilities, and *(b)* Her Majesty's inspectors (higher education), UGC/UFC, and NAB/PCFC, have been employed in 1987-88 and 1988-89; and how many extra it is proposed to recruit in 1989-90.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is as follows:

	[1]*1987-88*	[1]*1988-89*	[1]*1989-90*
Civil Servants with responsibility for policy on higher education	57	54	51
HMI (Higher Education)[2]	150	150	150
UGC	70	68	—
UFC	—	—	80
NAB	30	33	—
PCFC	—	—	63

Notes

[1] Staff in post on 1 October.

[2] The majority of HMI with responsibilities in higher education also have further education responsibilities. It is not possible to disaggregate the time spent on higher education.

Most of the additional staff budgeted for in 1989-90 have already been recruited and are included in the third column. Any further net additions should not be significant.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ministerial Duties (Mileage)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average mileage per day travelled by the Minister for Overseas Development in performing her official duties; and what was the figure for her predecessor.

Mrs. Chalker: Between mid-1988 and mid-1989 my predecessor, the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) travelled over 100,000 miles, an average of nearly 300 miles per day, in the course of his official duties. I expect my travel to follow a similar pattern.

Consultants

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Overseas Development Administration maintains a list of approved consultants.

Mrs. Chalker: The ODA maintains a register of consultants but inclusion on this register does not imply that ODA approves of the firm or individual concerned, nor that they will necessarily be invited to tender for projects.

Overseas Civil Service (Pensions)

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements have been made to include Hong Kong and other colonies in the arrangements for pensioners of Her Majesty's overseas Civil Service to include pre-appointment war service in the calculation of their pensions.

Mrs. Chalker: Any overseas pensioner from one of our dependencies who also receives a pension paid under the terms of the Overseas Pensions Act 1973, will be eligible for consideration under the terms of the Colonial Service Officers' Pensions Addition for War Service (United Kingdom) Scheme 1989.

We have written to Hong Kong and other dependencies whose expatriate pensions do not come within the scope of the Act, to ask if they will introduce arrangements which would parallel our scheme. Bermuda and the Cayman Islands have advised us that they have no pensioners to whom the terms would apply; we still await replies from the others, including Hong Kong whose Government have previously expressed a desire to intoduce credit for war service.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Safety

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister what steps are taken to encourage scientific civil servants working on areas related to public safety to draw public attention to threats to public safety.

The Prime Minister: This will depend on the circumstances in each case. In bringing matters to the attention of the public all civil servants are required to act in accordance with the principles concerning the provision of information set out in chapter 6 of the "Personnel Management Handbook", copies of which are available in the House Libraries.

WALES

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much of the money currently spent on residential care in Wales is specifically allocated to services for disabled people.

Mr. Grist: The only relevant figures available are those for expenditure by local authorities on residential homes for different categories of resident as shown in the following table.

Residential homes for	*Net current expenditure (1987-88) (£)*
The elderly	29,623,980
The younger physically disabled blind and deaf	1,869,453
Persons with a mental illness—Staffed homes	1,168,760
Persons with a mental illness—Unstaffed homes	11,287
Persons with a mental handicap—Staffed homes	5,947,987
Persons with a mental handicap—Unstaffed homes	43,406
Residential accommodation for mixed client groups	39,883

Residential homes for	*Net current expenditure (1987-88) (£)*
TOTAL	38,724,756

Note—Includes expenditure on employees and running expenditure financed from relevant specific grants, rates and balances. Excludes expenditure financed by local income and non-relevant specific grants.

Excludes expenditure associated with the All-Wales Mental Handicap Strategy.

Farmers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions during 1988 and 1989 either he, or his officials, have met representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have met representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales on seven occasions and my officials have on 25 occasions. In addition there are frequent but irregular meetings with officials at the four divisional offices dealing with matters involving either individual farmers or of a more general, but essentially local, interest. Central records are not kept of these local meetings.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are being taken to monitor the linguistic rights of elderly Welsh-speaking people within private sector nursing and old people's homes.

Mr. Grist: It is for the individual elderly person to select a home which suits his/her particular language requirements. In exercising their responsibilities, several registration authorities have issued guidance to proprietors on how to cater for the Welsh-language needs of residents.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the subjects on which he is not prepared to answer parliamentary questions.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is not possible to provide a definite and exhaustive list of questions which I might exceptionally decline to answer on grounds other than cost and commercial confidence. Each question will continue to be considered on its merits.

Welsh Water plc

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether it was with his authority that Welsh Water plc joined with Saur UK Ltd. to form a joint subsidiary company to undertake a variety of commercial activities.

Mr. Grist: We welcome Welsh Water's proposals to diversify its activities including its joint venture with SAUR about which we have been kept fully informed.

Rural Housing

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* those county, district and community councils which have submitted comments on the letter dated 30 June entitled, land for low cost housing in rural areas in Wales draft planning guidance and *(b)* the authorities which were sent a copy of this letter.

Mr. Grist: The information is shown as follows:

(a) Clwyd County Council
Colwyn Borough Council
Delyn Borough Council
Glyndwr District Council
Rhuddlan Borough Council
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council
Dyfed County Council
Carmarthen District Council
Ceredigion District Council
Dinefwr Borough Council
Preseli Pembrokeshire District Council
South Pembrokeshire District Council
Gwent County Council
Monmouth Borough Council
Gwynedd County Council
Aberconwy Borough Council
Arfon Borough Council
Dwyfor District Council
Ynys Môn—Isle of Anglesey Borough Council
Ogwr Borough Council
Powys County Council
Brecknock Borough Council
Montgomeryshire District Council
South Glamorgan County Council
Cardiff City Council
Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council
West Glamorgan County Council
Neath Borough Council
Port Talbot Borough Council

The Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia National Park Committees also commented on the draft guidance.

No Community Council has submitted comments.

(b) All District and County Councils in Wales together with the three Welsh National Park Committees. The Welsh Counties Committee, the Council of Welsh Districts and the Welsh Association of Town and Community Councils were also consulted on the draft guidance.

Mr. W. D. Harries

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department will pay the agricultural capital grant of £904·55 under the agriculture and horticultural development scheme in respect of sheep fencing for holding number 55/443/16 Mr. W. D. Harries, Crafty farm, Hayscastle cross, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, which was submitted in May.

Mr. Peter Walker: Mr. W. D. Harries has already been informed that his claim has been approved for payment. He should receive his payment order by mid-November.

SOCIAL SECURITY

EC Charter of Rights

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to implement paragraph 29 of the European Community charter of fundamental social rights.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The charter has not been agreed by member states. Discussion of its implementation is therefore premature at this stage.

Computer Centre (Livingston)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guarantees his Department has gained from the company EDS, awarded the contract to run the computer centre at Livingston, that a continuous service will be maintained.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Contractual arrangements are in place to ensure effective performance by EDS. Failure to meet the agreed levels of service will result in financial penalties.

Chief Adjudication Officer Guidance

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will place a copy of any guidance issued by the chief adjudication officer as a result of Commissioner's decision R(SB)6/89 in the Library.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The guidance issued by the chief adjudication officer as a result of Commissioner's decision R(SB)6/89 is contained in AOG Memo Vol. 3/22 which has been placed in the Library.

Personal Pensions

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for men and women aged 16, 20, 30 and 40 years in April 1988, the ages at which it would pay the person concerned to cease contributing to a personal pension or other money purchase scheme, assuming rates of return of 0·5 per cent. and 2·5 per cent. above the annual increase in average earnings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is not possible to give such a table because of the wide range of other factors, in addition to the rate of return, which would affect the amount of the personal pension.

Ms. Marsha Basaj

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will investigate the circumstances surrounding the visit to Ms. Marsha Basaj by two regionally based fraud investigators responsible to the Central Office for Scotland CN (Fraud) branch.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have called for a report on this case and will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Social Fund

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much the Government have spent on social fund loans and community grants; how many people have been refused help by the social fund from its inception to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Information relating to 1988-89 is contained in the Secretary of State's annual report to Parliament.

Information for the current year is available from the national summary statistics which are placed in the Library monthly. The latest month for which information is available is September 1989.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is proposing to take about the administration of the social fund following the report by the Social Fund Commission for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Social Fund Commissioner's first annual report, which was published in July, discharged her responsibility to report annually on the standard of reviews by social fund inspectors. I was pleased to note that 90 per cent. of the decisions monitored "met fully or exceeded the required standard" and that of the remainder very few "were found to be fundamentally flawed". I agree fully with the Commissioner's conclusion that the results of her monitoring will encourage public confidence in the review system.

The Commissioner also made a number of recommendations to the Department. These are all issues on which the Department's views have been made known to the Commissioner, or on which the Department has already taken action. I understand that the Commissioner's next annual report will refer to this year's recommendations and the Department's response to them.

TRANSPORT

British Rail (Expenditure)

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the following totals at constant prices: *(a)* capital expenditure out of the public service obligation grant to British Rail and *(b)* other capital expenditure by British Rail authorised by his Department for each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The public service obligation grant meets the difference between costs and revenues for grant-supported services. Eligible costs include depreciation, a supplement to fund capital renewals, and interest. Grant therefore provides support for capital investment, but grant is not allocated to particular categories of expenditure.

Figures for total BR investment are given in the table:

£ million 1989-90 prices

	Total BR investment
1979	518
1980	529
1981	433
1982	352
1983	347
1984	368
1985-86	491
1986-87	475
1987-88	594
1988-89	600

Note:—1984-85 was a 15 month financial period. The 1984 figure is the 12 month internally reported result. Figures exclude the laying of continuous welded track which BR no longer classify as investment.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. Atkins: Ministerial colleagues and I aim to deal with all correspondence in three weeks.

Manually kept records show that of approximately 15,000 letters received from hon. Members since January

1989, 378 are currently outstanding. These have raised complex questions or problems which inevitably take longer to research.

Road Improvement Contracts

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to the answer to the hon. Member for Hexham on 10 January, *Official Report*, column 617, if he will list *(a)* those trunk road improvement contracts that have been awarded since the start of the financial year 1989-90, together with the name of the successful tenderer and the value of the contract, *(b)* those contracts on which tenders have been invited but contracts have not yet been awarded and *(c)* those contracts on which tenders have not yet been invited but are expected to be let by the end of the financial year 1989-90.

Mr. Atkins: The following contracts have been awarded since 1 April 1989:

Scheme and Successful Tenderer	*Contract Price £ million*
M1 J34 Meadowhall Development[1]—Birse Construction	1·2
M3 Compton-Bassett Widening—John Mowlem	41·5
M20 Maidstone-Ashford (Contract 2)—Wimpey Construction	28·7
M40 Waterstock-Wendlebury Section—Fairclough/Alfred McAlpine	63·9
A23 Waddon Marsh Bridge—Balfour Beatty	2·7
A27 Brighton Bypass (Dyke Road/Patcham)—Alfred McAlpine	16·7
A41 Chester Improvement—Fairclough	17·5
A41 Bicester Bypass State 1—John Mowlem	4·7
A42 Castle Donnington North (Contract 1)—A F Budge (Construction)	24·7
A65 Addingham Bypass—Cumbrian Industrials	3·1
A69 Brampton Bypass—Cumbrian Industrials	4·9
A127 Rayleigh Weir GSJ—Christiani and Nielsen	11·8
A282 Dartford Third Crossing Approach Roads—Balfour Beatty	27·7
A303 Ilchester to South Petherton—Wimpey Construction	12·8
A406 Chingford Road to Hale Road—Cementation Construction	60·3
A604 M1-A1 Link:	
Contract 6 (Kettering-Thrapston)—A. F. Budge (Construction)	25·7
Contract 7 (Thrapston-Brampton phase 1)—Tarmac Construction	14·2

[1] Grant aided scheme.

Tenders have been invited for the following schemes and the contracts should be awarded before the end of the financial year:

A6	Quorn and Mountsorrel Bypass
A16	Boston Algakirk Diversion
A16	Louth Bypass
A23	Warninglid to Brighton (Sayers Common to Muddlewood)
A43	Castle Donzington North (Contract 2)
A47	Castor and Ailsworth Bypass
A47	Eye Bypass
A418	Leighton Linslade Bypass[1]
A523	Macclesfield Inner Relief Road
A604	M1-A1 Link:
	Contract 1 (Catthorpe Interchange)
	Contract 4 (Rothwell to Kettering)
	Contract 5 (Kettering Southern Bypass)
A650	Drighlington Bypass
A1079	Market Weighton Bypass

[1] Grant aided scheme

Subject to completion of statutory procedures further tenders for other schemes may be invited before the end of the financial year.

Cars (Anti-theft Systems)

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has assessed whether the development of electronic anti-theft systems for cars has reached the point in cost and effectiveness at which he will consider legislation to make their installation mandatory.

Mr. Atkins: Every new car sold in Britain since 1978 has had to have a steering lock. Britain has developed, in co-operation with manufacturers, new standards to improve car locks and to shield window mechanisms. We are pressing for these to be adopted in the EC.

Many cars are also fitted with alarm systems. The variations in their design and location contribute to their effectiveness. The greater standardisation likely to result from obligatory installation might diminish that effectiveness. Moreover, there is a growing volume of complaints about the environmental effects of alarms set off with no apparent attempt at theft.

Parking sensibly, locking up carefully and avoiding leaving valuables in view are all strong deterrents to thieves.

Lorry Weights

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many inspectors are employed at ports to ensure that lorry weights from incoming vessels are within United Kingdom requirements; and how many prosecutions were undertaken in 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 to the most recent practicable date.

Mr. Atkins: The Department currently has a force of 235 traffic examiners who carry out lorry weight checks at inland sites as well as at major ferry ports. Vehicles found to be overweight in ports are prohibited from further movement but are not normally prosecuted because an offence has not taken place until the vehicle has been on a public road. Separate figures for prohibitions in ports are not kept. The number of prosecutions nationally for overloading, with in brackets figures for prohibitions, in each of the years 1986-88 were, respectively, 6,400 (5,700), 5,500 (4,250) and 7,600 (7,700). The figures for the first half of 1989-90 were 3,250 and 2,900. These figures do not include offences taken by the police and local authority trading standards staff.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many of the short-span bridges on non-trunk roads will not meet 40-tonne lorry weights; what will be the cost of repairing or replacing such bridges; and what is the estimated cost of the traffic delays arising from such work;

(2) whether his Department has carried out an assessment of the likely extra strengthening costs in the event of the EEC directive on 40-tonne lorries being applied in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It was agreed at a meeting of the European Council of Transport Ministers in July that the United Kingdom's derogation from the directive permitting the use of lorries weighing 40 tonnes should end on 31 December 1998.

In 1988 my Department began a programme—expected to last 10 years—to assess all the bridges on trunk roads and to strengthen them, where necessary, to cater for heavier lorries. The increase from 38 tonnes to 40 tonnes will require about another 400 bridges to be assessed, but it is expected to account for only a relatively small proportion of the total cost of strengthening work.

Last December, the Government made provision through the rate support grant settlement for an additional £27 million expenditure by local authorities in England in 1989-90 so that a start could be made on the long-term programmes of work necessary on their roads. It is too soon to say what proportion of their bridges will eventually need to be strengthened, but a sample survey carried out by my Department in 1987 suggested that it might be about 20 per cent.

In some cases, strengthening may not be the only option. It will be more appropriate to restrict some bridges to vehicles of a lower weight; in other cases, it would be possible to cater for heavier lorries by reducing the number of lanes of traffic.

It is inevitable that there will be traffic delays while some of the work is carried out, but it is not possible to predict where these will occur or their economic cost. My Department's regional offices will assist in co-ordination of the work to help keep delays to a minimum.

Articulated Lorries

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what research has been undertaken on the use of 16·5 m articulated lorries in the United Kingdom; what alterations will be required to existing tractor units, what design requirements will be needed for compatible tractor units for the 13·6 m trailer; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to lay the order allowing 16·5 m articulated lorries in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(3) why he is advancing by 12 months the implementation of the EEC directive permitting 16·5 m articulated lorries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Once the EC date was imposed on us, there was a serious risk of detriment to the interests of British manufacturers. We therefore advanced implementation to January 1990 from January 1991.

The order will be laid as soon as possible, subject to the completion of the necessary detailed consultation. No specific research was carried out on the proposals leading to the EC directive. The new 13·6 m semi-trailer will require the use of a tractor unit slightly longer than the shortest units now in use: some already exist. The shortest tractor units can still be used with semi-trailers slightly shorter than 13·6 m.

Commercial Vehicles

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the total numbers of commercial vehicles in each category of unladen weight registered for 1989; what were the totals for each year from 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Information on vehicle stock for 1989 is not yet available. Details of the number of commercial vehicles registered in Great Britain are available by gross weight and were published in "Heavy Goods Vehicles in Great Britain 1988", transport statistics report, August 1989, a copy of which was placed in the House of Commons Library.

The number of heavy goods vehicles has fallen from 506,000 in 1979 to 462,000 in 1988 despite a 25 per cent. increase in road freight activity.

Channel Tunnel (Rail Services)

Mr. Aitken: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been reported to him in the provision of rail services between the Channel tunnel and London; and whether it remains the Government's policy not to subsidise this project.

Mr. Parkinson: British Rail is planning to spend over £1 billion on upgrading the rail network in Kent and London, on developing Waterloo station and on rolling stock, so that a full international passenger and freight service can commence on the day that the Channel tunnel opens.

In July of last year British Rail began consultations on the proposal to build a new line which would be needed by the end of the century. On the basis of consultation on four route options, British Rail narrowed the choice to a preferred route in March of this year. British Rail also isued an invitation to the private sector to participate in a joint venture. Five positive responses to this invitation were received, and BR subsequently shortlisted two consortia.

Today British Rail has announced that it has selected its preferred partner in a joint venture for Channel tunnel rail services, and that is Eurorail, comprising Trafalgar House and BICC. I very much welcome this announcement.

The broad scope of the joint venture has been settled. It includes the operation of international rail services, not just the construction of the link. The details are still to be negotiated and my approval to the final agreement will be necessary. At this stage, however, I am greatly encouraged by the clear indications that I have had from the private sector that Channel tunnel rail services, including a new Channel tunnel rail link, can be financed commercially and that the new link can still be brought into operation in 1998.

I have been greatly impressed by the confidence, expertise and commitment shown by both the shortlisted consortia, Eurorail and the Acer Group. Eurorail is satisfied that detailed work carried out on the route through Kent confirms that the route proposed by BR is the best solution. It is confident that an acceptable way can be found of continuing the route from the outskirts of London to Waterloo and to a second terminal at Kings Cross with its excellent connections to the north.

This confirmation of the route through Kent, on which so much work has already been done to minimise the environmental consequences, will help to end uncertainty in the county. I welcome that as I welcome the decision to bring forward immediately legislative proposals to allow Ashford international passenger station to be relocated so as to open in 1993, but to fit in with the new line. It is for British Rail and its partner to determine the best route and terminals to be included in a parliamentary Bill, and I accept that now that BR and Eurorail have reached agreement it will not be practicable or sensible for them to examine other possible alternative proposals and projects. It will be for Parliament to decide whether the route can be accepted.

I think that it must be primarily for BR and Eurorail to judge how and when to seek the necessary legislative approval for their proposals. I accept BR's judgment that it is wiser to wait until all the details of the route through London have been finalised before introducing a Private Bill and that will also give the opportunity for further refinement of the detailed measures proposed for Kent. I welcome their stated intention to introduce a Bill in 1990.

The provision of the Channel tunnel link is now the responsibility of BR and its chosen partner, Eurorail. I confirm that it remains the policy of the Government that no subsidy will be given to Channel tunnel rail services.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many gainers and losers his Department now estimates there will be after the introduction of the poll tax in England.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 1 November 1989, at column 75.

Lindane

Mr. Graham Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been and will be the environmental consequences to the United Kingdom of the recent loss of a container of lindane in the Channel.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No signs of lindane pollution have been detected from the continuing joint Anglo-French monitoring programme, set up immediately after the incident.

British and French scientists are confident that any increases in lindane concentrations in the marine environment could be easily detected at levels well below those at which they would represent a risk to human health. They further agree, after having carefully considered the probable rate of dissolution of the lindane in its container and its likely rate of release to the sea, that the chances of the lindane having any significant detectable effect are very slight.

As a precaution joint monitoring continues and if any leakage is detected this would provide important clues as to the whereabouts of the container and so assist recovery action, should this be necessary.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider giving additional incentives to councils to encourage the introduction of further schemes for the recycling of domestic waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Our proposals to improve waste management on which we hope to legislate shortly should encourage local authorities to promote recycling. In addition we are carefully considering what further measures might be taken to encourage recycling both at the collection and disposal stages, and are evaluating examples of current best practice and the major experiment in recycling—"Recycling City"—which is now taking place in Sheffield, with the support of the Government.

Litter

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation to allow local authorities to appoint designated officers for the purpose of taking the name and address of any alleged litter offender for subsequent prosecution.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am pleased to inform my hon. Friend that our proposals for legislation to tackle the problem of litter, published on 20 July, include a provision which will allow all district and borough councils to operate a fixed penalty scheme for littering. Under such a scheme an authorised officer of the authority will be empowered to issue tickets to litterers requiring payment of a fixed penalty within a set period. Failure to pay the fixed penalty will render the offender liable to prosecution. We are not, however, proposing to give the authorised officer extra powers to demand the name and address of the offender.

Housing Finance (Leicester)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for the financial years 1981 to 1988 inclusive the following information: *(a)* the housing investment allocation paid to Leicester city council for each of the years and *(b)* the housing investment allocation in real terms for each of those years.

Mr. Chope: The following figures give Leicester city council's housing investment programme allocations and also its outturn expenditure for the years requested, in both actual and real terms.

	£ million *Allocation*		*£ million* *Outturn*	
Year	*Actual*	*Real terms*	*Actual*	*Real terms*
1981-82	17·036	24·628	19·464	28·137
1982-83	18·496	24·971	21·063	28·436
1983-84	17·373	22·416	22·488	29·016
1984-85	18·900	23·238	30·604	37·628
1985-86	15·000	17·482	28·395	33·093
1986-87	13·285	15·002	26·013	29·375
1987-88	14·277	15·319	23·983	25·733
1988-89	13·716	13·716	32·393	32·393

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the subjects on which he is not prepared to answer parliamentary questions.

Mr. Patten: I would normally expect to answer questions within my area of responsibility other than those involving disproportionate cost.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Her Majesty's Government intend to ratify the Basel convention on the control of transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and their disposal.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes, together with our European Community partners.

Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to proceed with the restructuring of the Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission as outlined by the previous Secretary of State for the Environment on 11 July.

Mr. Trippier: Yes.

Green Belt (Derbyshire)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an assurance that he will uphold the terms of the north-east Derbyshire green belt local plan (paragraph 5.20, proposal 6) and reject any application lodged on appeal by British Coal to begin opencast mining in the green belt and around Barlborough.

Mr. Moynihan: No. I cannot give such an assurance. This would clearly prejudice the position of the Secretary of State were an application to come before him on appeal. Minerals can be worked only where they occur, but extraction, including opencast coal, need not be incompatible with green belt objectives provided high environmental standards are maintained and sites are restored to a good standard. As Derbyshire's green belt local plan makes clear, mineral working is a temporary operation which can be acceptable in green belt areas and is not incompatible with the eventual restoration of the area to an open use.

Water Authorities (Foreign Investment)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the extent of foreign investment in British water authorities.

Mr. Howard: The successor companies to the nine water authorities in England are wholly owned by the Crown.

Works of Art Committee

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will appoint a new member to the advisory committee on works of art in the House of Commons following the resignation from the committee of the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan).

Mr. Patten: I am pleased to announce that, with Mr. Speaker's agreement, I have appointed the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) to the advisory committee.

Water Privatisation

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made with preparations for the forthcoming water share offers.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have today placed in the Library the "Pathfinder" prospectus for the 10 water share offers which has been published today. It gives details of the forthcoming offers, apart from the price, share capital and related information. The share price will be announced on 22 November.

Benzene (Toxicity)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the toxic and carcinogenic properties of unleaded petrol; and what assessment he has made of the effects of using benzene in such petrol.

Mr. Roger Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

We are not aware of any information to suggest that there are toxic or carcinogenic properties specific to unleaded petrol.

Benzene is toxic at high doses and is classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as a human carcinogen on the basis of data from workers who were exposed to high levels in the past. The concentration of benzene permitted in petrol is regulated under a European directive and it is not used as an additive to substitute for lead.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Scotch Whisky (Korea)

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to persuade the Korean Government to equalise the levels of duty on Scotch whisky and other spirits.

Mr. Redwood: It has been our objective for some time to remove the discriminatory features of Korea's tax and tariff treatment of Scotch whisky and other imported spirits, as well as other restrictions on the import and distribution of these products. There has been some liberalisation which has benefited Scotch whisky but discriminatory treatment continues to hold back sales in Korea. We have made strong representations to the Korean Government and will continue to take every opportunity to do so, both bilaterally and through the European Community.

Scotch Whisky (Taiwan)

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to overcome the import restrictions faced by Scotch whisky exports to Taiwan.

Mr. Redwood: The authorities in Taiwan are well aware of United Kingdom concerns. Her Majesty's Government have no dealings with the Taiwanese authorities but United Kingdom concerns on this and other matters are put across very clearly in Taipei and London by the Anglo-Taiwan trade committee, a private organisation set up to promote British exports to Taiwan.

Selling by Telephone

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which recommendations of the Office of Fair Trading set out in the document "Selling by telephone," in 1983 he has accepted; which of these have been implemented; and what are his reasons for not implementing the remainder.

Mr. Forth: Two of the recommendations in the 1984 report by the Office of Fair Trading on selling by telephone were addressed to Government.

The first related to automatic dialling equipment. Such equipment which transmits recorded messages or synthesised speech may only be used with the consent in writing of the intended recipient. Other such equipment which transmits speech or data has only been approved by the Director General of Telecommunications for connection to the public network where there are legitimate reasons for its use.

The Government have accepted the more recent advice of the Director General of Telecommunications that the new branch systems general licence, which will soon be granted under the Telecommunications Act 1984, should contain a condition requiring anyone making telephone sales calls not to do so in respect of any user who requests them to stop.

On the second recommendation, the Government are not convinced that there have been sufficient problems to require the introduction of a statutory cooling-off period for oral contracts resulting from unsolicited telephone calls.

Northern Region

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list all offers of regional selective assistance in the Darlington area for each year since 1982; and whether he will provide the same information for *(a)* Stockton-on-Tees and *(b)* Middlesbrough.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The offers of regional selective assistance in the Darlington, Stockton and Middlesbrough areas in each year since 1 April 1982 are as follows:

(A) Offers of regional selective assistance in the Darlington parliamentary constituency

Company	*Amount offered £*
1 April 1982—31 March 1983	
Nil	
1 April 1983—31 March 1984	
Whessoe Projects Ltd.	1,070,000
Brent Chemicals International Ltd.	40,000
Stenga Ltd.	25,000
C. P. Offset	25,000
Darlington Pattern Making Company	6,500
1 April 1984—31 March 1985	
T. E. Catterall Ltd.	20,000
Amdega Ltd.	50,000
Indescon Ltd.	35,000
Princegate Services (No. 29) Ltd.	30,000
1 April 1985—31 March 1986	
Harvey Plating Ltd.	50,000
Kalibar Ltd.	10,000
Ammons Shoe Components Ltd.	50,000
Mech-Tool Engineering Ltd.	70,000
Mini-Prints North East	15,000
F. W. Alderson	5,000
S. R. Steel Ltd.	5,000
1 April 1986—31 March 1987	
Kohlangaz Fire Co. Ltd.	30,000
Con-Mech Group Ltd.	45,000
Darlington Timber Supplies Ltd.	15,000
Mitre Tooling Co. Ltd.	35,000
Epcot Leisure Ltd.	15,000
BSA Foundries Ltd.	175,000
Baydale Engineering	8,000
Forge Diesel Services Ltd.	5,000
Amdega Ltd.	70,000
1 April 1987—31 March 1988	
Vector Electronics	10,000
Rennyco Ltd.	5,000
Aycliffe Paper Winding Ltd.	5,000
Darcham Ltd.	65,000
Amdega Ltd.	100,000
Edgeworth Electronics Ltd.	5,000
Harvey Plating Ltd.	25,000
Glassfibre Flagpoles Ltd.	20,000
Mitre Plastics Ltd.	35,000
1 April 1988—31 March 1989	
Regis Fibres (UK) Ltd.	25,000
BSA Engineering Ltd.	10,000
J. L. Moore & Sons	75,000
Stenga Ltd.	90,000
Thrivewell Ltd.	7,500
Shildon Manufacturing	15,000
Baydale Architectural Metalwork	25,000
Great Northern Timber Co. Ltd.	60,000
1 April 1989—30 September 1989	
No case details published.	

(B) Offers of Regional Selective Assistance in the Stockton North Parliamentary Constituency

Company	*Amount Offered £*
1 April 1982—31 March 1983	
Derian Ltd.	25,000
Supreme Knitwear Manufacturing Co. Ltd.	25,000
1 April 1983—31 March 1984	
Cleveland Redpath English Holdings Ltd.	4,000,000
English Conservatories Ltd.	25,000
Supreme Knitwear Manufacturing Co. Ltd.	25,000
John Harrison (Stockton) Ltd.	27,000
Brandtex Manufacturing Ltd.	25,000
1 April 1984—31 March 1985	
Fine Organics Ltd.	300,000
Supreme Knitwear Manufacturing Co. Ltd.	35,000
ITM Head Wrightson Teesdale Ltd.	400,000
Josty (UK) Ltd.	20,000
1 April 1985—31 March 1986	
Brandtex Manufacturing Ltd.	176,000
Bellrise Fashions Ltd.	12,500
Supreme Knitwear Manufacturing Co. Ltd.	25,000
John Harrison (Stockton) Ltd.	20,000
Herzewege Brushes Ltd.	45,000
1 April 1986—31 March 1987	
Portrack Security Services	5,000
F. Hills & Sons Ltd.	80,000
C. & S. Hogarth Ltd.	25,000
1 April 1987—31 March 1988	
Falcon Press (Stockton on Tees) Ltd.	35,000

Company	Amount Offered £
Artix Ltd.	280,000
Lionweld Ltd.	255,000
F. Hills & Sons Ltd.	40,000
1 April 1988—31 March 1989	
Billingham Press Ltd.	25,000
Spencer & Halstead Ltd.	400,000
BKE Ltd.	10,000
1 April 1989—30 September 1989	
No case details published	

(c) Offers of regional selective assistance in the Stockton, South parliamentary constituency

Company	Amount offered £
1 April 1982—31 March 1983	
Parkfield Group plc	30,000
M. M. Knitwear 1982 Ltd.	96,000
Cleveland Microfilm Services Ltd.	25,000
Cardosi's Ltd.	15,000
Eyetech Group Ltd.	95,000
Nerco Products Ltd.	5,000
Hygena Ltd.	172,628
1 April 1983—31 March 1984	
Northdale Rotary Engineering Ltd.	22,000
Hygena Ltd.	366,000
Churchcliffe Glass	8,000
Panda Supplies Ltd.	20,000
Sanderson Chemical Consultants	20,000
1 April 1984—31 March 1985	
Cresstale Ltd.	20,000
J. G. Tinkler Ltd.	72,303
Tabuchi Electric (UK) Ltd.	300,000
1 April 1985—31 March 1986	
British Visqueen Ltd.	400,000
Elta Plastics Ltd.	50,000
Cresstale Ltd.	75,000
Harcros Chemicals UK Ltd.	400,000
Supreme Knitwear (1986) Ltd.	25,000
1 April 1986—31 March 1987	
Laserprint and Display Ltd.	5,000
Cresstale Ltd.	85,000
1 April 1987—31 March 1988	
Supreme Knitwear Manufacturing Company Ltd.	100,000
Wireless Video Products	5,000
Stainton Metal Company Ltd.	50,000
Tees Components Ltd.	48,000
Silleck Mouldings Ltd.	170,000
Sanyo Electric Manufacturing (UK) Ltd.	721,000
1 April 1988—31 March 1989	
De Novo Engineering Ltd.	20,000
Ready-To-Assemble Furniture Ltd.	400,000
Styles Precision Components Ltd.	20,000
Dalestone Concrete Products Ltd.	70,000
E. H. Education and Training (E. E. Hughes T. A.)	10,000
1 April 1989—30 September 1989	
No case details published	

(D) Offers of regional selective assistance in the Middlesbrough local authority district

Company	Amount offered £
1 April 1982—31 March 1983	
Seaway International Cables Company Ltd.	20,000
Fabrikat industries Ltd.	230,000
Collin Maintenance and Inspection Services	200,000
1 April 1983—31 March 1984	
Norlite Windows Ltd.	14,000
A. C. Walker and Co.	10,000
Solar Pans Ltd.	50,000
1 April 1984—31 March 1985	
Henry Newbould Ltd.	480,000
1 April 1985—31 March 1986	
Cleveland Cable Company Ltd.	45,000
1 April 1986—31 March 1987	
Chemoxy International Ltd.	200,000
1 April 1987—31 March 1988	
Marinecrown Ltd. T/A Tees Inshore Engineering	25,000
Bulkhaul Ltd.	100,000
Stanley Vickers Ltd.	45,000
Northern Systems Ltd.	30,000
Amberley Foods Ltd.	550,000
Recovery Ltd.	15,000
Maval Engineering Company Ltd.	25,000
1 April 1988—31 March 1989	
Gordian Print Ltd.	22,000
River Tees Engineering and Welding Ltd.	50,000
Wearparts Ltd.	60,000
Cherry Marine Ltd.	15,000
1 April 1989—30 September 1989	
No case details published	

Notes:

[1] In accordance with normal practice, information has been restricted to that published in the quarterly tables in "British Business".

[2] The figures relate to the Parliamentary Constituency areas of
- *(a)* Darlington
- *(b)* Stockton North
- *(c)* Stockton South

and to the local authority area of
- *(d)* Middlesbrough, excluding that part of the Stockton South Parliamentary Constituency within the borough boundary.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many jobs have been created or safeguarded by regional aid in the Northern region since 1984.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of jobs expected to be created or safeguarded in the Northern region[1] through offers of regional develpment grant (RDG) and regional selective assistance (RSA) since 1984 is:

Regional Development Grants

Financial Year	Jobs
1984-85	[2]846
1985-86	11,340
1986-87	18,389
1987-88	21,156
1988-89	25,013
Total	76,744

Regional Selective Assistance

Financial Year	*Jobs*
1983-84	14,133
1984-85	13,579
1985-86	5,984
1986-87	9,600
1987-88	6,123
1988-89	4,487
1989-90[3]	3,708
Total	57,614

[1] The northern region is the north east region plus Cumbria.

[2] Offers were made under the revised RGD scheme from 29 November 1984. Following the closure of the scheme on 31 March 1988, all outstanding offers were made in the period ending 31 March 1989. Prior to November 1984, RDG's were not linked to the creation or preservation of jobs, so no estimate is available of the effect on employment of payments under that scheme.

[3] Period to 30 October 1989.

Notes:

1. Some RSA and RGD offers will relate to the same jobs but it is not practicable accurately to identify these.
2. The figures for both schemes are based on offers made.
3. Regional enterprise grants have also been available for firms employing less than 25 people in development areas since April 1988. Job creation or safeguarding is not, however, a condition of the scheme.
4. Other Government Departments have no job-linked regional aid schemes.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the subjects on which he is not prepared to answer parliamentary questions.

Mr. Ridley: It is not possible to provide a definite and exhaustive list of questions which I might exceptionally decline to answer on grounds other than cost and commercial confidence. Each question will continue to be considered on its merits.

Ticket Touts

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make it his policy to introduce a system of licensing for ticket touts.

Mr. Forth: No.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to remove Crown immunity from those establishments run by his Department subject to consumer protection and environmental health laws; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend gave to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on 20 October 1989 at column *279*.

Export Seminar

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the cost to small firms wishing to attend the seminar organised by his Department on exporting to Belgium and Germany on 21 November.

Mr. Redwood: The exporting to Belgium seminar on 21 November costs £35 per delegate, including lunch.

European Trade Committee

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what trade union representation exists on the European trade committee.

Mr. Redwood: There is no trade union representation on the European trade committee. Members are selected on the basis of their wide experience of exporting and their knowledge of western Europe.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide information covering each of the last five years showing the number of employees whose earnings fell below *(a)* the national insurance contributions lower earnings limit; and *(b)* the PAYE threshold; and if he will estimate what proportion of these employees are (i) women, (ii) female part-timers and (iii) part-timers.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information from the new earnings survey is not sufficiently precise to make reliable estimates separately distinguishing the numbers with earnings below these two thresholds. However, the numbers are broadly estimated to be in the following ranges:

April	*Millions*
1984	2½—3
1985	2¾—3¼
1986	2¾—3¼
1987	3—3½
1988	3—3½

It is estimated that women account for 75 per cent. of these employees, that female part-timers account for 70 per cent. and that all part-timers account for 90 per cent.

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when results from the Restart cohort survey will be available; if a copy of any preliminary findings and subsequently the full results will be published or placed in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The final results from the Restart cohort study are likely to be available in the middle of 1991. A decision on publication will be taken in due course.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is collected on the ET2 form which is completed for each employment training trainee by training managers; and if he will give as much information as he has for each region and for Great Britain as a whole showing how many employment training trainees have achieved vocational qualifications; how many have received any form of training bonus; and how much.

Mr. Nicholls: The information which is collected from the ET2 trainee record form is detailed in the following table. Information from the forms on qualifications obtained and numbers receiving training bonuses is still being analysed and its reliability assessed. No information is available about the amount of training bonus paid to trainees.

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM ET2, TRAINEE RECORD FORM

Name and address
National Insurance number
Date of birth
Sex
Marital Status
Age band
Duration of unemployment
Whether disabled/health problem
Ethnic origin
Referral source
Eligibility code
Literacy and numeracy need
Whether trainee referred to Training Manager
Date of assessment
Training Agent/Training Manager Reference number
Date training started
Date training expected to end
Placed on project in first 4 weeks
Date of Training Manager action
Training Manager reference number
Date training ended
Main training occupation classification code
Type of training received
Whether studied for vocational qualification or credit
Whether gained vocational qualification or credit
Whether fulfilled agreed action plan
Whether received training bonus
Leaving code
Training Manager reference number

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why there has been a delay in assessing employment training training managers for ATO status; what effect this has had on the original timetable; how many employment training training managers passed stage one; how many have been told to make improvements; how many have failed; and if he will make a statement about the future timetable for carrying out the full assessment of ATO status in employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: Area office staff began the assessment of employment training training managers for ATO status immediately the programme began and they have continued that process.

It was originally hoped the process would be completed within 18 months of the beginning of the programme. It was recognised that training of managers, many of whom were new to training of this type, needed sufficient time to provide the evidence of the high standards of training required to satisfy the stringent criteria leading to the award of approved status. For this reason, the timetable allowed for the approval process is now set at two years from the date of commencement of operation.

At 31 October 1989, 338 training managers had passed stage 1. The monitoring activities for approved status provide for Training Agency staff to work in partnership with all training managers to offer advice about the developments necessary to achieve full status.

No training managers have failed.

The timetable for approved status is set as described.

Women Managers

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will outline the steps being taken by Her Majesty's Government to encourage the employment of women in management jobs.

Mr. Nicholls: Employers are bound by the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to afford equal opportunities at all occupational levels to women and men. The careers service, the employment service and the Training Agency take every opportunity to bring openings in management and other senior appointments to the attention of appropriate women and to advise them of the necessary qualifications and available training.

I and colleagues frequently remind employers of the need to use women's talents to the full, particularly at managerial level, and to emphasise that women must be treated equally with men. We are also supporting initiatives which help to promote women's enterprise. It is encouraging that the number of women managers is rising and that the Institute of Employment Research predicts that by 1995 two fifths of managers and entrepreneurs will be women.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO exercise Wintex-Cimex 1987 and exercise Wintex-Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercises themselves; and what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Mr. Eggar: My Department plays its part in testing those procedures in which we have an interest. Staff participate as required; it would not be appropriate for me to supply the detail requested.

Computers (Public Safety)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to ensure all aspects of decision-making at all levels involving public safety will not be compromised by the commercial secrecy of any computer codes which may be involved in such decision-making.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive is working with Government Departments to develop guidelines and standards for the use of computer software in safety-related applications. Under section 20 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, inspectors have powers to make any necessary examination or investigation.

Industrial Accident Regulations

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will extend the scope of the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard (CIMAH) Regulations to cover nuclear installations.

Mr. Nicholls: No. Such an extension is neither appropriate nor necessary. The operation of nuclear installations is already closely controlled by the conditions attached to nuclear site licences granted by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965.

The HSE is currently developing regulations which will apply to nuclear installations requirements similar to those of the CIMAH regulations on the preparation of off-site emergency plans by local authorities and the provision of information to the public.

New Businesses

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new businesses registered for value added tax in Derbyshire in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: In 1988, the estimated number of new registrations for value added tax in Derbyshire was 3,110. The net increase in the number of VAT-registered businesses in Derbyshire in 1988 was 740, or 3·3 per cent. bringing the total number of VAT- registered businesses in Derbyshire to 22,770.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Derbyshire were benefiting from the enterprise allowance scheme in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: In the financial year April 1988 to March 1989 a total of 1,555 people joined the enterprise allowance scheme in Derbyshire.

Construction Industry (Injuries)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many occupational injuries per 1,000 workers were reported in the construction industry *(a)* in total, *(b)* for employees, *(c)* for the self-employed and *(d)* others for each year from 1979 to 1988-89.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* The available information is given in the table. Figures for the periods 1979-80, 1981 to 1985 and 1986 onwards are not comparable owing to changes in reporting arrangements. Figures for 1988-89 are provisional.

Injury incidence rates[1] for injuries to employees and the self employed in the construction industry[2] in Great Britain

Year	*Employees*		*Self employed*	
	Fatal and major Rate per thousand[3]	*All reported Rate per thousand*[4]	*Fatal and major Rate per thousand*[3]	*All reported Rate per thousand*[4]
1979	[7]	31·5	[7]	[7]
1980	[7]	30·0	[7]	[7]
1981	1·7	41·9	0·1	[7]
1982	2·0	40·7	[7]	[7]
1983	2·2	[7]	0·2	[7]
1984	2·4	[7]	0·2	[7]
1985	2·4	[7]	0·3	[7]
1986-87[5]	2·7	19·4	0·9	2·3
1987-88[5]	2·8	19·3	1·0	2·4
1988-89[5] [6]	2·8	18·4	1·3	2·9

[1] Rates based on injuries reported to Health and Safety Executive's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates and all other relevant enforcing authorities, under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1980 (NADOR) for 1981 to 1985 and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR) for later years. Rates for the years 1979-80 are based on reports made under various legislation to the Health and Safety Executive's Inspectorate only.

[2] The construction industry is defined as Standard Industrial Classification 1980 Division 5.

[3] The major injury category was first introduced by NADOR. The definition of a major injury was widened with the introduction of RIDDOR on 1 April 1986.

[4] Includes injuries causing incapacity for work for more than three days. For the years 1979-80 and from 1986-87 over three day injury data is based on employers' reports to enforcing authorities. For 1981-82 the over three day injury data is based on industrial injury benefit claims.

[5] Year beginning 1 April.

[6] Provisional.

[7] Not available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Trade Deficit

Mr. Orme: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the balance of trade deficit.

Mr. Major: The deficit on visible trade in the third quarter of 1989 was £6·8 billion. In that quarter exports, in both value and volume terms, were at an all-time high. Excluding oil and erratics, export volumes were 8½ per cent. higher than in the third quarter of 1988. Imports in the third quarter of 1989 were also at an all-time high, but import growth has slowed down significantly since last year. As domestic demand slows further, import growth should also continue to decline.

Crown Estates (Revenue)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the revenue raised by the Crown Estate for the last five years by sea area for *(a)* dredging licences and *(b)* mooring rights.

Mr. Major: Statistics on dredging activity are collated by main dredging area. The revenues raised by the Crown Estate from licences to dredge aggregate for the last five calendar years were:

	£ million				
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
East Coast	0·9	1·1	1·3	1·5	1·9
Thames Estuary	0·4	0·4	0·4	0·4	0·5
South Coast	0·5	0·6	0·6	0·7	0·9
Solent and Spithead	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1
Bristol channel	0·3	0·3	0·4	0·5	0·5
Liverpool Bay and River Mersey	0·05	0·05	0·06	0·07	0·07

Statistics for the revenue from mooring rights for the last five years are not readily available on the same basis. However, revenue for the 1988-89 financial year by main area of activity was:

	£ (thousands)
East Coast of England	10·2
South Coast of England	96·8
West Coast of England (with Wales and Northern Ireland)	8·3
Scottish Waters	46·8

Child Care

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rules he applies to parents receiving vouchers or allowances in lieu of child care facilities not provided by employers; and what concessions he makes to those employers who do.

Mr. Lilley: Under the normal business tax rules, employers qualify for tax relief on day-to-day expenditure on all forms of child care provision for their employees' children, including cash allowances and vouchers. Tax relief is also available for certain capital expenditure on child care facilities. Cash allowances or vouchers given by employers to employees in lieu of child care facilities are taxable under the normal income tax rules.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider a change in the law in relation to the taxation of workplace nurseries and child care subsidies.

Mr. Lilley: Proposals to change the tax law in relation to workplace nurseries and child care subsidies were considered and rejected by the House during the passage of this year's Finance Bill. My right hon. Friend has no plans to reopen this matter.

Emergency Communications

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the liaison arrangements between the Central Office of Information and United States civilian or military authorities on the proposed content of emergency radio and television broadcasts in the United Kingdom during a pre-war crisis.

Mr. Ryder: No liaison arrangements have been made between the Central Office of Information and United States civilian or military authorities on the proposed content of emergency radio and television broadcasts in the United Kingdom during a pre-war crisis.

Benjamin Report

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will arrange for a copy of the report by Professor Bernard Benjamin, "Accessibility and other problems relating to statistics used by social scientists", to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 31 October at cols. *153-54*. I understand that the report is available on request from the Economic and Social Research Council.

Pensions

Mr. Neil Thorne: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider removing the attributable forces family pension from taxation.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* I have no plans to do so.

War Widows

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his Department's definition of a war widow for the purpose of taxation.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* There is no definition of war widow in tax legislation. Section 318 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 defines the pensions and allowances, generally regarded as war widows' pensions, which are not treated as income for tax purposes.

Rugby Players (Tax)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 25 October to the hon. Member for Wakefield, if he will specify the information that is available about income tax paid by rugby union players in respect of relevant earnings.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* For the reason given in my reply of 25 October to the hon. Member at column *451*, no such information is available.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

County Courts

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to make county courts more accessible for disabled people, especially in terms of physical accessibility, provision for the hard of hearing, clarity of signposting.

The Attorney-General: New and adapted or reconditioned court buildings provide, to the maximum possible extent, all the facilities required for the disabled, including lifts and ramps as necessary. Other buildings have had improvements incorporated where this has been feasible. New court rooms are designed to high acoustic standards which benefit the hard of hearing. Internal signs are made as clear as possible. Court staff are always available to assist disabled court users.

Court Fees

Mr. Archer: To ask the Attorney-General how much money was raised by county court fees, respectively, in the years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89; how much money was spent on county court services, other than on judicial salaries in each of these years; how much money was raised in High Court fees in each of these years; and how much money was spent on High Court services other than on judicial salaries in each of these years.

The Attorney-General: The income raised by fees in the county court and the Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeal) respectively for the last three years, and the total cost of the civil courts, exclusive of judicial costs, are shown in the table. It is not possible to give a precise breakdown of costs between the Supreme Court and county courts. Civil business is treated as a single entity and many of the components of the overall figure, for example administrative overheads, are not broken down in this way. However, an estimate based on 1988-89 figures suggests that 75 per cent. of the cost is attributable to county court and district registry services, and 25 per cent. to other Supreme Court services.

£ millions

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
County Court fees	91·5	96·4	97·4
Supreme Court fees	43·2	47·0	52·5
Total fees	134·7	143·4	149·9
Non judicial cost of civil courts	121·1	133·5	143·9
Excess of fees over cost	13·6	9·9	6·0

County Courts (Civil Justice Review)

Mr. Archer: To ask the Attorney-General what additional staff accommodation, judges and registrars will be made available to the county court in order to implement the recommendations of the civil justice review.

The Attorney-General: Implementation of the civil justice review recommendations are to be phased over a period of five years. Resources for the first stages of the programme are currently the subject of public expenditure survey negotiations.

Legal Aid

Mr. Archer: To ask the Attorney-General what was the percentage increase *(a)* in legal aid fees and *(b)* in total costs per legal aid certificate in each year since 1979.

The Attorney-General: *(a)* No rates are prescribed for non-matrimonial civil cases. From 1 October 1988 a system of prescribed rates and fees was introduced for legally aided matrimonial work, which were increased by 6 per cent. with effect from 1 April 1989. Rates for non-matrimonial legal aid work remain in the discretion of individual court taxing officers.

For criminal cases prior to 1982 there were no prescribed rates for remuneration. With effect from 1 October 1982 rates were prescribed by regulations. Those rates have been increased by the following percentages:

	Solicitors per cent.	*Counsel per cent.*
1983-84	5	5
1984-85	4·5	4·5
1985-86	4	4
1986-87	[1]5	5
	[2]6·5	5
1987-88	6	5
1988-89	5·4	5·2

[1] with effect from 1 April 1986

[2] with effect from 1 October 1986

(b) For civil cases the percentage increase in total costs per legal aid certificate in each year since 1979 was:

	per cent.
1979-80	18·44
1980-81	14·91
1981-82	26·25
1982-83	17·89
1983-84	14·18
1984-85	10·36
1985-86	10·16
1986-87	10·22
1987-88	8·99
1988-89	16·22

For criminal proceedings in magistrates courts the percentage increase in total costs per legal certificate in each year since 1979 was:

	Per cent.
1979-80	19·08
1980-81	23·50
1981-82	5·98
1982-83	6·93
1983-84	7·73
1984-85	8·85
1985-86	7·46
1986-87	11·54
1987-88	14·95
1988-89	10·06

For criminal proceedings in the higher courts information is available only from 1985. The percentage increase in total costs per legal aid order for solicitors from that year was:

	Per cent.
1985-86	9·79
1986-87	13·53
1987-88	11·32
1988-89	4·40

No information is available on counsel's fees by reference to legal aid orders for the higher courts.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Naturalisation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for naturalisation were made to the immigration and nationality department in *(a)* 1987, *(b)* 1988 and *(c)* the current year to date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of applications for naturalisation received in caseworking groups was as follows:

	Number
1987	22,696
1988	24,632
1989	46,515

Because of delays in the initial processing of applications, the figures for the years in question may include applications received in a previous year.

Citizenship

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of applications received for registration for citizenship by 31 December 1987.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of applications for registration for citizenship received in caseworking groups during 1987 was 57,322. In addition, there were a substantial number of applications for registration received in the Home Office which were received in groups after 1987. A figure for this is not currently available.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to grant any licence under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to Perrycroft Lodge kennels in Malvern.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Applications for licences and certificates under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 are considered individually on their merits but it is not our practice to comment on particular applications.

Game Licences

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to review the system of game licences in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to review the system of game licences.

Deportations

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been deported from the United Kingdom in each of the past 10 years *(a)* for being illegal immigrants and *(b)* for other reasons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on persons removed from the United Kingdom between 1987 and 1988 under the enforcement powers in the Immigration Act 1971, either as illegal entrants or under the deportation process, is published in tables 23 and 24 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 1988" (Cm. 726), a copy of which is in the Library.

Drug Addicts

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will advise chief constables to make available police pathology lab photographs of the bodies of dead drug addicts to schools and parents in order to show the effects more realistically.

Mr. Waddington: We have no plans to give such advice. Many schools have already introduced a programme of drugs education and all schools will be required to do so under the national curriculum.

HM Prison, Shrewsbury

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the causes for delay in selling houses owned by his Department in Shrewsbury to prison officers based at Her Majesty's prison, Shrewsbury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Since the introduction of the discount sale scheme of quarters to prison officers in June 1987, over 4,500 applications have been received in England and Wales. Approximately 3,400—75 per cent.—sales have so far been completed, with a further 500 accepted offers currently with solicitors.

Inevitably there have been some delays in dealing with difficult cases and at Shrewsbury there have been particular problems with four properties in The Dana opposite the prison. A detailed survey was needed to determine the areas of land to be sold with each property and the question of rights of way and inclusion of associated lock-up garages had also to be considered. The deeds, dating back to 1598, were rather obscure and had to be investigated by the Treasury Solicitor to establish proper title.

The delay in these cases is regretted but the Treasury Solicitor is in possession of all necessary deeds and documents, together with detailed plans for conveyance purposes, and is reaching completions as quickly as possible.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board between the receiving of a claim and bringing the matter to settlement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 17 October 1989 at column *16* .

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the efficiency and staffing of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. John Patten: To deal with the steep rise in the number of applications the board's complement has been increased from 220 in 1987 to 320 now and a new office has been opened in Glasgow. We are in close touch with the chairman of the board about ways of improving efficiency at the board and tackling the problems of delay and backlog caused by the increased workload.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will instigate a report to discover the sociological and psychological backgrounds on child abusers;

(2) if he will instigate a research project to discover how widespread the problem of child abuse is within the community; and what are the effects upon the individual child, the family unit concerned, and the sentencing and removal of the abuser.

Mr. John Patten: A table listing recent, current and planned research into child abuse funded by all Government Departments was placed in the Library in May this year. This covers the period 1989-90 and includes projects on the perpetrators, prevalence and effects of child abuse to be undertaken mainly by health departments. The Home Office is undertaking research into prevention and evidential matters. We are also preparing for publication a statistical study of criminal proceedings for offences against children, taking in sentencing. It is too early to say what projects Departments will be including in 1990-91 research programmes.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up a national prevention programme against child abuse.

Mr. John Patten: The Government are supporting a number of preventive measures. An important factor in preventing child abuse is to ensure that children are taught how to keep themselves safe, and to this end a set of guidelines for parents, drawn up by the organisation KIDSCAPE, has been incorporated in the Home Office crime prevention handbook "Practical Ways to Crack Crime". Three million copies of the handbook have been distributed.

The Department of Health provides a financial contribution towards the administrative expenses of a number of national voluntary organisations which campaign for the prevention of child abuse, for example the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Childline. The Department of Health also funded the production of a training package by the Open university which was launched earlier this year and which aims to provide people who have had little or no knowledge of the subject of child abuse, as well as professionals and voluntary workers, with greater awareness and recognition skills.

Broadwater Farm (Police Raid)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many police officers and other personnel were used in the raid on Broadwater Farm by the police on Friday 29 September; if any armed police officers were used; how many press, radio and television journalists accompanied the police, and representing which newspapers, radio and television stations; how many observers accompanied the police and from where; what briefing was given to the observers and the press by the police; and where and for how long the observers and the press were kept incommunicado.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that 229 police officers were involved in the operation but none of them was armed. Eight media organisations accompanied the police. There were four personnel (one reporter, three crew) from Independent Television News, three (one reporter, two crew) from BBC News, two (one reporter, one photographer) from the Press Association, and one journalist from each of *The Mail on Sunday*, BBC Radio News, the *News of the World*, the *Tottenham and Hornsey Journal* and Independent Radio News. Four observers accompanied the police, of which three were members of the Haringey police liaison committee and the fourth was the director of criminal justice studies at Reading university. All the observers and the media representatives were present throughout the entire main briefing given to the police officers at the police training centre at Hendon. They were incommunicado from the time they joined police early on the morning of 29 September until about 5 pm that afternoon when the operation commenced.

Attempted Suicides

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many attempted suicides have been recorded in prison establishments in England and Wales during 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We have received reports of 463 apparent suicide attempts made by inmates in prison service custody so far during 1989.

Suicides

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many suicides in England and Wales have occurred during 1989 *(a)* at prison establishments and *(b)* in remand establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: At the end of October 1989 verdicts of suicide had been returned on 20 inmates who died in prison establishments in England and Wales during 1989. Of these inmates eight were on remand. Inquests have yet to be held on 13 other inmates, of whom 10 were on remand, who have died in prison department custody during this period and whose deaths are thought to have been suicides.

Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the sentence and remand prison population for England and Wales for the latest date available, and for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The latest available information is that in September 1989, 10,536 remand, 222 non-criminal and 37,851 sentenced prisoners were held in prison service establishments. A further 30, most of whom were on remand, were held in police cells. Average populations in each of the last 11 years were published in table 1.5 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1988" (Cm 825), a copy of which is in the Library.

Acid House Parties

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many arrests for drug-related offences have been made to date at events described as acid house parties;

(2) what information he has on which drugs and in what quantities have been seized by police at events described as acid house parties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Drugs

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in each of the last 10 years have been fined for drug-related offences.

Mr. John Patten: The information is published in table 1.1 of Home Office statistical bulletin issue 30/89, "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs: Seizures and Offenders Dealt With, United Kingdom, 1988", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were convicted for unlawful possession of *(a)* cannabis, *(b)* cocaine, *(c)* LSD, *(d)* heroin, and *(e)* crack for each year from 1979.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the number of persons found guilty, cautioned or dealt with by compounding for unlawful possession of cannabis, cocaine, LSD and heroin for each year since 1979 is published in tables S2.29, S2.17, S2.23 and S2.21 respectively of "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs: Seizures and Offenders Dealt With, United Kingdom, 1988—Supplementary tables", a copy of which is in the Library. Corresponding tables S2.28, S2.16, S2.22 and S2.20 give the number of persons found guilty in 1988. Crack offences are included in those for cocaine.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers of registered addicts in the United Kingdom for each year from 1979.

Mr. Waddington: There is no system of registration of addicts. Information on the numbers of addicts notified to the chief medical officer at the Home Office in the years 1979 to 1988 was published in Statistical Bulletin issue 13/89 "Statistics of drug addicts notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom, 1988", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the current street price of crack.

Mr. Waddington: Information from the national drugs intelligence unit suggests that the street price of crack is in the region of £20 to £25 for a piece of about 0·2gs.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the levels of addiction of hard drugs in *(a)* West Germany, *(b)* France, *(c)* Netherlands, *(d)* Switzerland, *(e)* Spain, *(f* Italy, *(g)* Belgium, and *(h)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: Information about the numbers of drug addicts notified to the Home Office in 1988 was published in Home Office statistical bulletin issue 13/89, "Statistics of Drug Addicts Notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom, 1988," a copy of which is in the Library. In addition, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, in its report "Aids and Drug Misuse part 1," estimated that there might have been between 75,000 and 150,000 misusers of notified drugs in the United Kingdom during 1986, together with as many again (excluding cannabis users) who are using a variety of non-notifiable drugs (such as amphetamines) on an experimental or occasional basis. Comparable information about addiction levels in other European countries is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the numbers of young people aged 16 or under, arrested or cautioned for possession of drugs.

Mr. Waddington: The number of persons aged 16 or under dealt with in the United Kingdom in 1988 for unlawful possession of drugs was 831. This includes persons dealt with at court and cautioned, and cases where other action (such as informal warnings and no further action) was taken. There is likely to be under-recording of persons in the last group.

Mr. Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the use of the drug ectasy in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: MDMA, known as "ecstasy", has been a controlled drug since 1977. Seizures of MDMA have increased in recent years but still remain small compared to those of drugs such as heroin, cocaine, amphetamines and cannabis. Informaton from the forensic science service indicates that some 90 MDMA seizures were analysed in 1988.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average sentence given for *(a)* unlawful possession and *(b)* possession with intent to supply drugs.

Mr. Waddington: The information is published in table S2.6 of "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs: Seizures and Offenders Dealt With, United Kingdom, 1988—Supplementary tables", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the weight of the seizures of *(a)* cannabis, *(b)* cocaine, *(c)* LSD, *(d)* heroin and *(e)* crack for each year from 1979.

Mr. Waddington: The information is published in tables 2.4 and 2.5 of Home Office statistical bulletin issue 30/89, "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs: Seizures and Offenders Dealt With, United Kingdom, 1988", a copy of which is in the Library. Crack seizures are included in cocaine seizures.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of prison suicides is among those inmates serving sentences for drug-related offences.

Mr. Waddington: The table gives the figures for inmates held in prison establishments in England and Wales in each of the last five years.

	Total suicides[1]	*Suicides by sentenced inmates*[1]	*Suicides by inmates serving sentences for drug related offences*[1]
1984	23	11	1
1985	23	9	—
1986	17	5	—
1987	42	14	2
1988	30	11	2
1989	[2]20	[2]12	[2]1

[1] The table gives the number of deaths for which suicide verdicts were returned at the inquest.

[2] Inquests have yet to be held on 13 other inmates who have died in 1989 and whose deaths are thought to have been suicides. Of these two were serving sentences for drug related offences.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of the gaol population of the United Kingdom is in detention for *(a)* drug and *(b)* cannabis-related offences.

Mr. Waddington: The latest readily available information was published in table 1*(b)* of "Prison statistics England and Wales 1988" (Cm 825), a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to seek powers for the police to be able to apply for a court order to allow them access to information about a suspected drug dealer's tax affairs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Courts already have powers under sections 27 and 30 of the Drug Trafficking Offences

Act 1986 to make an order authorising the police to gain access to information about the tax affairs of any person who is suspected of involvement in drug trafficking.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is able to estimate per year *(a)* the approximate levels of consumption in the United Kingdom of cannabis, cocaine, LSD, heroin and crack and *(b)* the total value of each of these drugs.

Mr. Waddington: No. But information on seizures of these drugs is published annually by the Home Office.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is able to estimate the number of police officers in the United Kingdom who are solely engaged in combating crime from drug-related offences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We estimate that by the end of 1988 a total of 1,323 police officers were solely engaged in the investigation of drug-related offences at force and regional level in England and Wales. Twenty posts from the 1989-90 manpower programme have been allocated to regional crime squad drugs wings.

In addition, very many police officers at force and crime squad level will contribute to the prevention and investigation of drug-related offences in the course of their duties.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is able to give an estimation of the cost per year of prosecuting and convicting individuals accused of drug-related offences.

Mr. Waddington: No. But information on persons dealt with for drug offences is published annually by the Home Office.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is considering the greater use of confiscation orders for drug trafficking convictions.

Mr. John Patten: The Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 already provides that, when a person is convicted of a drug trafficking offence, the court must determine whether he has ever benefited from drug trafficking and, if he has, impose a confiscation order to deprive him of his proceeds.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will undertake a review of the penalties for drug-related offences.

Mr. John Patten: No. The courts have adequate powers to deal with drug-related offences. For the production, supply or possession with intent to supply a class A drug the maximum penalty is life imprisonment; for class B drugs, it is 14 years and five years for class C drugs. Sentencing is a matter for the courts and the Court of Appeal has given guidance on sentencing drug offences.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department collects regular information on the street prices of drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: No. But the national drugs intelligence unit collates information on the approximate street prices provided by police forces for intelligence purposes.

Crack

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the first seizure of crack was made in the United Kingdom; and how much has been seized to date.

Mr. Waddington: The first seizure of crack recorded by the national drugs intelligence unit was in 1986, although it is possible that earlier seizures were made but reported as of cocaine. The total numbers of seizures of crack recorded so far are as follows:

	Number
1986	5
1987	12
1988	27
1989[1]	75

[1] January to September.

Kurdish People

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Kurdish asylum seekers have been detained, and for what period, since 1 January.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Of approximately 3,900 Turkish nationals who have claimed asylum on arrival in the United Kingdom since 1 January some 300 have been detained at some time, for periods ranging from one day to five months. On 26 October, four Turkish asylum seekers, one of whom arrived in May and three in June, remained in detention, their applications for asylum having been considered and refused. On the same date two other Turkish nationals who were being treated as illegal entrants and were detained had applied for asylum. One had been in prison—following a criminal conviction, the other was detained in September 1989.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Kurdish people from Turkey have arrived at Heathrow airport and then returned to Turkey without seeking entry to Britain since 1 January.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* Information on passengers subject to control who seek leave to enter is maintained by nationality not ethnic or religious origin. There are no records of passengers who do not seek leave to enter, for example because they are in direct transit. Up to 26 October a total of 232 Turkish asylum seekers had departed voluntarily without awaiting the outcome of their applications.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date Siho Iyiguven arrived in Britain; for what periods he was detained; how many representations were received on his behalf; who took the decision to remove him; whether his Department will pay for the return of his body to Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* Mr. Siho Iyiguven arrived in Britain on 2 May 1989. He was detained on 22 August for one night and on 4 October until the fire on 5 October which led to his death. Representations were received on his behalf on five occasions. The decision that he did not qualify for asylum in this country was taken in the refugee section of the immigration and nationality department and removal directions were issued by the immigration service. The inquest into Mr. Iyiguven's death has been adjourned and I understand that his next of kin have yet to decide what arrangements to make for his remains.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of Kurdish asylum seekers from Turkey who have arrived in Britain since 1 January; and how many have *(a)* made voluntary departures, *(b)* been given exceptional leave to remain, *(c)* been granted asylum and *(d)* been removed to Turkey.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* Immigration statistics do not record ethnic origins of asylum seekers. From 1 January until 25 October some 3,900 Turkish nationals had applied for asylum on arrival *(a)* 232 had made voluntary departures, *(b)* 270 had been given exceptional leave to enter, *(c)* 75 had been granted asylum and *(d)* 38 had been removed to Turkey.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations from human rights and church organisations he has received concerning the treatment of Kurdish asylum seekers since 1 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* Representations have been received from various individuals and organisations about general and specific issues concerned with Turkish asylum seekers.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Polish Economic Delegations

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if visits by Polish economic delegations which include seminars at the Adam Smith Institute are being subsidised by his Department.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. But we have funded a seminar on privatisation in Warsaw organised by the Adam Smith Institute. Polish economists, whose visits here are financed by us, sometimes have talks with the institute.

Cambodia

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy towards the continuing membership at the United Nations of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on 25 October at column *491*.

Political Groups (EC)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* the amounts paid, in 1988 pound sterling equivalents, to each of the political groups of the European Parliament together with an indication of any allocated expenditure within the totals and the total expected expenditure in 1990.

Mr. Maude *[pursuant to his reply, 24 October 1989, c. 402]:* The amounts paid in 1988 to the political groups of the European Parliament were:

	ECU	*£(at 1·5057 ecu = £1)*
Contribution to administrative/ secretarial operating expenses of the political groups and non-attached members	6,851,970	4,550,687
European Information Campaign (information activities on the role and work of the European Parliament, its political groups and their members)	27,700,000	18,396,758
Purchase of data-processing equipment	800,000	531,314
Hire and maintenance of equipment	330,000	219,167
Other activities	3,496,100	2,321,910

No breakdown of the payments to each political group is available.

ENERGY

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what percentage of letters from hon. Members to his Department received a reply *(a)* in under four weeks, *(b)* within four to six weeks, *(c)* within six to eight weeks and *(d)* over eight weeks, in each of the last three years;

(2) what information his Department has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. Wakeham: The Department's general objective is to answer letters from hon. Members within three weeks of receipt. At present the Department has no letters awaiting a reply which have been outstanding for longer than that period. The specific information requested by the hon. Member can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Risley Programmes

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of the Chardis, Thor and Supersomite programes at Risley.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the UKAEA and I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Reactors (Privatisation)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the privatisation of advanced gas-cooled reactors and the pressurised water reactors under construction.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made to the House on 24 July by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Energy at columns 744-45.

Electricity Industry

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the competitive structure of the United Kingdom electricity industry and other member nations of the EEC.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The electricity industries of EC member states show a variety of structures. Some are dominated by a single state monopoly; in others, dominant generators play a significant role in transmission; regional monopolies in supply are also common. In England and Wales, the Government are putting in place a competitive structure. Use of the distribution and transmission system will be open to all on published and regulated terms. There will be competition between generators from day one. And the market in supply to customers will be progressively opened up to competition. There will be no permanent monopolies in supply or generation.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies he has carried out regarding the effect of the privatisation of the electricity supply industry on British Coal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since it has responsibility for the coal industry, my Department naturally monitors closely and continuously the implications for British Coal of electricity privatisation.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on European Community investigations into the nuclear provisions in the electricity privatisation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government have kept the EC Commission fully informed of their proposals relating to the privatisation of the electricity industry. The dialogue is continuing. We are confident that the arrangements for the new industry will be consistent with the United Kingdom's Community obligations.

Wylfa B Power Station

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will cancel plans for the public inquiry into the proposed Wylfa B pressurised water reactor station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has received formal objections to the CEGB's application for his consent to construct a PWR nuclear power station at Wylfa from both the Isle of Anglesey borough council and the Gwynedd county council. He is therefore obliged to arrange a public inquiry pursuant to section 34(1) of the Electricity Act 1957.

Hinkley Point C Power Station

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will cancel plans to build the Hinkley Point C pressurised water reactor station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB's application for my right hon. Friend's consent to construct a PWR nuclear power station at Hinkley Point C is currently the subject of a public inquiry.

My right hon. Friend will wish to consider the inspector's report before deciding whether or not to grant his consent to the CEGB's application.

The construction of new nuclear power stations in England and Wales is a matter for the CEGB.

Coal Productivity (North-East)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will give the latest figures for productivity for the north-east coal field; and if he will give those for 1985.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Productivity in the north-east coalfield rose from 2·23 tonnes per man shift in 1985-86 to 3·82 tonnes in 1988-89.

Nato Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO exercise Wintex/Cimex 1987 and exercise Wintex/Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercises themselves; and what are the ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department plays its part in testing those procedures in which we have an interest. Staff participate as required; it would not be appropriate for me to supply the detail required.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the annual load factor achieved by United Kingdom nuclear power plants.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The average load factor of the Central Electricity Generating Board's nuclear power stations for the first six months of the current financial year was 60·6 per cent. The equivalent load factor for the South of Scotland Electricity Board's nuclear power stations was 62·8 per cent.

Fast Breeder Reactors

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the future of the fast breeder reactor programme.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made to the House on 21 July last year by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Energy at column 1288.

Magnox Plants

34. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he now expects to be able to announce the estimated decommissioning costs for the Magnox nuclear power plants.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Members for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 24 October at column *381*.

DEFENCE

Armed Services (Privatisation)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to evaluate the benefits to the efficiency of national defence of privatisation of the armed services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

B2

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any request from the United States administration to base the B2 stealth nuclear bomber in the United Kingdom, under the updated 1948 Anglo-American military air bases agreement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Collisions

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* all instances of Royal Navy surface or submarine vessels in collision, or otherwise in contact, with commercial vessels in the Irish sea since May 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the case of surface vessels, this information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost and effort. Incidents in which Royal Navy submarines have been in collision with surface vessels or their gear since 1 January 1980, in or around the Irish sea, are as follows:

Date		
17 November 1981	FV Sapphire	Clyde Area
18 April 1982	FV Sharelga	Irish Sea
10 March 1983	FV Targuen	Irish Sea
11 August 1984	FV Huntress	Clyde Area
6 December 1987	FV Prevail	North Channel
2 July 1988	Yacht Dalriada	North Channel
16 July 1988	Yacht Drum	North Channel
27 October 1988	FV Brilliant Star	Sound of Bute
28 June 1989	FV Huntress	Clyde Area
12 September 1989	FV Contester	Irish Sea

Contester (Incident)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the incident in the Irish sea off Skerries, county Dublin, involving the trawler Contester and a Royal Navy vessel; and what communications have been received by Her Majesty's ambassador in Dublin over this incident.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At 1830 hours on 12 September 1989, some 25 miles north-east of Dublin, a communications buoy being towed by a Royal Navy submarine became caught in the nets of the Irish fishing vessel Contester; the buoy wire parted shortly afterwards. The submarine came to periscope depth, made a very careful visual examination of Contester, which had been monitored on sonar throughout, and listened on radio circuits to ensure that all was well. Once it had been established that neither Contester nor any of the other fishing vessels in sight were in any difficulty, the submarine proceeded on her way.

The British embassy in Dublin has been in contact with the relevant authorities in the Irish Republic and has also received letters from interested organisations and individuals in connection with this incident.

Australian Service Men (Compensation)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Australian Government have sought any financial compensation from the United Kingdom to offset payments they agreed to make, on 4 September, to Australian service men contaminated by radioactive fallout from United Kingdom nuclear weapons tested in Australia in the 1950s.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have not received any such request from the Australian Federal Government, nor would we expect to do so.

Hydrographer's Department (Sales)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will authorise the Hydrographer's department to reproduce old charts, pilots and fleet review anchor plans for sale to the general public.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The hydrographic office already makes photocopies of old charts and documents available to researchers and other individual inquirers for specific purposes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence informed the House on 18 October at column *155* that the hydrographic office is planned to become a defence support agency from 1 April 1990. I hope that, as such an agency, the office would more easily pursue commercially viable opportunities for wider sales of reproductions of the historic collections in its archives.

Nuclear Tests (Safety)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek advice from the Health and Safety Executive under section 11(5)(b) of the Health and Safety at Work, Etc. Act 1974 as to the health of the United Kingdom participants in the British nuclear weapons test programme 1952-67.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: With regard to the health of United Kingdom participants in the British nuclear weapons test programme, we are completely satisfied with the independent and expert advice already being provided by the national Radiological Protection Board, which is engaged in an ongoing study and is free to consult whichever experts it sees fit. It is not for the Government to dictate the conduct or methodology of that study. Furthermore, the Health and Safety at Work Act did not come into force until 1974 and therefore the Health and Safety Executive had no direct involvement in the trials. It would, therefore, seem inappropriate to consult them and the NRPB has not advised us to do so.

Open Skies

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the open skies aerial surveillance and reconnaissance proposals for co-operation between NATO and the Warsaw pact.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As the May 1989 NATO summit declaration made clear, we consider President Bush's call for an open skies regime to be an important intitiative. It is currently the subject of study and consultations.

Uniter

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the Uniter RAF telecom system; what was the original cost and target completion date; what are his current estimates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Uniter will provide the RAF with a new secure voice and data communications system to support the effective operation of a number of new equipments and systems coming into service in the next few years. Uniter stage 1, involving 12 improved United Kindom air defence ground environment stations, was commissioned and handed over to the RAF in December 1988. Stage 2, involving a further 48 sites, will come into service in the early 1990s.

The equipment delivery programme for stage 2 is proceeding according to schedule. Some equipment costs have, however, increased; and greater than foreseen difficulties with the substantial works programme, combined with high cost escalation in recent years in the civil construction industry, have led to cost and timescale overruns for the programme as a whole. I am considering proposals to strengthen the management arrangements for the remainder of the programme in order to minimise the likelihood of further delays or cost increases.

Red Arrows

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what factors are taken into consideration when deciding the annual programme of appearances at air displays for the Red Arrows; and if he will make a statement regarding next year's programme;

(2) what representations he has received regarding the annual programme for the Red Arrows display team; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date, the Ministry of Defence has received nearly 200 requests for public appearances by the Red Arrows in 1990.

At the end of each year, a Ministry of Defence committee considers all the requests received for appearances by the Red Arrows, and other RAF display teams and aircraft, at public events the following year. The main aims of RAF participation in such events are to create good public relations and to attract recruits into the service. With these aims in mind, the committee considers factors such as likely crowd size, expected media coverage, geographical location, whether repeat performances are being sought, and financial and practical considerations.

The committee plans to meet in December 1989 to decide the programme for the Red Arrows, and the other RAF display teams and aircraft, for 1990.

Weapons (Dismantlement)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what investment in terms of finance and personnel his Department has made in arms control and disarmament verification in the sectors of *(a)* nuclear weapons dismantlement, *(b)* nuclear warhead dismantlement, *(c)* conventional weapons dismantlement and *(d)* chemical and biological weapons detection and dismantlement, in each year since 1979; and what has been for each year the proportion of the annual defence budget devoted to verification issues.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* Demands on the defence budget connected with arms control verification have been met from existing resources and are not accounted for separately. The information requested could therefore be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has had any discussions or plans any future discussions with the defence Minister of any country not party to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty on the joint developments with the United Kingdom of stand-off air-launched nuclear weapons systems.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I have made clear on several occasions, discussions are taking place with both the United States and French Governments on procurement options for the possible replacement of WE177 free-fall bomb.

Army Presentation Team

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Army presentation team started to give presentations on the British Army to invited audiences throughout the United Kingdom; and if he will state the dates and occasions of presentations by the Army presentation team on the British Army to invited audiences in the last 12 months.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Army presentation team was established to explain the vital role of the Army, both regular and reserve, in the defence of the United Kingdom. The first presentation was given in Tunbridge Wells on 4 September 1989, since when further presentations have been given as follows:

	Date
Canterbury	5 September
Guildford	6 September
Portsmouth	11 September
Bletchley	13 September
Shrivenham	14 September
Stirling	26 September
Glasgow	27 September
Galashiels	28 September
Harrow	9 October
Walthamstow	11 October
Marble Arch	17 October
Twickenham	18 October
Lewisham	19 October
Stoke-on-Trent	31 October
Shrewsbury	1 November
Wolverhampton	2 November

Presentations are open to all, and are publicised via the local media.

Ambulances

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Department's ambulances are *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* overseas; and if he will estimate the normal requirements of the service in peacetime.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The armed forces have approximately 1,000 ambulances of various types in service in the United Kingdom and approximately 700 overseas. The services also maintain stocks of vehicles for use in the event of war, however details of such holdings are classified.

The military requirement for ambulances in peacetime centres on the need to provide day-to-day emergency medical cover at service establishments and also the need to ensure that appropriate numbers of vehicles are available for training and exercises. The current size of the military ambulance fleet reflects this.

Cambodia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance Her Majesty's Government are giving towards the military training of each of the factions contending for power in Cambodia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 30 October 1989 at column *43*.

SCOTLAND

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Alan Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the subjects on which he is not prepared to answer parliamentary questions.

Mr. Rifkind: No. I answer all questions which appear to be proper to my responsibilities.

Land Renewal

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the total amount of expenditure on land renewal by the Scottish Development Agency in each of the years 1979-80 to 1988-89 inclusive and *(b)* the estimated expenditure on land renewal in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, at current and constant prices.

Mr. Lang: This information is set out in the table and includes the agency's expenditure on urban renewal and environmental improvement generally. The Government's expenditure plans for the years beyond 1989-90 will be expenditure White Paper early in the New Year.

£ millions

Year	*Cash*	*1988-89 prices*
1979-80	24·9	46·8
1980-81	31·6	50·1
1981-82	24·0	34·7
1982-83	30·7	41·4
1983-84	30·3	39·0
1984-85	36·4	44·7
1985-86	41·2	48·0
1986-87	44·1	49·7
1987-88	44·9	48·2
1988-89	46·5	46·5
[1]1989-90	47·7	[2]44·6

[1] Provisional.

[2] Estimated.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the total number of land renewal schemes started by the Scottish Development Agency in each of the years 1979-80 to 1988-89 inclusive and *(b)* the estimated number of schemes to be started in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the following table. Wide variations in the agency's level of support for individual schemes makes it impossible to give realistic forecasts of the number of schemes which will receive assistance this year or in 1990-91. From 1991-92 onwards, this will of course be a matter for Scottish Enterprise.

	Number of schemes started
1979-80	210
1980-81	70
1981-82	116
1982-83	448
1983-84	264
1984-85	173
1985-86	242
1986-87	287
1987-88	336
1988-89	364

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total expenditure from the land renewal budget of the Scottish Development Agency on the Glasgow garden festival in each of the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table. The table also shows expenditure on the festival in 1988-89.

£ million

Year	*Cash*	*1988-89*
1985-86	2·9	3·4
1986-87	5·5	6·2
1987-88	11·9	12·8
1988-89	3·6	3·6

Public Rights of Way

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy as to whether the Countryside Commission for Scotland will be permitted to fund the erection of a structure which substantially altered the value of a right of way without a variation order being obtained.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* The Countryside Commission for Scotland operates in conformity with the powers and duties contained in the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967. Under the Act, it is the duty of local planning authorities and not of the Commission to assert and protect public rights of way. Questions about the application and interpretation of this duty are matters for the courts to decide.

HEALTH

Hospital Facilities (Closures)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contingency provisions he has made or is contemplating to avoid bed closures and other temporary closures of hospital facilities during Christmas and winter of the current year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for health authorities to decide how health services should be provided to meet local needs and priorities within the resources allocated by the Government.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new district general hospitals have been built or approved in principle in the last 10 years; what was their size in area and in bed provision; and what is the population of the health districts they serve.

Mr. Freeman: District general hospitals are normally developed on a phased basis, each phase or scheme being the subject of a separate approval in principle submission and construction contract. Information held centrally is not therefore in the form requested and could not be provided without incurring disproportionate expense. I have, however, placed in the Library of the House a list of 482 schemes costing over £1 million completed or approved in principle since 1 January 1980, giving the number of beds in each case. (There is some undercounting because *(a)* before 1986 information was only collected on schemes over £2 million and *(b)* central records for 1980-82 are incomplete). Information on the population of health districts is set out in OPCS Monitor PP1/89/1. However hospitals often treat patients from outside their own district boundaries.

Elderly Patients

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of acute hospital in-patients are over the age of 70 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the year ending March 1988, the latest year for which information is available centrally, 24 per cent. of acute patients treated were aged 65 years and over and 12 per cent. were 75 years and over.

Maternity Units

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his Department's guidelines as to the number of births per annum in a district hospital maternity unit for it to be recognised as a training establishment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is not a matter for the Department. The design and accreditation of training for these professional staff is the responsibility of the relevant statutory and professional bodies: the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Shropshire Health Authority

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what increase in patient through put he expected to result from the opening of Telford district hospital at the time he decided to approve plans by the Shropshire health authority to close hospitals in the county and reduce the number of beds available within Shrewsbury.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Shropshire district health authority's consultation document "The future of health services in Shropshire" (January 1988) indicated that the number of in-patients treated across the district would increase in 1990 by about 2,000 a year.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the special programmes for social workers that include training in handling specific cases of child abuse.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government introduced this year the training support programme (child care), which makes available to local authorities grants of 70 per cent. in support of expenditure of £10 million on training for social services staff working in the child care field. Within the programme authorities were asked to give particular emphasis to training for staff handling child abuse and child sexual abuse. The programme will continue in the next financial year.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the definition of child abuse used by his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department's guidance "Working Together" (1988), copies of which are available in the Library, describes child abuse as harm to children by parents, relatives, carers, acquaintances or strangers. Paragraph 5.31 of the guidance details definitions of neglect, physical abuse, emotional and sexual abuse. It states that these categories are not necessarily exhaustive nor mutually exclusive; and that all are encompassed within the term "child abuse".

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what facilities are available for child abusers under the age of 12 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Child abusers under the age of 12 years are eligible for the full range of assessment, treatment and support services provided by local authority social services departments and health authorities. These may include for example placement in residential or foster care, including secure accommodation where appropriate, or provision of psychological and psychiatric services.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children in South Yorkshire are currently on the child abuse register.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Child protection registers record those children who are the subject of an inter-agency plan for the protection of the child. The most recent published information about children and young persons on child protection registers is contained in "Survey of Children and Young Persons on Child Protection Registers Year Ended 31 March 1988". Copies are available in the Library.

NHS Accommodation

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of nurses and other hospital staff living in National Health Service accommodation in the west midlands.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The West Midlands regional health authority estimates that 3,852 nurses and 2,762 other staff were living in NHS accommodation on 23 October 1989.

HIV-positive People

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to issue an update of the Cox estimate of the number of HIV-positive individuals in England and Wales as at the end of 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The estimates of the Cox report are being considered by a group of experts. It is expected that the revised changes will be published early next year.

Waltham Forest Health Authority

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy not to merge Waltham Forest district health authority with any other district health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans for a merger involving Waltham Forest district health authority.

Health Authorities (Capital Charges)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish updated estimates of the capital charges for health authorities under his White Paper proposals.

Mr. Freeman: Health authorities are making good progress in compiling asset registers in preparation for capital charging. Estimates of capital charges will be available when these have been completed and valued.

Community Care

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those district health authorities which are most advanced in the provision of care for the mentally ill in the community.

Mr. Freeman: Many district health authorities are responsible for examples of good practice in relation to health care for people with a mental illness being treated in the community and I referred to some in the written answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) on 13 July at columns *620-25*. We do not have within the Department the information necessary to compile a definitive list of such districts.

BMA

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the chairman of the British Medical Association; and what subject was discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I met Dr. John Marks, the chairman of the British Medical Association, with some of his colleagues on 18 October when we discussed details of the implementation of the proposals in the White Paper, "Working For Patients". It was a friendly and useful meeting.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has recently made to, or received from, the British Medical Association.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Ministers met the British Medical Association on 18 October to discuss the implementation of our proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients". We have also received a number of letters from the BMA about the details of our proposals.

Treatment (Boundaries)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to enable patients to cross district health authority boundaries for treatment in authority areas other than their own, where their own authority cannot provide the treatment concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: GPs are free to refer patients to the consultant of their choice, and consultants are free to refuse or accept such referrals. Sometimes referrals are not accepted when they involve patients from outside the health authority boundary for whom the authority is not remunerated.

Proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" will make it easier for patients to get treatment outside their home district if they choose to do so. Districts will ignore administrative boundaries in ensuring that a comprehensive range of high quality services is available to their population. Money will follow the patient so that all hospitals will have an incentive to offer their services widely. The most popular hospitals that attract patients by the quality of their care will be rewarded. The effect will be to give patients greater choice and better access to the highest standards of service.

Hampstead Health Authority

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the spending per head of the population served by Hampstead district health authority in the year 1987-88; and what is the figure per head on the most nearly comparable basis for *(a)* England and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Freeman: Figures for spending per head of resident population for 1987-88 are shown in the table:

Revenue expenditure per head of resident population
Hospital and community health services[1]

	£
Hampstead District Health Authority	592
England—average for all district health authorities	227
United Kingdom	238

[1] Includes hospital, community health, patient transport (ie. ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.

Sources:

(a) 1987-88 annual accounts of district health authorities in England and those of the analogous health authorities, boards and agencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—as submitted to the central health department in each country.

(b) Mid-year estimates of populations—1987 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

Notes to the table

1. Capital expenditure on hospital and community health services is excluded. Expenditure on family practitioner services (which cannot be strictly attributed to particular districts) and expenditure on personal social services (which in Northern Ireland is accounted for by Health and Social Services Boards) is also excluded.
2. Significant variations in figures for spending per head of population at district level arise principally because:
    - *(a)* people travel across district boundaries for treatment and resource allocations reflect the pattern of service provision locally;
    - *(b)* the population figures used make no allowance for people resident in one district who receive treatment in another or for differences in morbidity and age/sex structure of particular populations.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to commission a study of possible adverse health effects of abandoned and leaking toxic waste dumps.

Mr. Freeman: The Department, with others concerned, would commission a study if there were reasonable grounds to consider that there might be adverse health effects associated with a localised source of pollution.

The Department, with others, has established a small health statistics unit at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. This independent unit is developing new techniques specifically to undertake studies of this sort.

Officials will be discussing with officials at the Department of the Environment whether there are any particular sites used for the disposal of toxic chemicals where environmental contamination may be occurring in circumstances which would make a health study appropriate.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply that the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment gave to him on 26 October at columns *552-53.*

NHS Supplies

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to ensure that in no circumstance the National Health Service should pay more for supplies than the private sector, and that it should pay less when there is a large and regular order.

Mr. Freeman: Existing policy is to seek maximum value for money and commercial awareness in all NHS tendering and contracting practices and procedures.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South on 26 October whether the main suppliers who have offered to supply commercial hearing aid equipment to the National Health Service at reduced prices are now charging the National Health Service the same prices as those charged to private hearing aid dispensers; what is meant by the term main suppliers; and which suppliers are still charging the National Health Service more than they charge the private sector;

(2) pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South on 26 October, if he will request those suppliers of hearing aids who have overcharged the National Health Service either to pay immediate compensation or to lower their prices for a fixed period to such an extent as to fully compensate the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Mersey RHA has completed negotiations on behalf of the NHS with the relatively small group of suppliers who provide commercial hearing aid products to the NHS for special requirement which fall outside that of the established NHS hearing aid range. The NHS accounts for only a small market share of such products in this country.

We welcome the fact that all the suppliers concerned have agreed to supply the NHS at the same wholesale prices as supplied to private hearing aid dispensers. Contract terms and conditions are being established with each supplier by Mersey RHA and the new prices will be effective nationally from 1 December 1989. Suppliers have previously provided hearing aids on the basis of contracts freely entered into by individual health authorities. In these circumstances where there is no evidence of any breach of contract it would not be appropriate to claim compensation.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South on 26 October, if the National Health Service procurement directorate routinely compares prices charged to the National Health Service with those charged to the private sector; when was the last occasion that a major supplier was found to be charging the National Health Service more than the private sector; and what action was taken.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Action is continuously taken by NHS purchasing officers to secure more competitive prices by reference to market or other conditions. It would not be practicable for the procurement directorate to monitor every price charged to the 3,000 points of delivery that exist in the NHS, or to ensure that prices were always lower than those charged to every other purchaser. The NHS is by no means always a main or dominant purchaser, and prices may vary between health authorities according to delivery, service and volume requirements.

Methadone Substitution

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many addicts are on methadone substitution programmes.

Mr. Freeman: The figures published in the Home Office statistical bulletin, issue 13/89, a copy of which is in the Library, record that there were 12,339 drug addicts in the United Kingdom recorded as receiving methadone to treat their addiction as at 31 December 1988.

Vinegar

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the health implications of the consumption of vinegar.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are not aware of any adverse health implications from the normal usage of vinegar (acetic acid).

Drug Treatment Centres

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure by Her Majesty's Government on specialised drug treatment centres, for each year from 1979.

Mr. Freeman: Information relating to the expenditure by health authorities on specialised drug treatment centres is not held centrally.

Illegal Drugs

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he is able to estimate the cost per year to the National Health Service of patients suffering from the effects of illegal drugs.

Mr. Freeman: Because drug misuse has many different effects, which will be treated by a wide range of specific and general medical services, it is not possible to estimate the overall cost to the National Health Service.

However, since 1984 we have committed nearly £65 million of new money to preventing drug misuse and providing services.

Hormone Replacement Therapy

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to fund a research centre at King's College hospital, London to investigate the beneficial effects of hormone replacement therapy on menopausally related problems.

Mr. Freeman: This matter is still under consideration.

NHS Reform

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which of the units that have expressed interest in self-governing status intend to prepare applications to become National Health Service community trusts or National Health Service hospital trusts in April 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I will not be able to receive any formal applications until Parliament has given approval to the necessary legislation. Since it is for the sponsor of the proposal in individual units to decide whether and when to prepare an application, the picture is likely to change over time. Amongst those units interested in self-governing status, some are more advanced than others and are likely to be in a position to apply to become an NHS trust in the first wave in April 1991. Others will follow in due course. The preparation of applications is proceeding in many places and the local sponsors are drawing up plans for service development that concentrate on the benefits that establishing an NHS trust could bring to the unit and its patients. Neither I nor any local sponsors have entered into any final commitment at this stage in respect of any unit. Seventy-nine units currently intend to prepare draft applications for NHS Trust status in 1991. The units are listed in the table.

Northern RHA
Darlington Hospital and Community Services
Freeman Hospital
Newcastle Mental Health Services
North Tyneside District
Northumbria Ambulance Services

Yorkshire RHA
Bradford Acute Services
Leeds General Infirmary and Associated Hospitals
St. James University Hospital, Leeds

Trent RHA
Bassetlaw
Children's Hospital, Sheffield
Doncaster Royal Infirmary and the Montagu Hospital
Lincolnshire Ambulance Service
Nether Edge Hospital, Sheffield
Northern General Hospital
Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield
South Lincolnshire Mental Handicap Services
University Hospital, Nottingham

East Anglian RHA
East Suffolk Community Services
Great Yarmouth and Waveney Priority Services
West Norfolk and Wisbech Community Services
West Norfolk and Wisbech Acute Services

North West Thames RHA
Central Middlesex Hospital
Harefield Hospital
Hillingdon Hospital
Mount Vernon Hospital
North West Hertfordshire Priority Services Unit
North Hertfordshire Acute and Community Services
Northwick Park Hospital

North East Thames RHA
City and Hackney (St. Bartholomew's, Homerton, St. Mark's Hospital Trust)
North Middlesex Hospital
Southend District Services
The London Hospital Group
The Royal Free Hospital
The Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital

South East Thames RHA
Brighton Acute Services
Bromley Acute Services
Eastbourne Acute Services
Guy's and Lewisham Hospitals and associated Mental Illness Services
King's-Camberwell Acute Services and associated Community Services
St. Thomas's Hospital and associated Community Services

South West Thames RHA
Croydon Mental Handicap Unit
Croydon Community Unit
Kingston Hospital
Mid-Downs West Unit
Mid-Surrey General Unit
South West Surrey Acute Unit
St. Helier and Sutton Hospitals

Wessex RHA
Lymington Hospitals
Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases
West Dorset Community and General Hospital Services
West Dorset Mental Health Services

Oxford RHA
Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, Oxford

South Western RHA
Bristol
Cornwall Mental Handicap Services
Cornwall Community Services
East Somerset
East Gloucestershire NHS Trust
Exeter Community Services
North Devon
Plymouth Acute Services
Royal Cornwall Hospitals
South Devon Health Care Trust
West Somerset
West Cornwall
Weston
Wonford Acute Services

West Midlands RHA
Alexandra Hospital
Mid Staffs Mental Health Unit
Mid Staffs Community Unit
Rugby District Services
Walsall Acute Services

Mersey RHA
Broadgreen Hospital, exc. Mersey Regional Cardio-Thoracic Unit
Crewe Acute Services
Halton Community Services
Regional Adult Cardio-Thoracic Unit, Liverpool
Royal Liverpool Children's Hospitals
Whiston St. Helens Hospital

North Western RHA
Central Manchester Hospital and Community Services
Christie Hospital

Pregnancy-related Disease

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women aged 14-16 years, 17-21 years, 22-24 years, 25-30 years, 31-35 years and 36-40 years died from pregnancy-related diseases in each year since 1959.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 28 July 1989]:* The information is not available precisely in the form requested. Details have been extracted from the reports of the confidential inquiry into maternal deaths in England and Wales, which are produced triennially rather than annually. The breakdown of information among age groups is comprehensive but not exactly the same as the age groups requested.

Definitions used in the classification of maternal deaths altered in 1972. Before then they were sub-classified as "true" maternal deaths—resulting from complications of pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium; or "associated" maternal deaths—due to other causes when the deceased woman was know to be pregnant, or had been pregnant within one year.

From 1973 maternal deaths have been sub-classified as "direct"—resulting from obstetric complications of pregnancy, labour and childbirth; "indirect"—resulting from previous existing disease or a disease which developed during pregnancy and which was aggravated by pregnancy; or "fortuitous"—resulting from causes not related to or influenced by pregnancy.

The request for information about "deaths from pregnancy-related diseases" has been interpreted as a request for information on "associated maternal deaths" up to 1972 and to "indirect deaths" thereafter.

Number of Associated/Indirect Maternal Deaths by Age of Mother 1958-1984

	Under 16	*16-17*	*18-19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45+*	*Total*
Year										
"Associated" Deaths										
58-60	—	—[1]	8	40	62	67	51	[2]24	—	252
61-63	1	—	[3]10	49	65	48	45	24	2	244
64-66	—	3	3	30	44	41	29	16	5	176
67-69	—	4	7	60	66	50	29	26	1	243
70-72	1	3	19	58	65	42	46	17	—	251
"Indirect" Deaths										
73-75	—	6	11	34	48	35	14	6	1	155
76-78	1	4	5	11	27	20	6	4	—	78
79-81	—	2	3	29	20	27	5	4	—	90
82-84	1	2	4	16	19	13	13	3	—	71

[1] under 20 years

[2] 40+ years

[3] 16-19 years

Single Mothers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the percentage of single mothers aged 16 to 19 years, by county, in England and Wales.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of families consisting of a single mother with one or more children in each county are not known. However, the county percentages of all births outside marriage in 1988 which were to women aged 16-19 were as follows:

Area	*per cent.*
England and Wales	24·5
England	24·2
Standard regions and counties	
North	30·2
Tyne and Wear	29·2
Cleveland	31·0
Cumbria	29·9
Durham	30·9
Northumberland	32·5
Yorkshire and Humberside	28·5
South Yorkshire	27·5
West Yorkshire	29·5
Humberside	29·0
North Yorkshire	25·6
East Midlands	25·8
Derbyshire	26·7
Leicestershire	24·9
Lincolnshire	28·1
Northamptonshire	23·6
Nottinghamshire	25·9
East Anglia	24·9
Cambridgeshire	24·1
Norfolk	24·9
Suffolk	25·6
South East	19·0
Greater London	15·9
Inner London	14·1
Outer London	17·8
Bedfordshire	21·5
Berkshire	21·8
Buckinghamshire	22·0
East Sussex	18·4
Essex	21·7
Hampshire	24·5
Hertfordshire	23·2
Isle of Wight	26·7
Kent	23·3
Oxfordshire	21·4
Surrey	19·4
West Sussex	22·1
South West	24·3
Avon	22·9
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	25·7
Devon	25·1
Dorset	23·4
Gloucestershire	23·1
Somerset	26·4
Wiltshire	25·4
West Midlands	26·0

Area	*per cent.*
West Midlands	24·6
Hereford and Worcester	26·2
Shropshire	25·6
Staffordshire	30·3
Warwickshire	27·7
North West	27·1
Greater Manchester	27·7
Merseyside	24·6
Cheshire	28·9
Lancashire	28·2
Wales	29·5
Clwyd	26·2
Dyfed	28·1
Gwent	31·9
Gwynedd	23·9
Mid Glamorgan	35·1
Powys	24·9
South Glamorgan	27·0
West Glamorgan	27·8

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Recycled Paper

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether his Department has taken any steps to consider the use of recycled paper for House of Commons publications; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Much of the material published for the House is of archival significance and must be printed on paper of suitable archival quality which is not currently obtainable in paper produced from recycled waste.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will allow fibre-producing or other animals to be added to existing set-aside scheme provision.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to my written answer to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 31 October 1989 at column *129*.

Respiratory Disease

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department has on the incidence of respiratory disease among the agricultural work force; and what steps he is taking to promote improvement in this situation.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

Nineteen cases of occupational respiratory disease occurring in agricultural workers in England and Wales were reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985, in the two years 1986-87 and 1987-88, the two years for which information is available. However, data collected under these regulations is regarded as an incomplete measure of the true incidence of occupational disease. The Executive's employment medical advisory service is about to begin a publicity campaign, lasting 12 months, on occupational lung disease with the objective of increasing the awareness of employers, employees and the medical community to this group of diseases. Also, the Executive is currently supporting a project on the surveillance of occupational lung disease from reports of consultant chest physicians and occupational physicians.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Curry: I met representatives of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations on 25 October when we discussed the 1989 allocations of North sea haddock.

Farm Animal Welfare Council

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many veterinary surgeons are appointed to the Farm Animal Welfare Council; and how many meetings they have participated in during the last two years.

Mr. Curry: The three registered veterinary surgeons referred to in the reply are Professor Webster of Bristol university, Mr. Haxby, ex-president of the BVA and RCVS, and Mr. MacPherson, veterinary consultant and member of the RCVS council.

Meat and Meat Products

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state any current restriction placed by any member state of the European Economic Communities, or any Community authority, on the import into any Community member other than the United Kingdom of meat or meat products currently permitted for sale in the United Kingdom together with the related reasons, and showing what categories of slaughterhouses, or food processing plants, are unacceptable to any of the authorities concerned; and what action he is taking to make such exports possible.

Mr. Currry: West Germany has recently announced that it requires additional certification for beef from the United Kingdom and that it will not accept bovine slaughter by-products for human consumption. We consider these restrictions unjustified on public health grounds and are pursuing the matter with the authorities of the Federal Republic as a matter of urgency.

Slaughterhouse and processing plants in any member state which wish to engage in intra-community trade must be approved as meeting the requirements of directives 64/433 (red meat), 71/118 (poultrymeat) and 77/99 (meat products). Plants operating only under the national rules of member states are not permitted to export. We shall be discussing with the EC Commission and other member states the rules which are to apply to all meat plants on completion of the internal market.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions have been placed by Britain's trading partners on the importation of British meat and bone meal of ruminant derivation.

Mr. Curry: France, West Germany and Israel have set conditions for the import of British meat and bone meal. France requires that British meat and bone meal should not be fed to ruminants. West Germany seeks to require certification that the material is not derived from cattle confirmed or suspected of having BSE. Such cattle in the United Kingdom would in any case be compulsorily slaughtered and their carcases destroyed. Exports to Israel are restricted to meat and bone meal derived from poultry.

Swales Moor Mink Factory

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his inspectors last visited Swales Moor mink factory; what their findings were; and if he will place a copy of the inspector's report in the Library.

Mr. Curry: Officials of the Ministry's wildlife and storage biology discipline and the state veterinary service last visited Swales Moor farm on 26 September and 11 October respectively.

Reports on specific premises obtained during the course of statutory duties are not made public.

Fur Farming

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what minimum conditions have to be complied with by applicants for fur farming licences; and how many such licences are currently extant.

Mr. Curry: A total of 55 licences were issued for the farming of mink in England and eight in Scotland during 1988-89. There are no licensing controls for other species farmed for fur.

Mink farm owners must satisfy the security arrangements specified in the Mink (Keeping) Regulations 1975, as amended in 1982.

Food Irradiation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he has made for the vitamins value of irradiated foodstuffs to be checked; and when he expects to have the results of such tests.

Mr. Maclean: Extensive research by a number of expert bodies has established that food irradiation does not result in any greater loss of vitamins than other comparable food preservation processes. Nevertheless the Government intend, if Parliament approves the introduction of food irradiation, to require details of vitamin content before and after irradiation to be provided by those licensed to undertake the process. This information would be made available to the steering group on food surveillance (SGFS) who would keep under review the nutritional implications of the consumption of irradiated food. The SGFS regularly publishes the results of its work.

Live Animals (Export)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will now establish an independent and representative inquiry into the economics, welfare and transport implications of the export trade in live animals.

Mr. Curry: I have no plans for a specific inquiry but we will take the factors referred to fully into account in negotiating new EC controls on the welfare of animals during transport.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions in each of the past five years his officials have accompanied shipments of live food animals to destinations in Europe; and with what results.

Mr. Curry: Monitoring the welfare of animals transported in other Community countries is essentially a matter for the authorities of those countries. Nevertheless in the last five years nine export journeys of food animals have been accompanied by representatives of our state veterinary service under arrangements agreed with the countries concerned.

Myopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department has on the incidence of myopathy in deer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has no information on the incidence of myopathy in deer.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total expenditure on structural and support measures in the common agricultural policy in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what is the total British contribution to the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Curry: Total expenditure in the European Community on structural and support measures under the common agricultural policy was 28·9 billion ECU (£19·6 billion) in 1988. This was about 65 per cent. of the total EC budget. The United Kingdom's net contribution to the EC budget in 1988 was £1·36 billion.

Badgers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the release of lactating sow badgers trapped as part of his Department's tuberculosis control scheme; and whether he authorises any exceptions to this policy.

Mr. Curry: Lactating sow badgers trapped during official badger removal operations are released.

All possible precautions are taken to avoid taking them by mistake and, as such, where doubt exists, they are released.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions during the last 12 months operatives from or on behalf of his Department have used snares for the purpose of catching badgers under the tuberculosis control scheme.

Mr. Curry: Since 1 November 1988 snares have been employed in eight badger investigations. Snares are used as a last resort, under careful supervision, when it is either not possible to use traps or when traps have proved ineffective.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has revised his guidelines on the trapping of badgers under tuberculosis control release;

whether any trapping is authorised other than on farms where tuberculosis has recently been confirmed; and what definition is used for these purposes of the word "recently."

Mr. Curry: Revised procedures, allowing a single trapping period of four months rather than a three-month period with follow-up trapping, have been introduced. There have been no other changes in the guidelines for trapping procedures, which are based upon the recommendations of the Dunnet report published in 1986. No trapping is carried out beyond those breakdown farms where badgers have been implicated in the transmission of the disease to cattle. Investigations into the cause of breakdowns are carried out as quickly as is practicable and the word recently is not used.

Cereals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the respective acreages and yields for the last five years of *(a)* wheat, *(b)* barley, *(c)* oats, *(d)* rye and *(e)* other cereals produced in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: The information is as follows:

Cereal area and yield 1985-1989
Area ('000 ha.) Yield (tonnes/ha.)

	1985		*1986*		*1987*		*1988*		*[1]1989*	
	Area	*Yield*	*Area*	*Yield*	*Area*	*Yield*	*Area*	*Yield*	*Area*	*Yield*
Wheat	1,902	6·33	1,997	6·96	1,994	5·99	1,886	6·23	2,106	6·55
Barley	1,966	4·95	1,917	5·22	1,831	5·04	1,878	4·67	1,662	4·81
Oats	134	4·59	97	5·16	99	4·57	120	4·50	121	4·55
Rye	8	4·64	7	4·72	7	4·76	7	4·57	7	4·12
Mixed Corn	7	4·27	7	4·31	6	4·50	5	4·19	5	4·14

[1] provisional.

Eggs

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many laying hens producing eggs for human consumption there were on British farms in *(a)* September 1988 and *(b)* September 1989; and how many individual flocks of such poultry there were on the same dates.

Mr. Curry: Information is not available in the form requested.

Details of the numbers of fowls laying eggs for human consumption, and the number of holdings in Great Britain on which laying fowls are recorded, taken from the agricultural census which is held in June each year, are given in the table.

Year	*Number of fowls producing eggs for eating (millions)*	*Number of holdings (thousands)*
1988	33·931	38·2
1989[1]	31·216	36·6

[1] Provisional.

Very small holdings which make only occasional returns are excluded from these figures.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he anticipates announcing modifications to the Testing of Poulty Flocks Order to assist the smaller egg producer.

Mr. Curry: The Poultry Laying Flocks (Testing and Registration etc.) Order 1989 came into operation on 26 October 1989, replacing the provisions in the Testing of Poultry Flocks Order 1989 which related to flocks producing eggs for human consumption. The new order reduces the required frequency of sampling and provides for a simpler sampling method involving the collection of droppings. These changes will, without compromising the protection of public health, lead to a considerable reduction in the cost of testing, particularly for small flocks.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table of average egg prices for each month of the current year.

Mr. Curry: The average packer to producer price (in terms of pence per dozen) for each of the last 12 months has been as follows:

	pence
January	25·0
February	28·5
March	29·7
April	32·0
May	35·7
June	36·2
July	35·1
August	38·9
September	45·1
[1]October	45·7

[1] provisional.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of laying hens in the United Kingdom at the latest date for which figures are available and on the equivalent date of 1988.

Mr. Curry: Details of the size of the laying flock in the United Kingdom, taken from the United Kingdom agricultural census which is held in June each year, are given in the table. These figures are for fowls laying eggs for human consumption and include estimates for very small holdings in England and Wales (but not for Scotland or Northern Ireland).

Number of fowls producing eggs for eating

Year	*millions*
1988	37·389
[1]1989	34·152

[1] provisional.

Farmers Union of Wales

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions in 1988 and 1989 either he, or his predecessor, or his officials, have met representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales.

Mr. Curry: Meetings with the Farmers Union of Wales are, in the first instance, for the Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), and his Department. However, there are occasional meetings between representatives of the union and Ministers and officials of my Department. The most recent such occasion occurred last week, when I held discussions on sheep scab.

EC (Fraud)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent measures his Department has taken to combat European Community fraud.

Mr. Curry: The Government have taken the initiative in the Council of Ministers on several occasions to press for further action to deal with fraud in the common agricultural policy and good progress is now being made on strengthening controls. Proposals are currently under discussion which would require member states to carry out annual physical checks on intervention stocks and a minimum level of inspections on consignments attracting export refunds; and to improve the system of audit checks on firms making or receiving CAP payments. My Department is actively involved in these negotiations and is working towards early implementation. In addition, new anti-fraud controls and penalties have recently been introduced into a number of CAP schemes, such as the suckler-cow premium beef special premium and durum wheat production aid.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 6 November 1989

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Bostik

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received representations concerning the proposed sale by Black and Decker of Bostik of Leicester to Orkem.

Mr. Redwood: I am not aware of having received any such representations.

Computer Codes

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps the Government are taking to construct satisfactory criteria to be met by all computer codes which may be used as part of the decision-making processes involving public safety.

Mr. Forth: The Government are particularly concerned to ensure that safety-related systems are constructed to satisfactory standards; the identification and apportionment of risk attributable to software within systems is part of this process. They are actively taking steps to encourage the development of suitable standards and guidelines, at both national and international levels, to be met by all systems incorporating software on which public safety may in some way depend. The work is motivated not by a recognition of particular present dangers; rather by a desire to anticipate and forestall hazards which may arise with the very rapid pace of technical change.

Activity is being co-ordinated by a working group of the Interdepartmental Committee on Software Engineering (ICSE) on which all interested Government Departments are represented.

The working group, drawing on expertise from outside Government, is currently devising a strategy which includes the development of a requirement for harmonised standards applicable to the civil and defence sectors. The strategy will also embrace research and development, education and training, and the encouragement of technology transfer to equip software producers for the high quality of work to be demanded. The ICSE work on safety-related software is a particular aspect of the efforts of the Department of Trade and Industry to encourage higher quality software in general through the promotion of best practice, support for standards-making, and the establishment of certification schemes where appropriate.

A number of studies have recently been carried out, for example, by the Health and Safety Executive, and jointly by the Institution of Electrical Engineers and the British Computer Society (with financial support from the Department of Trade and Industry). The recommendations resulting from this work are being considered by ICSE in the development of its strategy. In particular, ICSE is working on a standards framework proposed by the Health and Safety Executive, which will take into account interim defence standards 00-55 (requirements for the procurement of safety critical software in defence equipment) and 00-56 (requirements for the analysis of safety critical hazards) as well as international standards currently being produced. The framework which eventually emerges from the ICSE work will, after normal consultation with United Kingdom industry, be presented to the International Electro Technical Commission, a body with a wide membership, whose responsibilities include the production of international standards for computer-based systems and the software used therein.

"Single Market News"

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what guidelines are followed when allowing firms to advertise within his departmental publication "Single Market News".

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* Advertising is accepted on normal commercial terms and in accordance with the British code of advertising practice.

Inward Investment

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give a breakdown of inward investment in the United Kingdom, by standard English regions and for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, for each of the years 1979-80 to 1988-89 inclusive showing *(a)* the total number of investments, *(b)* the number received as a percentage of the total in each year, *(c)* the total number of associated jobs both new and safeguarded, *(d)* the number of jobs as a percentage of the total in each year and *(e)* the total amount of Government financial assistance provided.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* The table sets out the number of inward investment decisions known to the invest in Britain bureau for the calendar years 1979-88, together with the value of regional selective assistance offers to foreign-owned companies in England, Scotland and Wales and the financial assistance offered in Northern Ireland to such companies. It is currently not possible to provide all the information requested on a financial year basis.

Number of inward investment decisions
Regional breakdown
Scotland

	Number of projects	*New jobs*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*	*Government assistance (£ million)*
1979	28 (15·3)	2,757 (19·3)	n/a	2,757 (19·3)	15·8
1980	31 (20·0)	4,474 (24·0)	n/a	4,474 (24·0)	18·8
1981	28 (21·0)	5,756 (35·1)	n/a	5,756 (35·1)	22·1
1982	28 (21·0)	2,258 (21·4)	n/a	2,258 (21·4)	13·6

	Number of projects		*New jobs*		*Safeguarded jobs*		*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*		*Government assistance (£ million)*
1983	49	(20·8)	5,135	(33·0)	3,432	(22·5)	8,567	(27·8)	25·9
1984	74	(22·6)	8,761	(32·3)	1,463	(7·6)	10,224	(22·0)	45·8
1985	57	(15·2)	4,971	(19·4)	2,922	(15·6)	7,893	(17·8)	36·8
1986	36	(10·6)	1,881	(11·6)	607	(5·6)	2,488	(9·2)	12·7
1987	31	(10·2)	3,704	(18·6)	2,061	(12·1)	5,765	(15·6)	22·1
1988	58	(17·6)	5,392	(20·3)	1,978	(10·9)	7,370	(16·5)	24·8

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

Figures in brackets apply to percentage of total for each region. These figures refer to decisions known to the IBB, and are provided by the companies themselves. The jobs are those associated with the projects over the long term.

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

Wales

	Number of projects		*New jobs*		*Safeguarded jobs*		*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*		*Government assistance (£ million)*
1979	18	(9·8)	854	(6·0)	n/a		854	(6·0)	3·7
1980	16	(10·3)	3,332	(17·9)	n/a		3,332	(47·9)	4·5
1981	20	(15·0)	1,986	(12·1)	n/a		1,986	(12·1)	11·6
1982	17	(12·8)	901	(8·6)	n/a		901	(8·6)	13·5
1983	31	(13·1)	2,116	(13·6)	1,913	(12·5)	4,029	(13·1)	10·9
1984	42	(12·8)	3,958	(14·6)	5,015	(26·0)	8,973	(19·3)	29·8
1985	45	(12·0)	2,416	(9·4)	1,350	(7·2)	3,766	(8·5)	21·6
1986	49	(14·5)	2,364	(14·5)	2,232	(20·7)	4,596	(17·0)	14·6
1987	57	(18·8)	3,954	(19·9)	877	(5·6)	4,831	(13·1)	18·1
1988	55	(16·7)	5,856	(22·1)	2,085	(11·5)	7,941	(17·8)	14·9

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

Figures in brackets apply to percentage of total for each region. These figures refer to decisions known to the IBB, and are provided by the companies themselves. The jobs are those associated with the projects over the long term.

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

Northern Ireland

	Number of projects		*New jobs*		*Safeguarded jobs*		*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*		*Government assistance[1] (£ million)*
1979	18	(9·8)	2,794	(19·5)	n/a		2,794	(19·5)	—
1980	20	(12·9)	2,760	(14·8)	n/a		2,760	(14·8)	—
1981	15	(11·3)	2,429	(14·8)	n/a		2,429	(14·8)	—
1982	6	(4·5)	1,893	(18·0)	n/a		1,893	(18·0)	—
1983	11	(4·7)	548	(3·5)	1,192	(7·8)	1,740	(5·6)	20·4
1984	27	(8·2)	2,256	(8·3)	2,876	(14·9)	5,132	(11·1)	42·1
1985	22	(5·9)	771	(3·0)	1,424	(7·6)	2,195	(5·0)	31·0
1986	18	(5·3)	693	(4·3)	1,722	(16·0)	2,415	(8·9)	27·1
1987	17	(5·6)	946	(4·8)	1,341	(7·9)	2,287	(6·2)	25·6
1988	22	(6·7)	2,610	(9·8)	916	(5·1)	3,526	(7·9)	57·5

[1] Figures for financial assistance in Northern Ireland are only available since the Industrial Development Board was established and are only available on a financial year basis.

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

Figures in brackets apply to percentage of total for each region. These figures refer to decisions known to the IBB, and are provided by the companies themselves. The jobs are those associated with the projects over the long term.

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

North East

	Number of projects		*New jobs*		*Safeguarded jobs*		*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*		*Government assistance (£ million)*
1979	21	(11·5)	1,466	(10·2)	n/a		1,466	(10·2)	7·1
1980	19	(12·3)	2,923	(15·7)	n/a		2,923	(15·7)	5·6
1981	14	(10·5)	1,021	(6·2)	n/a		1,021	(6·2)	8·5

	Number of projects		New jobs		Safeguarded jobs		Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)		Government assistance (£ million)
1982	15	(11·3)	539	(5·1)	n/a		539	(5·1)	4·1
1983	20	(8·5)	1,066	(6·9)	720	(4·7)	1,786	(5·8)	1·9
1984	29	(8·8)	4,589	(16·9)	230	(1·2)	4,819	(10·4)	42·8
1985	26	(6·9)	1,987	(7·8)	1,572	(8·4)	3,559	(8·0)	10·2
1986	30	(8·8)	1,581	(9·7)	1,158	(10·8)	2,739	(10·1)	6·9
1987	31	(10·2)	3,491	(17·5)	852	(5·0)	4,343	(11·8)	15·6
1988	22	(6·7)	2,041	(7·7)	31	(0·2)	2,072	(4·6)	17·1

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

Figures in brackets apply to percentage of total for each region. These figures refer to decisions known to the IBB, and are provided by the companies themselves. The jobs are those associated with the projects over the long term.

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

North West

	Number of projects		New jobs		Safeguarded jobs		Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)		Government assistance (£ million)
1979	9	(4·9)	379	(2·6)	n/a		379	(2·6)	7·5
1980	15	(9·7)	913	(4·9)	n/a		913	(4·9)	2·9
1981	12	(9·0)	1,177	(7·2)	n/a		1,177	(7·2)	5·9
1982	14	(10·5)	1,291	(12·3)	n/a		1,291	(12·3)	3·1
1983	22	(9·3)	709	(4·6)	1,114	(7·3)	1,823	(5·9)	1·9
1984	40	(12·2)	1,135	(4·2)	1,911	(9·9)	3,046	(6·6)	1·2
1985	28	(7·5)	2,271	(8·9)	1,378	(7·4)	3,649	(8·2)	10·1
1986	34	(10·0)	1,400	(8·6)	1,389	(12·9)	2,789	(10·3)	17·2
1987	22	(7·3)	356	(1·8)	1,946	(11·4)	2,302	(6·2)	16·1
1988	24	(7·3)	1,604	(6·0)	3,169	(17·5)	4,773	(10·7)	18·7

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

Figures in brackets apply to percentage of total for each region. These figures refer to decisions known to the IBB, and are provided by the companies themselves. The jobs are those associated with the projects over the long term.

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

Yorkshire and Humberside

	Number of projects		New jobs		Safeguarded jobs		Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)		Government assistance (£ million)
1979	27	(14·8)	1,176	(8·2)	n/a		1,176	(8·2)	5·4
1980	17	(11·0)	890	(4·8)	n/a		890	(4·8)	1·6
1981	6	(4·5)	167	(1·0)	n/a		167	(1·0)	0·3
1982	7	(5·3)	104	(0·9)	n/a		104	(1·0)	1·9
1983	10	(4·2)	345	(2·2)	502	(3·3)	847	(2·7)	0·4
1984	7	(2·1)	119	(0·4)	860	(4·5)	979	(2·1)	1·1
1985	16	(4·3)	2,263	(8·8)	2,969	(15·9)	5,232	(11·8)	6·7
1986	11	(3·2)	158	(0·9)	57	(0·5)	215	(0·7)	7·9
1987	22	(7·3)	938	(4·7)	961	(5·7)	1,899	(5·1)	4·3
1988	14	(4·2)	1,507	(5·7)	250	(1·4)	1,757	(3·9)	2·4

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

Figures in brackets apply to percentage of total for each region. These figures refer to decisions known to the IBB, and are provided by the companies themselves. The jobs are those associated with the projects over the long term.

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

West Midlands

	Number of projects		New jobs		Safeguarded jobs		Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)		Government assistance (£ million)
1979	11	(6·0)	864	(6·0)	n/a		864	(6·0)	0·0
1980	3	(1·9)	1,040	(5·6)	n/a		1,040	(5·6)	0·0
1981	7	(5·3)	425	(2·6)	n/a		425	(2·6)	0·0
1982	1	(0·7)	100	(0·9)	n/a		100	(0·9)	0·0

	Number of projects	*New jobs*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*	*Government assistance (£ million)*
1983	13 (5·5)	1,201 (7·7)	3,179 (20·8)	4,380 (14·2)	0·0
1984	14 (4·3)	1,531 (5·6)	5,240 (27·2)	6,771 (14·6)	0·0
1985	63 (16·8)	5,197 (20·3)	1,375 (7·4)	6,572 (14·8)	2·7
1986	74 (21·8)	4,393 (27·0)	1,899 (17·7)	6,292 (23·3)	5·1
1987	50 (16·5)	3,002 (15·1)	1,952 (11·5)	4,954 (13·4)	18·1
1988	66 (20·0)	3,656 (13·8)	7,824 (43·2)	11,480 (25·7)	8·3

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

Figures in brackets apply to percentage of total for each region. These figures refer to decisions known to the IBB, and are provided by the companies themselves. The jobs are those associated with the projects over the long term.

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

East Midlands

	Number of projects	*New jobs*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*	*Government assistance (£ million)*
1979	15 (8·2)	1,174 (8·2)	n/a	1,174 (8·2)	0·2
1980	5 (3·2)	276 (1·5)	n/a	276 (1·5)	0·8
1981	8 (6·0)	290 (1·8)	n/a	290 (1·8)	0·5
1982	13 (9·8)	848 (8·1)	n/a	848 (8·1)	0·7
1983	12 (5·1)	939 (6·0)	80 (0·5)	1,019 (3·3)	3·6
1984	11 (3·4)	658 (2·4)	303 (1·6)	961 (2·1)	2·5
1985	19 (5·1)	778 (3·0)	0 0	778 (1·8)	1·9
1986	15 (4·4)	557 (3·4)	20 (0·1)	577 (2·1)	0·4
1987	11 (3·6)	456 (2·3)	398 (2·3)	854 (2·3)	0·2
1988	16 (4·8)	836 (3·1)	880 (4·9)	1,716 (3·8)	0·7

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

Figures in brackets apply to percentage of total for each region. These figures refer to decisions known to the IBB, and are provided by the companies themselves. The jobs are those associated with the projects over the long term.

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

South East

	Number of projects	*New jobs*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*	*Government assistance (£ million)*
1979	23 (12·6)	908 (6·3)	n/a	908 (6·3)	0·0
1980	23 (14·6)	1,046 (5·6)	n/a	1,046 (5·6)	0·0
1981	15 (11·3)	967 (5·9)	n/a	967 (5·9)	0·0
1982	25 (18·8)	1,300 (12·4)	n/a	1,300 (12·4)	0·0
1983	59 (25·0)	3,036 (19·5)	2,667 (17·5)	5,703 (18·5)	0·0
1984	70 (21·3)	2,731 (10·1)	810 (4·2)	3,541 (7·6)	0·0
1985	84 (22·4)	3,649 (14·3)	5,712 (30·5)	9,361 (21·1)	0·0
1986	60 (17·7)	2,118 (13·0)	1,148 (10·7)	3,266 (12·1)	0·0
1987	50 (16·5)	2,503 (12·6)	599 (3·5)	3,102 (8·4)	0·0
1988	45 (13·6)	2,240 (8·4)	983 (5·4)	3,223 (7·2)	0·0

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

Figures in brackets apply to percentage of total for each region. These figures refer to decisions known to the IBB, and are provided by the companies themselves. The jobs are those associated with the projects over the long term.

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

South West

	Number of projects	*New jobs*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*	*Government assistance (£ million)*
1979	13 (7·1)	1,938 (13·5)	n/a	1,938 (13·5)	1·5
1980	6 (3·9)	1,008 (5·4)	n/a	1,008 (5·4)	0·5
1981	8 (6·0)	2,199 (13·4)	n/a	2,199 (13·4)	0·1
1982	7 (5·3)	1,295 (12·3)	n/a	1,295 (12·3)	4·3
1983	9 (3·8)	451 (2·9)	458 (3·0)	909 (2·9)	1·2

	Number of projects	*New jobs*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*	*Government assistance (£ million)*
1984	14 (4·3)	1,364 (5·0)	586 (3·0)	1,950 (4·2)	3·1
1985	15 (4·0)	1,281 (5·0)	19 (0·1)	1,300 (2·9)	1·2
1986	12 (3·5)	1,129 (6·9)	528 (4·9)	1,657 (6·1)	1·8
1987	11 (3·6)	564 (2·8)	328 (1·9)	892 (2·4)	1·5
1988	5 (1·5)	479 (1·8)	0 (0)	479 (1·1)	3·3

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

Figures in brackets apply to percentage of total for each region. These figures refer to decisions known to the IBB, and are provided by the companies themselves. The jobs are those associated with the projects over the long term.

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

United Kingdom (not specified)

	Number of projects	*New jobs*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*	*Government assistance (£ million)*
1987	1 (0·3)	— —	5,700 (33·5)	5,700 (15·4)	—
1988	3 (0·9)	325 (1·2)	0 (0)	325 (0·7)	—

Notes:

Figures in brackets apply to percentage of total for each region. These figures refer to decisions known to the IBB, and are provided by the companies themselves. The jobs are those associated with the projects over the long term.

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

Total United Kingdom

	Number of projects	*New jobs*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Total jobs (New jobs + Safeguarded jobs)*	*Government assistance[1] (£ million)*
1979	183	14,310	n/a	14,310	41·2
1980	155	18,662	n/a	18,662	34·7
1981	133	16,417	n/a	16,417	49·0
1982	133	10,529	n/a	10,529	41·2
1983	236	15,546	15,257	30,803	45·9
1984	328	27,102	19,294	46,396	126·3
1985	375	25,584	18,721	44,305	91·2
1986	339	16,274	10,760	27,034	66·6
1987	303	19,914	17,015	36,929	96·0
1988	330	26,546	18,116	44,662	90·2

[1] Excludes Northern Ireland.

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

Figures for Government assistance in England, Scotland and Wales are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance accepted by foreign-owned companies in the years shown. (NB: by no means all inward investment projects receive RSA.) Comparable information on other forms of financial assistance is not available.

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are *(a)* the most recent figures for homelessness by county and metropolitan district in England and *(b)* as a percentage of the population in county and metropolitan districts in England;

(2) what are the most recent figures for homelessness for England and by English regions as a percentage of the population;

(3) what are the most recent figures for homelessness for England, with regional breakdowns.

Mr. Chope: Figures for homelessness for non-metropolitan and metropolitan districts appear in table 7 of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the second quarter 1989. Supplementary Tables". This table gives the numbers of homeless acceptances and acceptances per 1,000 households for those districts which reported.

The latest estimates of households accepted as homeless expressed as numbers and per 1,000 households for England and by regions appear respectively in tables 1(a) and 1(b) of the same publication. Tables 1(a) and 1(b) include estimates for non-responders.

A copy of the supplementary tables is available in the Library.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of young people under 18 years of age who are currently homeless; and how these estimates have changed over the last three years.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* The numbers of young people among the households accepted as homeless are not reported by local authorities and my Department has no estimates.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department's records of correspondence from hon. Members are stored on a computer system. The system incorporates certain basic data for each case, including the length of time taken to send a reply to each letter.

Council House Sales

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is considering introducing any new schemes to promote the sale of council homes in England.

Mr. Chope: I shall be considering the experimental schemes recently announced in Scotland and Wales to enable tenants to buy their homes while deferring payment of part of the purchase price.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council homes were sold in 1988; what were the figures for five, 10 and 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is as follows:

Local authority and new town sales, England

(Thousands)

	1973	*1978*	*1983*	*1988*
Number of sales	39	30	137	142

It is clear that the right to buy, introduced in 1980, continues to meet the desire of very many tenants to take on the responsibilities of home ownership.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold in the northern region since 1980.

Mr. Chope: From April 1980 to June 1989 an estimated 74,000 dwellings were sold by local authorities and new towns in the northern region.

Housing (Rents)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average *(a)* council home rent, *(b)* new town development corporation home rent, and *(c)* housing association rent in England.

Mr. Chope: The estimated average weekly unrebated rent for local authority dwellings in England in April 1989 was £20·62; for new town dwellings it was £21·20.

For housing associations the average rent for fair rent lettings in the first half of 1989 was £26·47. Since January this year most new lettings by housing associations have been on assured tenancies but information about the rents charged under such tenancies is not yet available.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Housing Corporation has been given permission to issue index-linked housing loan stock to participants in self-build schemes for rent.

Mr. Chope: The Housing Corporation and the Department are currently examining a proposition of this kind.

European Environment Agency

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which body will make the final decision about the location of the European Environment Agency.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It will be for the Council of Ministers to make the final decision about the location of the European Environment Agency.

Land Sales

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of publicly-owned land in the northern region have been sold since 1980; and how many are still held.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is not held centrally. The Department's land register for public bodies covered by part X of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 records unused and underused land. At 30 September the register shows that in the northern region pubic bodies had disposed of 4,700 acres of such land since 1980; 10,100 acres remained on the register.

Hazardous Waste Cargoes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the requirements for cargo checks and physical assay of hazardous and toxic waste cargoes imported into the United Kingdom when border deregulation is implemented with the single European Market on 1 January 1993.

Mr. Trippier: Controls over tranfrontier movement of hazardous wastes are based on prior notifications to the waste disposal authority responsible for the intended disposal facility and do not depend on cargo checks or assay at borders. Waste disposal authorities already have wide powers to inspect and take samples, wherever necessary, in the performance of their functions. The European Commission has accepted that after the creation of the single market controls on movements of hazardous waste between member states will still be necessary.

Industrial Pollution

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public money was spent on clearing up pollution and environmental damage resulting from the release of pollutants into the environment by industry, in each of the last 10 years for the United Kingdom as a whole; and how much of this sum was spent in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This information is not collected in the form requested. Some expenditures incurred by public undertakings in dealing with environmental pollution are published for England and Wales in my Department's digest of environmental protection and water statistics but these cover much more than clearing up.

Community Charge

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend the community charge legislation in order to exempt from liability to pay the charge all persons who are in receipt of attendance allowance.

Mr. Chope: No, but my right hon. Friend intends to amend the legislation by order to enable anyone who is in receipt of attendance allowance, or constant attendance allowance, and who is severely mentally impaired to be exempt from the community charge. This will enable people suffering from degenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease to qualify for exemption.

Radioactive Waste, Drigg

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter dated 6 October from the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Woodgreen relating to the Sixth Report of the Environment Committee, session 1988-89 "Disposal of Low-level Radioactive Waste at Drigg."

Mr. Trippier: Yes. The text of my hon. Friend's letter is as follows:

> "I was interested to see your Committee's report on the "Disposal of Low-Level Radioactive Waste at Drigg" which was published in August. I am pleased that the Committee welcomed the progress that has been made by British Nuclear Fuels plc to respond to the Committee's earlier criticisms of the Drigg operation and to implement the Committee's recommendations.
>
> BNFL has made substantial efforts to improve the Drigg site and to reduce any environmental impact. This, and the company's commitment to further improvements, is encouraging news.
>
> I note, however, that the Committee considers there is still some work to be done in reducing the volume of waste being sent to the site. The Department agrees and will continue to press the waste producers to reduce the volume of the waste prior to disposal".

Pollution

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what safeguards there are to ensure that public funds do not go to businesses or activities which cause pollution and environmental damage.

Mr. Trippier: We have a legislative framework which provides systems for controlling pollution across all environmental media. We have strengthened the control of water pollution with the passage of the Water Act 1989. We propose to improve the effectiveness of other control systems with further environmental protection legislation. This framework provides the safeguard, and industrial and other activities, whether supported by public funds or not, must be regulated by these controls.

Public Standpipes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how payment is to be made to water undertakers for water taken from a public standpipe for domestic use when drought conditions exist.

Mr. Howard: There is no separate charge to domestic consumers for water taken from public standpipes erected during a period of water shortage.

Civil Service Dispersal

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of those sections of his Department which have been relocated in the last five years, indicating the sites to which they have been moved; whether consideration is being given to future relocation of London-based sections of his Department to sites outside London; and whether the central Borders of Scotland has been identified as a suitable area for any future moves.

Mr. Chris Patten: Around 38 per cent. of the Department of the Environment's staff of approximately 6,000 (excluding the Property Services Agency) are already located outside London, 24 per cent. outside the south-east. The Department's eastern regional office moved from London to Bedford last year. Staff working for the newly-established Historic Royal Palaces Agency have recently moved from central London to Hampton Court palace.

Information about the Department's review currently being carried out of the scope for further relocation was given in reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) on 21 July (*Official Report*, Vol. 157, col. *785*.)

Apart from the Property Services Agency, the Department's work is principally concerned with policies affecting England. We have not, therefore, considered locating posts in Scotland.

Seventy per cent. of the PSA's staff of 22,800 are already located outside London, 45 per cent. outside the south-east. The PSA is being restructured in preparation for privatisation, and the scope for further relocation is being examined through the business planning process.

Council House Building

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council dwellings were started in England and Wales for 1988; and how many starts have occurred in 1989.

Mr. Chope: Figures of local authority and new town housebuilding starts in England appear in table 2 of my Department's press release number 577 issued on 2 November 1989, a copy of which is available in the Library.

For information on Wales I refer to the hon. Member to the Secretary of State for Wales.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement in respect of damage in Yorkshire and Humberside to sites of special scientific interest *(a)* at Thorne, Crowle and Goole Moors *(b)* Sandall Beat wood and *(c)* Shirley Pool.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The latest information on these sites is being assembled by the Nature Conservancy Council. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the table placed in the Library on 19 July illustrating the impact, in each local authority area, of a system of local government finance based on a local income tax and on a system which combines local income tax with capital value based domestic rates, making the same assumptions but reflecting his estimates of 1990-91 expenditure, standard spending assessments and aggregate external finance.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today placed a table in the Library showing the figures requested, consistent with the announcements my right hon. Friend made in his statement today and with the exemplications of his proposals which he has sent to local authorities.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the terms for the payment of community charge transitional relief in 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what will be the amount of relief granted.

Mr. Chris Patten: On 11 October my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State announced in the other place details of the community charge transitional relief scheme. In 1990-91 the estimated cost of relief is £300 million. Transitional relief will be phased out over a three year period. The arrangements for future years are that in 1991-92 the amount of relief granted to an individual in 1990-91 will be reduced by 25p a week and by a further 25p in 1992-93. The cost of relief in 1991-92 is estimated to be £230 million and in 1992-93 £180 million.

Travel Passes

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to provide the money to local authorities to ensure that free bus travel passes are available for retired persons.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* The main avenue for Government support for local authority services will be revenue support grant, which is in aid of services generally. It is for local authorities to decide how much to spend on any particular activity, and in particular to decide the extent to which they support concessionary fare schemes.

Housing (Barnsley)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met Barnsley metropolitan borough council to discuss its housing needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* My officials met Barnsley metropolitan borough council on 3 October 1989 to discuss the district's housing needs and the council's proposed housing investment programme. The outcome of these discussions will be taken into account when the decisions are taken on the allocation of housing resources to Barnsley for the next financial year.

Right to Buy

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many right-to-buy applicants in each of the London boroughs were awaiting the determination of appeals to the district valuer at the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* The following table gives the number of right to buy valuation appeals awaiting determination by district valuers at 19 October. It excludes appeals which have not yet passed to district valuers or which have recently been the subject of determination reports to the local authority and the applicant:

District	*Number*
Barking	20
Barnet	19
Bexley	4
Brent	24
Bromley	2
Camden	323
Croydon	44
Ealing	11
Enfield	8
Greenwich	384
Hackney	33
Hammersmith and Fulham	36
Haringey	18
Harrow	4
Havering	38
Hillingdon	4
Hounslow	21
Islington	51
Kensington and Chelsea	3
Kingston	3
Lambeth	34
Lewisham	81
Merton	9
Newham	68
Redbridge	18
Richmond	2
Southwark	59
Sutton	18
Tower Hamlets	93
Waltham Forest	11
Wandsworth	17
Westminster	29
City	0

These figures suggest that the boroughs with very high numbers of appeals to the district valuer should be reviewing their valuation policies.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the arrangements that have been made to assist overseas Governments, should they have a major nuclear accident.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom signed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) convention on assistance in the case of a nuclear accident or radiological emergency as soon as it was opened for signature in September 1986. As at 28 September 1989 this convention had been signed by 70 states and ratified by 37 states. Copies of this convention are available in the Library (Cm. 566).

We undertook, on signature, to act as if bound by the convention pending ratification which is expected to take place early next year.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Prime Minister if she will set up a special unit in Downing street to deal with the problem of child abuse.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

United Nations Environment Programme

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to announce an increase in the United Kingdom contribution to the United Nations environment programme when she addresses the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 8 November.

The Prime Minister: I announced in March this year that the United Kingdom will increase its contribution to the United Nations environment programme to £3 million.

Textile Industry

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if she will appoint a Minister of the House responsible for policy relating to the textile industry; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied with the present arrangements.

Immigration and Nationality Policy

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister why responsibility for immigration and nationality policy has been passed to a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Responsibility for immigration and nationality policy rests with the Secretary of State for the Home Department. He will be assisted in the discharge of this duty by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd). They will continue the firm and fair administration of our immigration laws.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the model transitional agreements which he has suggested as viable contractual agreements between British Coal and National Power and Power Gen to take effect after the privatisation of electricity.

Mr. Wakeham: Coal contracts are a matter for commercial negotiation between British Coal and the generators.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what date has now been fixed for the sale to the private sector of each component branch of the electricity supply industry; and what level of certainty he attaches to the proposed date of each such sale.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government are firmly committed to completing the privatisation of the industry within this Parliament. The area boards will be offered for sale in autumn 1990. The two generating companies will be offered for sale in the first half of 1991. The precise timing for this has yet to be settled.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the likely effects of electricity privatisation on levels of employment in the British coal mining industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The coal industry will need to ensure that its future output and prices meet the needs of its main customers including the privatised electricity generators. Employment in the industry will depend both on demand for coal and future productivity gains. It is for British Coal to determine what its manpower requirements are and how it will meet them.

Civil Service Dispersal

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of those sections of his Department which have been relocated in the last five years, indicating the sites to which they have been moved; whether consideration is being given to future relocation of London-based sections of his Department to sites outside London; and whether the central borders of Scotland has been identified as a suitable area for any future moves.

Mr. Wakeham: There are no plans for relocation. As I told the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) on 26 July 1989 (col. *720*), the position will be reviewed in early 1991 when the Department will have had some 18 months' experience of working in its new headquarters building. No sections of my Department have been relocated in the last five years.

Energy Costs

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the energy cost of each Government Department for the past five years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Property Services Agency is currently responsible for paying fuel bills on behalf of most Departments. They will be writing to my right hon. Friend giving the precise information within two weeks.

Energy Savings (London)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the energy savings of each London borough council for the past five years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information on the energy savings of each London borough council is not available centrally.

TRANSPORT

Concessionary Fares Scheme

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals there are for changes to the operation of the concessionary fares scheme in Greater London.

Mr. Portillo: I am not aware of any such proposals. Decisions on concessionary fares rest with the London local authorities in negotiation with London Regional Transport.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will amend the law to provide that any fares imposed on users of concessionary travel permits in London will require parliamentary approval.

Mr. Portillo: This is a matter for the London boroughs and the City of London who pay for the concessionary fares scheme.

Passenger Rail Services

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail management about reopening to passenger traffic lines now used only for freight traffic, or where the trackbed remains wholly or substantially intact; if he has discussed the case put by the Wealden line campaign for the reopening of the Lewes-Uckfield link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I am aware of the campaign to re-open the Lewes-Uckfield line. It is for the British Railways Board to decide on the re-opening of freight railway lines to experimental passenger services, as they are empowered to do under the Transport Act 1962 (Amendment) Act 1981, (the "Speller" Act).

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assurance he has received from British Rail regarding the availability for use when the tunnel opens of a high-speed rail link to London from the Channel tunnel for passengers and freight.

Mr. Portillo: In the early years of the tunnel's operation, BR plan to use existing lines, upgraded as necessary, for international passenger and freight services. British Rail and their joint venture partners, Eurorail, are planning to build a new passenger rail link between the Channel tunnel and London to overcome capacity constraints on the existing network. This new line, which is expected to be operational in 1998, will release additional capacity on existing lines for the growth of international freight traffic.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assurance he has received from British Rail regarding the availability of the station facilities required in the Ashford area for the Channel tunnel link at the opening of cross-Channel services.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail and Eurorail have reaffirmed their intention to have an international passenger station at Ashford when the Channel tunnel opens. To this end the board has announced its intention to introduce a private Bill later this month to seek powers to change the proposed location of Ashford IPS in order to fit in with the proposed new Channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what engineering and costing investigations have been made by his Department into the viability of tunnelling the high-speed rail link to King's Cross through south-east London.

Mr. Portillo: Engineering and costing investigations for the Channel tunnel rail link are for British Rail and Eurorail, not the Department.

Prestwick Airport

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, *Official Report*, 23 October, columns *371-72*, he will state *(a)* how many of the 1,815 acres of land and buildings not directly or immediately required for airport operations were adjacent to Prestwick airport and *(b)* what was the value of land not directly or immediately required for airport operations at or adjacent to Prestwick airport at 8 July 1987.

Mr. McLoughlin: The prospectus issued when BAA plc shares were offered for sale noted that of these 1,815 acres, 938 acres were at BAA's Scottish airports, predominantly at Prestwick. Plans showing this land are in the House Library.

The gross current cost valuation of land and buildings at Prestwick, shown in the 1987 BAA company accounts, includes the value of land and buildings not immediately or directly required for airport operation. A separate valuation was not identified.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Disarmament

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any proposals from the Soviet Union for its complete unilateral disarmament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will hold urgent talks with the West German Government about the level of co-operation available to the Scottish police force investigating the Lockerbie crash.

Mr. Maude: No such talks are necessary. The close contact which the investigating authorities have enjoyed with their West German colleagues has been an important and productive feature throughout the investigation and will continue.

Dashevsky Family

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Soviet Government so as to obtain permission for Vladimir Dashevsky of 26 Bakinskich Icomissarov, Moscow, to leave the Soviet Union to travel to Israel together with his wife and three children.

Mr. Waldegrave: We take every opportunity to press the Soviet authorities on individual refusenik cases such as Vladimir Dashevsky. My right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised this case most recently when he met Mr. Shevardnadze in New York on 29 September. We shall maintain our pressure until Vladimir Dashevsky is given permission to emigrate from the Soviet Union.

Civil Service Dispersal

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of those sections of his Department which have been relocated in the last five years, indicating the sites to which they have been moved; whether consideration is being given to future relocation of London-based sections of his Department to sites outside London; and whether the central Borders of Scotland has been identified as a suitable area for any future moves.

Mr. Maude: The diplomatic wing has not relocated any jobs in the last five years, but some 250 jobs, (mainly in administration departments) have been identified for relocation from central London to the FCO estate at Hanslope park near Milton Keynes by 1995.

In the aid wing, 18 jobs have been relocated to the East Kilbride office in the last five years following the relocation of 427 jobs there in 1981; and some 390 jobs from the Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute are being relocated from London and the Thames Valley to Chatham between 1988 and 1990, most of which have already been transferred. In addition, about 100 further aid wing jobs will move from London, mostly to East Kilbride. The exact number of jobs and timing have yet to be decided.

Mr. Raghubinder Singh

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when his Department's migration and visa correspondence unit intends to reply to the letter dated 4 September from the hon. Member for Woolwich about the case of Mr. Raghubinder Singh.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Member's letter has not been received in the MV correspondence unit. I understand that he is sending a duplicate, which will receive prompt attention.

Missile Technology Control

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions are taking place between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government concerning ways of strengthening the missile technology control regime.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have had frequent discussions of this subject with the American Government at both ministerial and official level. We are agreed that the most effective means of strengthening the regime is to encourage more countries to participate. We hope in the near future to host a meeting of partners to discuss expanding the regime.

ASEAN

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he has received or sent to the Association of South-East Asian Nations countries concerning their nuclear-free policies.

Mr. Waldegrave: There have been no communications on this issue recently with the member states of the Association of South-East Asian Nations.

Southern Africa

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the claims of the South African Foreign Minister arising from interception of communications of United Kingdom units serving as UNTAG border monitors.

Mr. Waldegrave: United Nations' investigations have found no evidence to support the South African claims. We have no reason to question this judgment.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Nursery School Places

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures he plans to take to increase the number of nursery school places to encourage mothers to return to work; and what representations he has had on this subject.

Mrs. Rumbold: Nursery education takes place within the hours of the school day and children commonly attend part time. Day care facilities such as day nurseries play a more important part in enabling mothers to return to work. They are the responsibility at Government level of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Disabled Students

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how he plans to take account of the additional costs for disabled students in his current proposals in the White Paper on top-up loans for students.

Mr. Jackson: Disabled students will continue to qualify for the additional allowances available with the grant. They are also specifically exempted from the ending of students' benefit entitlements. After their courses, they will be protected by the provisions for deferment of repayments and write-off of the debt if their income is low.

Teachers

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what assessment has made of whether the 5·3 per cent. salary offer to teachers in maintained further education colleges will attract and retain top quality graduates and people with industrial and business expertise;

(2) what steps he will take to ensure that teachers remain attracted and committed to a career in further education; whether he has received the report by Hay Management Consultants on pay of principals of maintained sector colleges and if he will make a statement.

(3) whether he will bring forward proposals to establish for those teachers employed in adult education a properly graded salary structure.

Mr. Jackson: The pay and conditions of lecturers in further education, including adult education, are a matter for their local authority employers. At national level, they are negotiated by the employers and the lecturer unions in the National Joint Council (Further Education).

Human Genome Organisations

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what financial contributions he expects will be made from United Kingdom sources to the human genome organisations in 1989-90 and in each of the following four financial years.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that the Medical Research Council has not been approached to make a financial contribution to the human genome organisation. We have no information about possible approaches to private funding sources.

Disabled Students' Grant

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities follow procedures which enable them to pay the full three years disabled students' grant in a single lump sum.

Mr. Jackson: This informaton is not collected centrally.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, how many local education authorities have guidelines governing the award of disabled students' grants.

Mr. Jackson: The Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations empower local education authorities to assess extra grant in respect of certain types of expenditure incurred by disabled students. Within the framework specified in the regulations, how this power is exercised is a matter for individual authorities. Information about their procedures is not collected centrally.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many disabled students following higher education courses incur costs related to their disability that exceed the level of the disabled students' grant.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not collected centrally.

Fire Safety (Schools)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken or is considering to improve fire safety in schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 23 October 1989 at column *323*.

Top-up Loans

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to amend the financial assumptions upon which the top-up loans White Paper is based.

Mr. Jackson: We have no plans to adjust the assumptions made for the purpose of Cm. 520 as to the long-term rates of take-up, deferment, default or inflation. The size of the loan facility offered to students in any year will be determined the previous autumn in the light of actual and anticipated cost increases.

Open University

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision for inflation he will make in calculating grant aid to the Open university in 1990-91.

Mr. Jackson: The Treasury's expectation of price movements in the economy in 1990-91 will be announced in the Autumn Statement. Changes in the planned provision for the Open university in the forthcoming three years will be announced following the Autumn Statement.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Justice Act

62. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he proposes to bring section 43 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 into effect.

Mr. John Patten: Section 43 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 came into effect on 31 July this year. By subsection *(5)*, the wider power it gives the Court of Appeal to order a retrial does not apply where notice of appeal or application for leave to appeal was given before that date.

Drug Prevention Units

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy when considering the location for the recently announced drug prevention units, to consider Bolton as a base for a unit.

Mr. Mellor: Drug prevention units will be located in those areas judged most at risk from drug misuse and in particular from a threat of cocaine and crack. We are not yet in a position to announce which areas will be chosen.

Bingo

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to amend section 42 of the Gaming Act 1968 to allow bingo organisers to advertise specific games of bingo at pre-arranged times and places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 1 November at column *185* to an earlier question from him about the advertising of licensed bingo clubs.

Guildford Four

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure that interim compensation is paid immediately to Paul Hill, Gerard Conlon, Patrick Armstrong and Carole Richardson in light of the Appeal Court's decision in their case.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has made interim payments of compensation to all four.

May Inquiry

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure that Sir John May's inquiry into the case of the Guildford Four and Maguire Seven be held in public.

Mr. John Patten: The conduct of the inquiry is a matter for Sir John May, but I understand that it is his intention that as much of the evidence as possible will be heard in public.

Terrorism Suspects (Interviews)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ensure tighter safeguards for persons in custody on suspicion of terrorist offences; and if he will introduce video and sound recordings of all interviews of such persons, and immediate access to legal advice.

Mr. Waddington: There are already safeguards in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989 to ensure that interviews under the terrorist provisions are carried out properly and that those detained are properly treated. New provision was made in schedule 3 of the 1989 Act, in accordance with Lord Colville's recommendations in his report on the workings of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1984, for the supervision of the detention and examination powers in the Act by means of regular reviews during the first 48 hours. Any extension of detention beyond that period (up to a maximum of a further five days) requires my authority.

Preparatory work is now underway for the trial use of tape-recording in interviews with those held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. There are no proposals for video recordings in these cases.

There is already a right of access to legal advice for those detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act but I believe that it is essential that the police should continue to have the power to delay the exercise of that right for a prescribed period where it is necessary to do so and the statutory criteria are met.

Prisoner No. B51715

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he received an application for the temporary transfer of prisoner No. B51715 from Frankland prison to a prison in Northern Ireland; if he will outline the compassionate grounds on which the application was based; and if he will give sympathetic consideration to immediately granting this application.

Mr. Mellor: On 14 August 1989 the inmate concerned submitted a petition requesting temporary transfer to a prison in Northern Ireland in order to receive accumulated visits from members of his family who live in Belfast. The petition expressed concern about the strain being experienced by the inmate's family and particularly about the wellbeing of the inmate's wife, daughter and mother. We and the Northern Ireland Office need to take both security and compassionate considerations into account before deciding whether the request can be granted. No decision has yet been reached. I should add that the inmate has also submitted a petition for permanent transfer to Northern Ireland. This, too, is being carefully considered.

James Armstrong

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the internal inquiry into the death of James Armstrong at Risley remand centre revealed.

Mr. Mellor: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the inquiries which, in accordance with standard practice, were carried out at the time by the governor of Risley into Mr. Armstrong's death. Those inquiries established the facts of the case as subsequently disclosed at the coroner's inquest and as summarised in correspondence with the hon. Member.

Cable Authority

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take to ensure that companies being awarded cable franchises by the Cable Authority proceed to actual cabling within an agreed time scale.

Mr. Mellor: This is primarily a matter for the Cable Authority. There is inevitably some delay between the award of a cable franchise and the subsequent issue of the licences under the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984 and the Telecommunications Act 1984 which enable the operator to start operations. Before franchise holders can be granted such licences they need to be able to satisfy the Cable Authority and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (who is responsible for the issue of licences under the Telecommunications Act) on a range of matters. I understand that the Cable Authority has recently announced that it will review franchises after one year, with a view to withdrawing them if the holder has not made satisfactory progress in this regard.

Before a Telecommunications Act licence is issued, the cable operator has to agree a schedule for the construction of his system in consultation with the Department of Trade and Industry, the Director General of Telecommunications and the Cable Authority. Monitoring compliance with the Telecommunications Act licence is a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish a table showing *(a)* the list of cable franchises awarded by the Cable Authority, showing the name of the franchise, the successful applicant and the responsibility of the company who has won the franchise, and *(b)* a list of cable franchises currently on offer by the Cable Authority.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the Cable Authority that a total of 53 cable franchises have been granted, of which 16 have been licensed by the Cable Authority, and 14 are operational. Copies of the lists requested have been placed in the Library.

Prisons

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will *(a)* give the optimum operation capacity of each prison in England and Wales and *(b)* the actual numbers of prisoners currently housed in each prison in England and Wales.

Mr. Waddington: The maximum number of inmates an establishment can hold without some overcrowding is known as its certified normal accommodation (CNA).

The latest figures available for:

(i) CNA; and

(ii) population

of each establishment in England and Wales is as follows:

Establishment	*Total CNA for September 1989*	*Population on 3 November 1989*
Acklington	448	441
Albany	389	379
Aldington	127	119
Ashford	374	0
Ashwell	404	404
Askham Grange	134	104
Aylesbury	296	272
Bedford	178	305
Birmingham	593	981
Blantyre House	87	86
Blundeston	405	406
Bristol	552	602
Brixton	729	1,096
Brockhill	161	232
Buckley Hall	139	44

Establishment	*Total CNA for September 1989*	*Population on 3 November 1989*
Bullwood Hall	126	151
Camp Hill	461	479
Campsfield House	66	63
Canterbury	230	362
Cardiff	337	428
Castington	300	234
Channings Wood	538	536
Chelmsford	242	407
Coldingley	303	298
Cookham Wood	120	120
Dartmoor	631	614
Deerbolt	420	398
Dorchester	152	235
Dover	247	223
Downview	91	91
Drake Hall	288	260
Durham	729	1,009
East Sutton Park	84	77
Eastwood Park	134	101
Erlestoke	218	212
Everthorpe	304	370
Exeter	310	333
Featherstone	509	574
Feltham	846	713
Finnamore Wood	116	114
Ford	536	505
Frankland	447	385
Full Sutton	432	407
Garth	512	494
Gartree	320	313
Glen Parva	600	584
Gloucester	200	277
Grendon	261	239
Guys Marsh	180	104
Haslar	95	69
Hatfield	180	160
Haverigg	337	385
Hewell Grange	136	109
High Point	825	798
Hindley	312	401
Hollesley Bay	451	355
Holloway	517	482
Hull	402	673
Huntercombe	180	192
Kingston	150	139
Kirkham	632	589
Lancaster	186	253
Latchmere House	127	144
Leeds	633	1,189
Leicester	205	343
Lewes	371	554
Leyhill	384	384
Lincoln	391	568
Lindholme	1,001	850
Littlehey	484	482
Liverpool	967	1,309
Long Lartin	432	422
Lowdham Grange	304	121
Low Newton	185	278
Maidstone	550	551
Manchester	997	1,536
Morton Hall	192	151
Mount	484	346
New Hall	120	96
Northallerton	127	184
Northeye	249	232
North Sea Camp	202	130
Norwich	487	637
Nottingham	245	320
Onley	352	336
Oxford	124	201
Parkhurst	261	235
Pentonville	641	996
Portland	527	476
Preston	428	485
Pucklechurch	159	161
Ranby	404	405
Reading	178	286
Risley	318	378
Rochester	375	332
Rudgate	378	336
Send	101	99
Shepton Mallet	173	240
Shrewsbury	174	249
Spring Hill	210	211
Stafford	588	811
Standford Hill	444	428
Stocken	302	304
Stoke Heath	360	403
Styal	258	249
Sudbury	601	550
Swaleside	504	497
Swansea	229	278
Swinfen Hall	124	131
Thorn Cross	300	198
Thorp Arch	156	146
USK	238	147
Verne	595	599
Wakefield	756	716
Wandsworth	1,275	1,556
Wayland	484	484
Wellingborough	344	290
Werrington	110	75
Wetherby	196	145
Whatton	167	146
Winchester	471	652
Wormwood Scrubs	1,024	1,048
Wymott	816	720
TOTAL	44,991	48,632

Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will actively facilitate the transfer of those prisoners in British gaols who have requested to serve their sentences in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mellor: All such requests are considered in the light of the criteria governing such transfers, which were set out in the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on 23 June 1989 at column *263*.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make his reply to the report of Her Majesty's inspectorate of prisons on conditions within Wandsworth prison.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) published his response to the report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons on Wandsworth on 20 October 1989 and a copy was placed in the Library.

Mr. Lorrain Esme Osman

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish all the representations he has received about Mr. Lorrain Esme Osman.

Mr. John Patten: It is not normal practice to publish such correspondence, and I can see no reason to make an exception in this case.

Drugs

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the estimated cost of the Metropolitan police drugs raid on Broadwater Farm estate on 29 September; and what type and quantity of drugs were seized during the raid.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the additional overtime costs were about £42,500. There were some other minor additional costs but these cannot readily be identified. The forensic examination and weighing of the drugs found has not yet been completed, but an initial examination indicates that about a kilo of cannabis was seized as well as some cocaine.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his written answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) of 27 July, *Official Report*, column 856, if he will indicate the particular section of the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order (SI 1983. No. 764) which makes provision to appeal from decision to destroy a dog which has bitten a person.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Article 33(1) of the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 requires a court to make an order directing that a dog be destroyed where it appears to the court that the dog has attacked any person or attacked or killed livestock.

Articles 143 and 146 of the Magistrates Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 as applied and modified by article 33(6) of the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 enable an owner to appeal to a county court from an order for the destruction of a dog or, where a point of law is involved, to apply to the magistrates' court to state a case for the opinion of the Court of Appeal.

Students

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated cost of providing education for European Community students in Northern Ireland in *(a)* the current academic year and *(b)* each of the last three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is not possible to disaggregate such overall costs.

The cost of remitting the tuition fees of eligible European students for the previous three years was:

Year	*Amount £*
1988–89	702,650
1987–88	418,000
1986–87	216,000

Current year figures are not yet available.

Mr. Gerard Slane

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary on the circumstances of the murder of Mr. Gerard Slane in respect of whether any leaking of official photographs and documents relating to Mr. Slane were involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: No. However, at the request of the chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the deputy chief constable of Cambridgeshire, Mr. John Stevens, is already undertaking a full and impartial investigation into the alleged leaking of security material with a view to the earliest possible comprehensive report to the chief constable.

Seamus Duffy

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the present state of investigation by the police and the independent Police Complaints Commission into the circumstances in which Seamus Duffy was killed by a police plastic baton round in Belfast on 9 August.

Mr. Cope: The police investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Seamus Duffy is being actively pursued and has reached an advanced stage. The investigation is being closely monitored by the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland. Once the investigation has been completed the investigating officer's final report will go to the Commission which will then issue a statement to the chief constable on the conduct of the investigation. The papers will then be passed to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Until such time as the DPP has issued directions on the case, or any proceedings have terminated, it would not be appropriate to give details of the investigations.

Prisons

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give *(a)* the optimum operational capacity of each prison in Northern Ireland and *(b)* the actual numbers of prisoners currently housed in each prison in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope: The optimum operational capacity of each prison in Northern Ireland together with the actual numbers of prisoners currently housed is:

Population as at 08.30 hours 3 November 1989

Accommodation	*Number*
Her Majesty's prison Belfast	
[1]433	533
Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry	
[1]486	[2]297
Her Majesty's prison Magilligan	
[1]300	266
Her Majesty's prison Maze	
[1]750	517

[1] Single cell accommodation.

[2] Including 23 female prisoners.

These figures include prisoners on home leave and in outside hospitals.

In addition, the young offenders centre, Hydebank, has single cell accommodation for 300 and has a current population of 158.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total prison population in Northern Ireland in each of the years since 1980.

Mr. Cope: The average prison population in each of the years since 1980 was:

	Numbers
[1]1980	2,489
[1]1981	2,521
[1]1982	2,481
[1]1983	2,453
[1]1984	2,248
[1]1985	2,943
[2]1986-87	1,907
[2]1987-88	1,947
[2]1988-89	1,860

[1] Calendar year.

[2] Financial year.

NATIONAL FINANCE

IMF/World Bank (Meetings)

63. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's action in response to the outcome of the recent annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19 October to my hon. Friend, the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) at column *202*. The United Kingdom will play its full part in furthering these policies.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list the gross domestic product per head for *(a)* Wales, *(b)* England and *(c)* the United Kingdom for the most recent 10 years;

(2) if he will list the main components of the gross domestic product per head which result in the total for Wales being lower than the total for England and the United Kingdom for the most recent 10 years.

Mr. Lamont *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* For the latest estimates of gross domestic product (GDP) per head, I refer the hon. Member to "Economic Trends" No. 421, November 1988, page 90. An industrial analysis of GDP is given on page 93 of the same article which gives detailed figures for the latest four years; a copy of which is available in the Library. A copy of the information requested on the main components of the gross domestic product for the 10 most recent years has been placed in the Library.

Child Care Facilities

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of parents paying tax on the provision or subsidy of child care facilities by employers and the amount of tax collected in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* I regret that information on which to base reliable estimates of the number of parents paying tax on this benefit in kind and the amount of tax collected is not available.

Families with Children

Mr. Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many families with children fall below the tax threshold.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* In 1989-90, it is estimated that some 1·6 million families with children have taxable incomes below the income tax threshold. The estimate is based on a projection of the 1986 family expenditure survey and is therefore provisional.

Tax and Insurance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give up to date figures on income tax and national insurance averages on the same basis as in his reply to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) of 10 January, *Official Report*, columns *633-56*, including data for 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* Figures for 1978-79 to 1988-89 were earlier placed in the Library of the House on 13 April 1989. Revised estimates for 1988-89 and estimates for 1989-90 are set out in the tables.

Income Tax and NICS Payments at Multiples of Average Earnings, 1989-90

	Multiples of Average Earnings										
	0·5	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	21·05	38·27	55·49	89·92	139·27	249·47	359·67	469·87	690·27	1,020·87	2,122·87
NICS	10·46	16·66	22·86	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
Total	31·51	54·93	78·35	117·66	167·01	277·21	387·41	497·61	718·01	1,048·61	2,150·61
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	19·86	36·10	52·35	84·83	131·39	235·35	339·31	443·27	651·20	963·08	2,002·71
NICS	9·87	15·72	21·57	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17
Total	29·73	51·82	73·92	111·00	157·56	261·52	365·48	469·44	677·37	989·25	2,028·88
Percentage of Earnings											
Income Tax (per cent.)	15·3	18·5	20·1	21·8	25·3	30·2	32·6	34·1	35·8	37·1	38·5
NICS (per cent.)	7·6	8·1	8·3	6·7	5·0	3·4	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
Total (per cent.)	22·9	26·6	28·4	28·5	30·3	33·5	35·2	36·1	37·2	38·1	39·0
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	13·40	30·62	47·84	82·28	127·03	237·23	347·43	457·63	678·03	1,008·63	2,110·63

	Multiples of Average Earnings										
	0·5	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
NICS	10·46	16·66	22·86	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
Total	23·86	47·28	70·7	110·02	154·77	264·97	375·17	485·37	705·77	1,036·37	2,138·37
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	12·64	28·89	45·13	77·62	119·84	223·80	327·76	431·73	639·65	951·54	1,991·16
NICS	9·87	15·72	21·57	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17
Total	22·51	44·60	66·70	103·79	146·01	249·97	353·93	457·90	665·82	977·71	2,017·33
Percentage of Earnings											
Income Tax (per cent.)	9·7	14·8	17·4	19·9	23·1	28·7	31·5	33·2	35·2	36·6	38·3
NICS (per cent.)	7·6	8·1	8·3	6·7	5·0	3·4	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
Total (per cent.)	17·3	22·9	25·7	26·6	28·1	32·1	34·0	35·2	36·6	37·6	38·8
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	0·01	17·23	34·45	68·89	105·61	186·49	280·16	388·73	609·13	939·73	2,041·73
NICS	9·39	15·59	21·79	34·18	46·08	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49
Total	9·40	32·82	56·24	103·07	151·69	241·98	335·65	444·22	664·62	995·22	2,097·22
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	0·01	16·25	32·50	64·99	99·63	175·93	264·30	366·73	574·65	886·54	1,926·16
NICS	8·86	14·71	20·56	32·25	43·47	52·35	52·35	52·35	52·35	52·35	52·35
Total	8·87	30·96	53·06	97·24	143·10	228·28	316·65	419·08	627·00	938·89	1,978·51
Per cent. of Earnings											
Income Tax (per cent.)	0·0	8·3	12·5	16·7	19·2	22·6	25·4	28·2	31·6	34·1	37·1
NICS (per cent.)	6·8	7·5	7·9	8·3	8·4	6·7	5·0	4·0	2·9	2·0	1·0
Total (per cent.)	6·8	15·9	20·4	24·9	27·5	29·3	30·5	32·2	34·5	36·1	38·1
Married, two children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	−1·1	16·12	33·34	67·78	112·53	222·73	332·93	443·13	663·53	994·13	2,096·13
NICS	10·46	16·66	22·86	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
Total	9·36	32·78	56·20	95·52	140·2 50	250·47	360·6 7470· 87	91·27	1,021· 87	2,123·87	
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	−1·04	15·21	31·45	63·94	106·16	210·12	314·08	418·05	625·97	937·86	1,977·48
NICS	9·87	15·72	21·57	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17	26·17
Total	8·83	30·92	53·02	90·11	132·33	236·29	340·25	444·22	652·14	964·03	2,003·65
Per cent. of Earnings											
Income tax (per cent.)	−0·8	7·8	12·1	16·4	20·4	26·9	30·2	32·2	34·4	36·1	38·0
NICS (per cent.)	7·6	8·1	8·3	6·7	5·0	3·4	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
Total (per cent.)	6·8	15·9	20·4	23·1	25·5	30·3	32·7	34·2	35·8	37·1	38·5

Income Tax and NICS payments at multiples of Average Earnings, 1988-89

	Multiples of Average Earnings										
	0·5	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	19·51	35·53	51·55	83·59	129·33	231·85	334·37	436·89	641·93	949·49	1,974·69
NICS	11·53	17·30	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
Total	31·04	52·83	74·62	111·04	156·78	259·3	361·82	464·34	669·38	976·94	2,002·14
Per cent. of Earnings											
Income Tax per cent.	15·2	18·5	20·1	21·7	25·2	30·2	32·6	34·1	35·8	37·0	38·5
NICS per cent.	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·5
Total per cent.	24·2	27·5	29·1	28·9	30·6	33·7	35·3	36·2	37·3	38·1	39·1
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	12·35	28·37	44·39	76·43	117·87	220·39	322·91	425·43	630·47	938·03	1,963·23
NICS	11·53	17·30	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
Total	23·88	45·67	67·46	103·88	145·32	247·84	350·36	452·88	657·92	96·48	1,990·68
Per cent. of Earnings											
Income Tax per cent.	9·6	14·8	17·3	19·9	23·0	28·7	31·5	33·2	35·1	36·6	38·3

	Multiples of Average Earnings										
	0·5	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
NICS per cent.	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·5
Total per cent.	18·6	23·8	26·3	27·0	28·3	32·2	34·2	35·3	36·7	37·7	38·8
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	0	15·84	31·86	63·9	97·83	173·19	260·33	361·18	566·22	873·78	1,898·98
NICS	7·95	15·76	21·02	34·60	45·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90
Total	7·95	31·60	52·88	98·50	143·73	228·09	315·23	416·08	621·12	928·68	1,953·88
Per cent. of Earnings											
Income Tax per cent.	0·0	8·2	12·4	16·6	19·1	22·5	25·4	28·2	31·6	34·1	37·0
NICS per cent.	6·2	8·2	8·2	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	4·3	3·1	2·1	1·1
Total per cent.	6·2	16·4	20·6	25·6	28·0	29·7	30·7	32·5	34·6	36·2	38·1
Married, two children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	−2·15	13·87	29·89	61·93	103·37	205·89	308·41	409·93	615·97	923·53	1,948·73
NICS	11·53	17·3	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
Total	9·38	31·17	52·96	89·38	130·82	233·34	335·86	437·38	643·42	950·98	1,976·18
Per cent. of Earnings											
Income Tax per cent.	−1·7	7·2	11·7	16·1	20·2	26·8	30·1	32·0	34·3	36·0	38·0
NICS per cent.	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·5
Total per cent.	7·3	16·2	20·7	23·2	25·5	30·3	32·8	34·1	35·9	37·1	38·6

Notes to Tables:

1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the tax units receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances. Earners, including working wives, are assumed to pay Class 1 NI contributions at the contracted in rate. The figures for NI contributions are financial year averages.

2. The two earner married couple is assumed to have combined earnings equal to the various multiples of average earnings. In calculating disposable income it is assumed that these earnings are split between husband and wife in the ratio 60:40.

3. For the married couple with two children, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax.

4. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These were £256.30 per week in 1988-89, and estimated to be £275.50 per week in 1989-90 using the Government Actuary Department's assumption of 7½ per cent. growth over 1988-89 as published in the GAD annual report in December 1988.

5. 1989-90 figures are converted into 1988-89 prices by assuming that the RPI is 6 per cent. higher in 1989-90 than the previous financial year. This is consistent with the forecasts published in the 1989-90 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

EEC (Contributions)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the net contribution to the EEC in 1989.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 31 October 1989]:* The Government's latest published estimate of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the Community budget in 1989 is £1,966 million. A new estimate of the United Kingdom's net payments to European Community institutions for the financial year 1989-90 will be published in the Autumn Statement.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Charities

49. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what sum is currently given per capita in donations to overseas aid charities; and what was the equivalent sum in donations in 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: There is no Government record of the public's donations to voluntary agencies for work overseas. However, each major agency publishes an annual report and accounts. It is clear that voluntary giving for overseas aid agencies has increased substantially since 1979.

Ethiopia

50. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what way Her Majesty's Government are helping to reduce the consequences of famine in Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: Substantial amounts of food aid are likely to be needed but a fuller picture will emerge when United Nations crop assessment data become available shortly. Meanwhile, I announced in August 5,000 tonnes of wheatflour and I have recently approved a further 5,000 tonnes. We are, of course, working closely with other aid donors on emergency help.

61. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to help alleviate famine in Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: As I have said in reply to the question from my hon. Friend, the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), the situation is not yet fully clear, but it is likely that substantial amounts of food aid will be needed to prevent the recurrence of famine in northern Ethiopia over the coming year. I announced in August the allocation of 5,000 tonnes of wheatflour to Ethiopia and I have recently approved the allocation of a further 5,000 tonnes. We shall continue to monitor the situation very closely and to liaise with other aid donors.

South Africa

51. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what safeguards exist to monitor the allocation of overseas Government funding to organisations in South Africa and to South African organisations not currently located within South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Staff of our Embassy in Pretoria and of the British Council make frequent visits to the organisations to which we provide aid and the projects we help finance. Officials from my Department visit South Africa regularly to oversee our aid programme and to ensure that it is being well spent. We do not finance any South African organisations outside South Africa.

Namibia

52. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid he proposes to make available to Namibia on attainment of independence.

Mrs. Chalker: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stated in the House on 26 October, we are willing to provide financial assistance to independent Namibia. But it will not be possible to make specific plans until we have had discussions with the elected Government on their own priorities and policies.

Wildlife Conservation (Africa)

53. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in what ways Britain is helping to conserve wildlife in Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Britain has long been helping African Governments with their wildlife conservation efforts, and we are always ready to consider new requests for help. I have placed a list of recent and continuing activities in the Library of the House.

Northern Somalia

54. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of United Kingdom aid to Somalia particularly in terms of alleviating the poverty and suffering of people in northern Somalia; whether his policy has been reviewed in the light of renewed internal conflicts; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The security situation in northern Somalia since the beginning of the civil conflict there has prevented an effective relief effort being mounted, although we remain ready to support the operations of the international relief agencies and British voluntary organisations when these become possible. Concern about human rights abuses led us to suspend an offer of new capital aid to Somalia in October last year and following the deterioration of conditions since mid-July, we concluded that it was necessary to reduce our existing technical co-operation programme.

Brundtland Commission Report

55. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the Brundtland Commission report on environment and development issues.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government's commitment to sustainable development is set out in the United Kingdom response of July 1988 to the Brundtland report and in a progress report, "Sustaining our Common Future", produced recently by the Department of the Environment. Copies of both documents are in the Library. Among the things they show is how, through the aid programme, we are working to promote sustainable economic and social progress and alleviate poverty in developing countries.

India

56. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the United Kingdom is giving to support primary education in India.

Mrs. Chalker: A grant of just over £31 million was approved earlier this year for a primary education project in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It provides for the design and construction of some 1,100 teachers centres and 4,000 classrooms mostly in remote rural areas throughout the state. It will also cover the training of teachers and teacher educators, teaching materials and research and evaluation activities designed to measure and improve the effectiveness of training and child-centred learning techniques.

Overseas Aid Programme

57. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in the light of world economic conditions, he will review the priorities in the United Kingdom overseas aid programme.

Mrs. Chalker: Priorities in the United Kingdom overseas aid programme are kept under constant review, as indicated in the Government's observations on the 1987 FAC report on bilateral aid, Cm. 225.

Amazonian Rain Forest

58. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific developments have now resulted from the visit by the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) to the Amazonian rain forest.

Mrs. Chalker: In August and September British experts visited Brazil and identified a number of well-defined possibilities for collaborative projects. One of these, a joint five year project by Brazilian scientific institutions and the Institute of Hydrology to improve our knowledge of the critical effect of rainforests on climate, has been worked out in detail and has been put forward to the Brazilian authorities for agreement. If it is acceptable, I hope work will start by January, 1990.

In addition, Dr. Synnott of the Oxford Forestry Institute will visit Brazil again later this month to try to finalise the details of certain projects in sustainable forestry management and the genetic resources of forests so that work on these can also start early next year.

Overseas Aid

59. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many former colonies are currently in receipt of overseas aid from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: There are 59 former British dependent territories currently in receipt of British aid.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of gross domestic product is currently spent on overseas aid.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage proportion of gross domestic product is currently spent on overseas aid.

Mrs. Chalker: United Kingdom aid as a proportion of gross national product stood at 0·32 per cent. in 1988—14 per cent. up on the figure for 1987.

Aid (Debt)

60. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what weight he gives to a country's level of indebtedness when making decisions about the level of aid allocated to them.

Mrs. Chalker: Our criteria for allocating bilateral aid are set out in the Government's observation on the 1987 FAC report on bilateral aid, Cm. 225. Indebtedness by itself is not a reason for providing aid. In the context of support for economic policy reform the level of debt servicing obligations a country has to meet, after any debt rescheduling or relief, is one of the factors taken into account on deciding on the level of bilateral aid provision.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his answer of 6 March, *Official Report*, column *403*, he will estimate when the research would be complete in order to assess the impact of AIDS on developing countries.

Mrs. Chalker: We are supporting research on the demographic and economic impact of AIDS in developing countries. We expect this work to be completed in October 1990.

Developing Countries

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received a copy of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report on strengthening environmental co-operation with developing countries, published in the current year.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes. A copy has been placed in the Library.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Guildford Four

38. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Attorney-General what discussions he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions regarding the granting of immunity from prosecution to those giving evidence in the judicial inquiry on the convictions of the Guildford Four.

The Attorney-General: There is a distinction between a full immunity from prosecution, which might be given to a particular witness, and an assurance to that witness that any evidence he might give would not be used against him in criminal proceedings. I have discussed these matters in general terms with the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Civil Legal Aid

39. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of adults are now estimated to be eligible for civil legal aid; and what was the comparative figure in 1979.

The Attorney-General: Eligibility for legal aid is determined by a great number of factors. Among them is the fact that a large proportion of civil legal aid is for matrimonial proceedings where it is not easy to estimate who might be eligible as proceedings only arise where there has been a breakdown of an existing household. Officials have been considering how it might be possible to make more reliable estimates of current eligibility for civil legal aid. Their work is not yet complete.

Relator Proceedings

40. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Attorney-General whether he has received any representations about his criteria for deciding on the granting of relator proceedings; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Representations have been made in the context of recent proceedings brought against Barratt Manchester Ltd. and Bolton metropolitan borough council. The solicitor to the two relators concerned has confirmed that one of them is an undischarged bankrupt. Despite his making the usual inquiries, this was not known to him or the Attorney-General at the time consent was granted. The relator concerned has now withdrawn from the action.

Judicial Review

41. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will review the rule that application for judicial review must normally be made within three months from the decision complained of; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Government have no plans to review the three month period within which applications for leave to apply for judicial review must normally be made. The present rules both encourage promptness and allow exceptions to be made where necessary.

Legal Profession

42. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Attorney-General if he has had any recent representations from the judiciary on the green papers on the legal profession; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor received a number of representations from the judiciary on the Green Papers on the legal profession during the consultation period, but none since the White Paper was published on 19 July.

Justices of the Peace

43. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Attorney-General how many justices of the peace are currently in post; how many of these are from ethnic minorities; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The total number of active justices of the peace in England and Wales at 1 January 1989 was 28,211. Records are not kept of the racial origins of magistrates but surveys in 1987 indicated that 528 were members of an ethnic minority.

Since then an informal count has revealed that the number of appointments of justices from the ethnic minority has exceeded their proportion in the population age groups from which appointments are normally made. Subject to the personal suitability of candidates, it is desirable that each bench should broadly reflect the local community. Where this is not currently the case, advisory committees seek to redress the balance.

City Fraud

44. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent meetings he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions regarding serious City fraud; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Matters of serious City fraud are largely the responsibility of the serious fraud office. I have met the director and deputy director of the serious fraud office on a number of occasions in the past month to discuss matters of departmental interest.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Attorney-General what information his Department and the Lord Chancellor's Department have on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

The Attorney-General: Between 1 January 1989 and 30 September 1989, 67 per cent. of letters from hon. Members to the Lord Chancellor's Department were answered within 28 days of receipt. Information for earlier periods is not available.

I refer the hon. Member to my answer on 31 October 1989 at col. *133* to his earlier question concerning my own Department.

Ministers (Prosecution)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Attorney-General (1) if his fiat has been refused in any cases where citizens have attempted to bring a private prosecution against a Government Minister for alleged serious offences; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if his power of consent has been used at any time to refuse the prosecution of Government Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: My consent to the institution of criminal proceedings is required only when the statute creating an offence so stipulates. I have not refused any request from a prosecuting authority or any other source for such consent.

House of Fraser

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General if the serious fraud squad was able to secure in Egypt the papers it sought in connection with its inquiries into the House of Fraser report; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Egyptian authorities have recently informed the Crown prosecution service that their inquiries are continuing into the matters in respect of which assistance was sought.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General if the serious fraud squad has yet completed its inquiries into the issues raised by the House of Fraser reports; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The inquiries have necessarily been protracted on account of the nature of the matters under investigation and the need for a substantial proportion of the relevant evidence to be gathered from overseas. I am satisfied that these inquiries, with which I personally keep in touch, are being conducted with all proper expedition. I hope that a decision about this case will be taken shortly.

WALES

Far East (Visit)

14. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his visit to the Far East.

Mr. Peter Walker: In Korea I had talks with 19 top companies and in Japan with 27. As a result I expect a good number of positive decisions to invest in Wales to be made over the next 12 months.

Overseas Investment

15. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the amount of overseas investment in Wales for the period 1979-88.

Mr. Peter Walker: The available figures show that, between 1979 and 1988 inclusive, 360 individual inward investment projects have been secured in Wales, promising over 43,000 jobs. 1988 was a record year in which Wales secured 22 per cent. of the new jobs associated with inward investment to the United Kingdom. The associated capital investment for that year was over £1 billion.

Elderly Patients

16. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to provide the area health authorities with additional resources to enable them to improve hospital facilities for the long stay elderly.

Mr. Grist: Funding of long-stay hospital facilities for the elderly is a matter for district health authorities, using their discretionary resources. In 1989-90 total resources available to district health authorities, the bulk of which will be available for their discretionary use, will amount to over £961 million—an increase of £72 million over 1988-89.

NHS Reform

17. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that no doctor in Wales will be unable to prescribe for his or her patients the medication or drugs most appropriate to their condition if the Government's plans for the Health Service are implemented in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government's White Paper proposals relating to general practitioners' prescribing will not in any way prevent people getting the medicines they need. Our policy is to implement these proposals in Wales.

Regional Development Fund

18. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total value of grants which Wales has received from the European regional development fund in the past 10 years.

Mr. Peter Walker: European regional development fund commitments to Wales since 1979 have amounted to £460 million.

CBI

19. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of Wales Confederation of British Industry; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I last met members of CBI Wales on 12 June during a seminar to consider information technology and the single European market (1992).

National Curriculum (Teachers)

20. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to ensure that there will be sufficient teachers qualified in all the necessary subjects to teach the national curriculum in its further stages from September 1990.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The requirements of the national curriculum are being taken fully into account in setting the intakes to initial teacher training, in revising the criteria for initial teacher training courses and in planning the LEA in-service training grant scheme and education support grants.

Puppy Farming

21. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many planning appeals he has dealt with relating to puppy farming in Wales in the last 12 months.

Mr. Grist: None.

Welsh Language Board

22. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of the work of the Welsh Language Board.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Language Board has made encouraging progress in its first year of operation. It has issued voluntary guidelines governing the use of Welsh in both the public and private sectors. It has been instrumental in finding practical solutions to problems encountered by Welsh speakers. I am now discussing with the board next steps in relation to its strategy for the future.

Labour Statistics

23. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are employed in the Principality, at the latest available date, by employers who had no place of business in the Principality 10 years earlier.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not available in the form requested. However, on the basis of VAT returns, the stock of businesses in Wales rose by some 11,300 between 1979 and 1988. In addition, the Department's regional data system indicates that manufacturing units employing 10 or more and which have opened since 1979 currently provide 44,500 jobs.

25. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; and if he will give the equivalent figures for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 14 September 1989 the numbers of unemployment claimants in the Newport district, Gwent and Wales were 4,893, 14,970 and 90,594 respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison to be made. Unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency was 87 per cent. higher when the Government was re-elected in June 1987 than it is today.

Departmental Anniversary

24. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to mark the 25th anniversary of the setting up of his Department.

Mr. Peter Walker: The 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the Welsh Office falls on 1 April 1990. I intend to mark the anniversary in an appropriate manner and will announce my plans in due course.

National Museum

26. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to meet the president and director of the National Museum of Wales to discuss the museum's strategy plan and future funding.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend meets the president and director of the National Museum of Wales to discuss matters of mutual interest as occasion demands. Decisions on the need for a meeting to discuss the museum's next strategy plan will be taken when it is received early next year.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the change in the number of people visiting the National museum in Cardiff since the introduction of entrance charges.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the totals of visitors to the National museum of Wales, Cathays Park, since admission charges were introduced and for the previous comparable period.

Mr. Peter Walker: Recorded visitor numbers were:

December 1988-September 1989 (inclusive) 62,583
December 1987-September 1988 (inclusive) 329,949

The National museum issued a statement on 24 October explaining the reason for these differentials. Comparisons are difficult because in the earlier period both the Chinese Dinosaurs exhibition and the Gerald of Wales exhibition were taking place. Subsequently major building works at the museum have prevented the staging of major exhibitions. During the current financial year the attendance at Cathays park is 3,000 below budget—a shortfall of 8 per cent. Conversely the number of visitors attending the Welsh folk museum is 39,000 above budget —an increase of 20 per cent. The museum believes that these differences were accounted for by the exceptional summer weather and that its experience is in line with other indoor and outdoor attractions in Wales. The museum holds the view that with the reopening of the east wing in March 1990, refurbishment of the major temporary exhibition gallery which is now complete and the sound financial position, the museum could attract major temporary exhibitions which in turn would substantially improve visitor numbers.

Nature Conservancy Council

27. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the implications for Welsh conservation of the proposed merger of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The proposed new arrangements will mean clearer lines of responsibility and facilitate the development of conservation policies fully sensitive to the needs of Wales.

Welsh Water

28. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of Welsh Water plc; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am in regular contact with the chairman and discuss with him a wide range of issues related to the business of Welsh Water.

29. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek to stop Welsh Water from proceeding with a long sewage outfall from Swansea where this conflicts with any European Community directive.

Mr. Grist: The design and construction of a long sea outfall at Swansea bay is a matter for Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig. The company will, no doubt, have full regard to all existing statutory requirements in the preparation of its detailed proposals.

Hospital Waiting Lists

30. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the waiting lists and the numbers of patients treated for 1979 and for the latest available corresponding period for *(a)* in-patients, *(b)* out-patients and *(c)* day patients.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is as follows:

	1978-79	*1988-89*
Patients treated:		
In-patient cases	345,305	456,378
New out-patients	425,927	524,113
Day cases	26,456	84,758
	31 March 1979	31 March 1989
Waiting lists:		
In-patients	39,527	41,964
Out-patients	57,832	90,745
Day cases	3,397	6,914

Fishguard Harbour

31. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy towards the development of Fishguard harbour, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for Sealink, the port's operators.

Ministerial Visit

32. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his latest visit to mid-Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: My most recent visit was to Builth Wells on 17 October, when I addressed the 1989 Welsh agricultural outlook conference.

Egg Industry

33. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the present state of the egg industry in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The egg laying flock in Wales is relatively small. The market for eggs is very buoyant and prices are stable.

Heartbeat Wales

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the level and sources of funding of the campaign Heartbeat Wales in each year since 1985.

Mr. Grist: Central contributions to Heartbeat Wales, the Welsh heart programme, were identifiable in the programme's first two years of operation, are shown as follows:

	1985-86 £	*1986-87* £
Health Education Council	365,000	350,000
Welsh Office	130,000	215,000

From 1 April 1987 responsibility for Heartbeat Wales was assumed by the Health Promotion Authority for Wales, a Welsh Office-funded special health authority, which receives an unhypothecated allocation for its range of activities and expenditure. Funding for the authority in 1987-88 was £1·218 million; and £1·838 million in 1988-89; the allocation for 1989-90 is £2·057 million. In addition to central contributions, Heartbeat Wales has attracted income from sponsorship and other sources.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department holds information on the date of letters, the date they are received in the Department and the date a reply issues for all correspondence from hon. Members since 1984. This enables aggregate information to be produced on the length of time taken to respond to Members' letters.

Electricity Privatisation

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the likely effects on employment in the Welsh coal industry of the privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: This will depend on a number of factors which cannot now be predicted. Among them will be the terms eventually agreed between British Coal, National Power and PowerGen on the future of coal supplies and the competitiveness of mines in Wales.

Channel Tunnel

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the negotiations currently under way between his office and British Rail concerning the nature of the rail links between south Wales and the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Officials took part in British Rail's consultations on the plan of services they are required to present to the Government by the end of this year under S40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987. That report is now awaited.

East Glamorgan General Hospital

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the progress achieved to date in bringing to fruition the planned replacement hospital for the existing East Glamorgan general hospital;

(2) where the planned replacement hospital for East Glamorgan general hospital will be sited.

Mr. Grist: Though a number of planning approval and funding issues remain to be resolved we understand that Mid Glamorgan health authority continues to focus its management effort on securing an area of land at Ynys-y-Plwm for the proposed new district general hospital covering Taff-Ely and Rhondda.

Sewage Disposal

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, when he next meets the Welsh regional chairman of the National Rivers Authority, he will request him to address as a priority, stopping the Welsh water authority from depositing raw sewage from its treatment plants into the rivers, estuaries and bays of Wales.

Mr. Ian Grist: All of Dwr Cymru's sewage treatment plants have consents. It is for the National Rivers Authority to determine what to do if the consents are breached.

The NRA has already been asked to set in hand an urgent review of the way in which discharge consents are set and the way in which compliance with these consents is assessed.

Ynysplwm (Investment)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to encourage inward industrial investment located at the Ynysplwm site at Clantrisant, Mid Glamorgan.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am determined to continue to encourage inward investment into Wales and to this end I am actively involved in promoting all areas of the Principality. The Welsh Development Agency is responsible for identifying and promoting individual sites for inward investment and I am advised that it believes that there may be some land available at Ynysplwm which is suitable for one or more such projects.

Schools (Local Management)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the criteria which will be taken into account in the needs-related component of the formula funding under local management of schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Each LEA was required to devise its own formula having regard to local needs and circumstances and after consultation with its schools. The formula must be based on an assessment of school's objective needs and conform to the requirements of the Education Reform Act and the guidance in circular 36/88. The central determinant of a school's needs should be the number of pupils weighted for age differences.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the implications of local management of schools in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Local management will enable governors and headteachers of all county and voluntary secondary schools, and of larger primary schools, to target funds on their own educational needs and priorities by giving them control over their running costs. It will make schools more responsive to the clients—parents, the local community, and employers—by relating the funding that schools receive mainly to the numbers of pupils. Local management gives the local education authority the lead function in deciding the basis for allocating funds to schools and in supporting them in the efficient and effective provision of education.

The Department is currently considering the LEAs' schemes for the local management of schools.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment his Department has made of the implications of local management of schools on *(a)* administrative costs at school levels, *(b)* responsibilities and workloads of head teachers and *(c)* information technology requirements at school level.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Over time the administrative costs associated with the introduction of local management of schools should be offset by the more effective use of resources. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, has asked the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions to advise on the implications of local management for the workload of headteachers when reporting to him on school teachers' pay and conditions for 1990-91.

Up to £1 million has been made available to LEAs in Wales in 1989-90 for the introduction of local management. Of this £500,000 has been earmarked for the introduction of management information systems into schools.

NHS Reform

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the Member for Alyn and Deeside of 30 October, when he expects to be in a position to make a statement on staffing requirements under the proposals of the White Paper, "Working for Patients".

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on Monday 30 October at col. *34*. The manpower implications of the proposals contained in the White Paper "Working for Patients" are being considered as part of the ongoing manpower planning and management process within the NHS in Wales alongside a number of other initiatives. A number of these initiatives naturally interrelate and to some degree overlap for example, it is likely that the White Paper proposals will require a further strengthening of the personnel, finance and information technology functions within the NHS in Wales, in addition to the work that is already being undertaken in these areas as part of the continuing development of the management of the service.

Similarly, the proposals contained in a review of the Combined Training Institute at Cardiff and in an option appraisal of nurse education arrangements in Wales as part of the wider task of implementing Project 2000 are being considered alongside the outcome of the manpower resource planning exercise. The proposals contained in the White Paper overlay such initiatives to some extent and will be taken into account in that context. The annual manpower resource planning exercise will enable the NHS in Wales to take stock of the manpower requirements over the next decade.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his plans for a scheme of transitional relief to help community chargepayers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: In July I announced that the average community charge in Wales for 1990-91 would be £175, provided that Welsh local authorities budgeted in line with my plans. This will benefit all Welsh community chargepayers. In addition to this a three-year scheme of community charge transitional relief is to be introduced which will provide further assistance to personal chargepayers in Wales. The cost of the scheme will be £17·5 million in 1990-91.

I am placing in the Library copies of a paper setting out my proposals, which have been the subject of consultation with the Welsh local authority associations. The scheme gives protection to those facing significant increases over their 1989-90 domestic rates bills. It will provide broadly the same protection as that provided by a district safety net but without the need for contributions from chargepayers.

The scheme I am announcing today will mean that in 1990-91 personal chargepayers in communities where domestic ratable values are low will face an increase of no more than £25 per year—less than 50p a week—over the average 1989-90 domestic rates bill for each adult in their community area, provided that local authorities spend in line with my plans. Residents of many communities and some inner city communities will be protected from large increases as we introduce the new system.

In bringing forward these proposals, I must emphasise the important responsibility which now falls upon Welsh local authorities in their budget-making for 1990-91. The announcement I have made must not be taken by authorities as a signal to increase spending; rather, I look to Welsh local authorities to ensure, in setting their budgets for 1990-91, that the full benefits of these new arrangements flow through to chargepayers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales at what level he proposes to set the total of revenue support grant, the national non-domestic rate multiplier and the distributable amount of national non-domestic rate for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I announced on 20 July that I proposed to set the total of aggregate external finance (the level of central Government support for local authority revenue spending) at £1,733 million, an increase of 8·6 per cent. over the comparable level for 1989-90. This support comprises three component elements: revenue support grant, the national non-domestic rates distributable amount, and relevant specific grants.

I now estimate that the amount of business rates to be distributed in 1990-91 (the distributable amount) will be £454 million. This is the amount (adjusted to allow for certain technical factors) which I expect charging authorities to receive in respect of rates paid by private businesses, nationalised industries, and local authorities themselves, together with a contribution in respect of Crown property. This amount includes an element from the business sector which is broadly the same in real terms as the equivalent amount for 1989-90. In arriving at the distributable amount I have estimated that the national non-domestic rating multiplier for 1990-91 will be 38p; but this figure will be provisional until I have final information about the effects of the revaluation and other relevant factors.

I estimate that relevant specific grants towards local authority revenue expenditure will total £154·2 million. Further details will be available at the time of the Autumn Statement.

I propose that the total of revenue support grant should be £1,124·8 million. I am today consulting Welsh local authorities and their associations on this amount.

I will also shortly be notifying the associations of my proposals for the distribution and population reports, together with exemplifications of the likely effect of my proposals on individual authorities. These will be based on provisional population figures from community charge registers. The Welsh local authority associations share the view that it would not be helpful to publish exemplifications at this stage.

HEALTH

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will implement a scheme of compensation over and above the £10 million granted in November 1987, for haemophilia HIV positive people who have contracted the virus from infected imported blood products during National Health Service treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The £10 million that the Government provided to set up the Macfarlane Trust was an ex-gratia payment and not compensation. I understand that the trust funds are not yet fully committed, but, as we made clear when the £10 million grant was announced, we shall not be closed to any representations about further funding which may be made at a later date.

Some haemophiliacs who are HIV positive are now pursuing compensation through the courts and I am advised that this matter is now sub judice.

Wheelchairs (Children)

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the demand for, and availability of, electronic and hi-tech wheelchairs for disabled children.

Mr. Freeman: The Disablement Services Authority is the special health authority responsible for the provision of artificial limbs and wheelchairs. My hon. Friend should address his question to the DSA.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will create a specific section dealing with the problem of child abuse.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is a policy section specifically concerned with the problem of child abuse within the Department of Health. The section draws on professional advice from within and outside the Department, and, through the interdepartmental group on child abuse, works with other Government Departments to provide a co-ordinated approach to child protection.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will initiate a research project to discover how many clinics there are currently which have been set up to help child abusers overcome their problem.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department is aware of a number of clinics and other facilities and projects working with child abusers in a variety of settings. A definitive count of such clinics is not available, since some offer a specialist service while others help child abusers as part of a wider programme.

Health Authority Boundaries

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations are taking place on health authority boundary changes in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Consultation is taking place on the proposed transfer of north east Westminster from Bloomsbury health authority (North East Thames regional health authority) to Parkside health authority (North West Thames regional health authority). A consultation document has been issued, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

A further consultation exercise will take place later this year on a proposal by North East Thames regional health authority to merge the remaining part of Bloomsbury health authority with Islington health authority (also in North East Thames).

Erythropoietin

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Minister of State's reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 23 October about the prescribing of erythropoietin for patients with kidney failure, if he has now assessed the information received from health authorities about the likely need for the drug and its expenditure implications; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have nothing to add to the reply that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) gave to the right hon. Member and my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 23 October at columns *316-17*.

Medical Education and Research

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in view of the proposed Health Service arrangements, if he will establish a mechanism for evaluating the impact of the changes in medical education and research.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As was made clear in the White Paper "Working for Patients", the Government are firmly committed to maintaining the quality of medical education and research and we recognise the complexity and special needs of these areas.

The steering group on undergraduate medical and dental education, the standing committee on postgraduate medical education, and the Chief Medical Officer's expert advisory group are considering the impact that the proposed changes may have on medical education.

Beverley Lewis

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement about the Beverley Lewis case;

(2) whether he has any plans to review the Mental Health Act in the light of the Beverley Lewis case.

Mr. Freeman: The death of Beverley Lewis is a very tragic case. We have asked for reports on it from the health and social services authorities concerned. These reports and the inquest findings will be examined very carefully to see what needs to be done to close any gaps in legislation or in guidance to the authorities.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Correspondence)

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will reply to the letter from Mr. Jeremy Harrison, a chiropodist of 433 Aigburth road, Liverpool 17.

Mr Freeman: I met Mr. Harrison in the presence of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 25 September 1989 to discuss a number of issues concerning the practice of chiropody by state-registered and non-state-registered practitioners. The issues are very complex and I will be giving a considered reply to the questions raised by Mr. Harrison at this meeting as soon as possible.

Blood Products

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the anticipated levels of supply of factor VIII from the blood products laboratory, Elstree, over the last 12 months in monthly figures;

(2) what are the anticipated levels of supply of plasma to the blood products laboratory in Elstree over the next 12 months' in monthly figures;

(3) what were the quantities of plasma held in stockpile at the blood products laboratory, Elstree, over the last 12 months, in monthly figures;

(4) what were the quantities of plasma received at the blood products laboratory, Elstree, over the last 12 months, in monthly figures.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the tables.

Table 1

Levels of supply of Factor VIII from BPL over the last 12 months and projections for the next 12 months

millions of international units

	1988	*[1]1989*
November	6·6	6·0
December	6·2	6·0
	1989	*1990*
January	5·6	6·0
February	5·6	6·0
March	5·7	6·0
April	5·4	7·3
May	5·4	7·3
June	5·9	7·3
July	4·6	7·3
August	6·0	7·3
September	5·0	7·3
October	5·4	7·3

[1] Projections.

Table 2

Anticipated levels of plasma supply to BPL over the next 12 months

	Tonnes
November	35
December	35
January	35
February	35
March	35
April	40
May	40
June	41
July	41
August	41
September	41
October	41

Table 3

Quantities of plasma held in stockpile at BPL over last 12 months

	Tonnes
November	307
December	304
January	289
February	278
March	261
April	263
May	253
June	248
July	237
August	232
September	219
October	213

Table 4

Quantities of plasma received at BPL over the last 12 months

	Tonnes
November	33
December	28
January	33
February	35
March	35
April	35
May	31
June	44
July	34
August	34
September	39
October	35

North West RHA

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account is taken of inflation in the financial allocations to the North West regional health authority in connection with the reimbursement of costs for caring for the former residents of large mental institutions; and what allowance was made to that authority for the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: In general, allocations to regional health authorities do not make separate provision for individual clinical services or client groups. It is for authorities to determine how the resources available to them should be spent in line with national policy guidelines and their assessment of local needs and priorities.

Listeriosis

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give details of any information he has received about outbreaks of listeriosis in Mexico, Canada and California;

(2) if he will give the numbers of reported cases of listeriosis for each year since 1978;

(3) when he first became aware of any research programmes into listeriosis carried out in the United States of America, Austria and West Germany;

(4) when he first received the World Health Organisation report entitled "Foodborne Listeriosis" ;

(5) whether he has received advice from bodies representing informed medical opinion as to whether the public should be made aware of the risks of listeriosis.

Mr. Freeman: The number of reported cases of listeriosis for each year since 1978 is as follows:

	Number
1978	[1]87
1979	[1]70
1980	[1]75
1981	[1]86
1982	[1]77
1983	115
1984	115
1985	149
1986	137
1987	259
1988	291
1989[2]	231

[1] These figures cannot be compared with later figures which reflect a change in reporting systems.

[2] Figures are from January to September only and are provisional.

Information on listeriosis in California and Canada is available in evidence given to the Social Services Committee in its examination of food poisoning, listeria and listeriosis earlier this year. Of particular interest was the following table. Mexican-style soft cheese was implicated in the Los Angeles (California) outbreak in 1985. The Department has no information on any outbreak of listeriosis in Mexico.

Examples of outbreaks of food-borne listeriosis
Numbers of cases (deaths)

Ref.	*Place*	*Years*	*Total*	*Maternal/foetal/ neonatal*	*Non-pregnant adult and juvenile*	*Food implicated*	*Serotype*
1.	Boston, United States of America	1979	20 (5)	0	20 (5)	? raw vegetables	4b
2.	Halifax, Canada	1981	41 (18)	34 (16)	7 (2)	coleslaw	4b
3.	Boston, United States of America	1983	49 (14)	7 (2)	42 (12)	? milk	4b
4.	Los Angeles, United States of America	1985	142 (48)	93 (30)	49 (18)	soft cheese	4b
5.	Vaud, Switzerland	1983-7	122 (33)	61 (nk)	61 (nk)	soft cheese	4b

nk = Not known.
1. Ho et al. Arch Intern Med 1986; 146: 520-4.
2. Schlech et al New Engl J Med 1983; 908: 203-6.
3. Fleming et al New Engl J Med 1985; 312: 404-7.
4. Linnan et al New Engl J Med 1988; 319: 823-8.
5. Bille & Glauser. Bulletin des Bundesamtes fur Gesundheitswesen 1988; 28: 28-9.

The report of the WHO informal working group on foodborne listeriosis was published in May 1988.

The government have been working with all interests, including the medical profession, since the end of 1987 to assess and decide how best to deal with potential hazards from listeria monocytogenes as evidence of cases of listeriosis linked to food emerged in Europe. The Government have kept in close touch with relevant research worldwide.

Mentally Ill patients

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review the experiment in release of long-stay mentally ill patients known as the "Daily Living Programme".

Mr. Freeman: The pattern of care and treatment used in the daily living programme has been used very successfully for some years both in parts of the United States of America and in Australia.

The present research programme is to assess the value of this pattern of care in an urban environment in England. The daily living programme is designed to give people with early and acute mental illness the treatment that they need without unnecessary use of in-patient care. The patients in the daily living programme can be admitted or readmitted to hospital whenever it is considered necessary by their clinical team and preliminary results show that over 80 per cent. of patients in the programme have been admitted to hospital during their time on the programme. Patients in the programme can stay in hospital for as long as is judged necessary. The daily living programme is not concerned with the rehabilitation of long-stay patients. The programme is a research project, which has been partly funded by the Department of Health for three years until September 1990. A full evaluation is due at the end of 1990.

Health Authorities (Internal Markets)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the health authorities that are to be tested in the development of internal markets; what services are to be tested; and when he hopes to report on the results of the scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All health authorities are engaged upon development work to get ready for the first contracts for health services. Subject to the passage of the necessary legislation these should be operative from April 1991. We are however funding certain authorities whose development work is more advanced. The purpose of this funding is to enable them both to progress faster and to document their experience for the benefit of those authorities who are at a less advanced stage.

The projects are for:

(a) the development of contracts for services between three DHAs and hospitals within their own boundaries, hospitals in other districts and with the private sector. The DHAs are Cambridge, Peterborough and Huntingdon. The project will produce regular reports of its work, the next being due in March 1990.

(b) the development of management contracts between four DHAs and hospitals they directly manage. The DHAs are West Norfolk and Wisbech, West Suffolk, East Suffolk, and Great Yarmouth and Waveney. The project will produce regular reports of its work, the next being due in March 1990.

(c) The development of service contracts between authorities in respect of flows of patients across district boundaries. The project involves all DHAs within the South Western region. The project will produce regular reports, the next being due early in 1990.

The Department is in addition funding some other projects concerned with related aspects of the "Working for Patients" proposals.

Mental Health Act Commission

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has yet received the option appraisal on the future location of the Mental Health Act Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. We welcome the commission's decision to centralise its administration and, in the light of the information contained in the commission's report of its review, and in the option appraisal, have decided that the office should be located in Nottingham.

Hyperactivity

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is being undertaken into allergies leading to hyperactivity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The Medical Research Council, which receives a grant-in-aid from this Department, is the main agency through which the Government support medical research. The council is not currently supporting research into allergies leading to hyperactivity, though it is supporting other work on hyperactivity. The council is always willing to consider soundly-based proposals for new research programmes in competition with other proposals.

Cytomegalovirus

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department funds into the foetal disease cytomegalovirus.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from this Department, is the main agency through which the Government support medical research. I understand that the council is supporting the following projects concerning cytomegalovirus:

Dr. J. D. Oram, Molecular Genetic Laboratory, Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, Porton.
Project Title:
Expression of a human cytomegalovirus glycoprotein genes in cultures of escherichia coli.

Dr. G. H. Farrar, Molecular Genetics Laboratory, Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, Porton.
Project Title:
Isolation and characterisation of human cylomegalovirus glycoproteins.

Professor C. A. Mims, Department of Microbiology, United Medical School Guy's and St. Thomas's London.
Project Title:
Studies of the interaction of murine cytomegalovirus with the immune system.

Dr. P. D. Griffiths, Department of Microbiology, Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine, London.
Project Title:
Studies on the protein composition of cytomegalovirus found in the body fluids.

Professor Catherine Peckham, Department of Paediatric Epidemiology, Institute of Child Health, London.
Project Title:
Long-term follow-up of children with congenital cytomegalovirus infection.

Dr. Minson, Department of Pathology, University of Cambridge.
Project Title:
The indentification and characterisation of the glycoproteins in human cytomegalovirus.

Dr. V. C. Emery, Department of Virology, Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine, London.
Project Title:
Quantification of cytomegalovirus in clinical samples.

Additionally, research on cytomegalovirus may be being pursued by university departments and medical schools with support from UFC block grants and by health authorities; but information on this is not collected centrally.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mobility Allowance

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the total cost to the Exchequer of extending mobility allowance at *(a)* current levels of payment and *(b)* proposed updated levels of payment to people aged over 75 years of age.

Mr. Scott: Mobility allowance must be claimed before age 66 and in respect of disability arising before age 65. Section 8 of the Social Security Act 1989 has already provided for existing recipients of the allowance who reach age 75 to continue to receive it to age 80. The annual cost of this will rise to £8 million in 1991-92. The cost of complete abolition of all age limits would be nearly £1·5 billion a year at current rates and nearly £1·6 billion at the proposed new rates.

Unemployed Claimants

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) in what circumstances an unemployed person in receipt of income support who has their benefit suspended for two weeks for not actually seeking work will *(a)* continue to receive uninterrupted income support and eligibility for passported benefits such as housing benefit, less the 40 per cent. deduction to their personal allowance and *(b)* have to claim individually for a hardship payment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) under what circumstances an unemployed person in receipt only of unemployment benefit who has that benefit suspended for two weeks for not actively seeking work would *(a)* automatically be paid income support, less the 40 per cent. personal allowance deduction and *(b)* have to make a separate hardship claim for income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Normally payment of benefit will be suspended when a question arises about whether an unemployed claimant has been actively seeking employment. However, there can still be entitlement to income support at a reduced rate (and eligibility for passported benefits including housing benefit) if the adjudication officer decides that the claimant (or member of his/her family) would suffer hardship if benefit was not paid.

The adjudication officer should consider the question of hardship automatically for those already in receipt of income support. Where it is decided that benefit should continue the local office will do its best to ensure payments remain uninterrupted.

Those in receipt only of unemployment benefit when the actively seeking employment question arises need to make a separate claim before the adjudication officer can consider whether a payment of income support can be made.

Allowances

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update the information in his reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) about child and family allowances of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *563-66*, expressed in April prices to include the years 1989-90.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is as follows:

Value of child support[1] for each child in standard rate tax-paying families expressed at April 1989[2] prices (£)

Date[3]	Children under age 11 1st child	 2nd child	 3rd child[4]	Children aged 11-15 1st child	 2nd child	 3rd child[4]	Children aged 16 and over 1st child	 2nd child	 3rd child[4]
April 1958	7·60	10·01	10·76	9·46	11·96	12·52	11·40	13·82	14·46
April 1959	6·96	9·47	10·12	8·63	11·23	11·88	10·39	12·90	13·64
April 1960	6·91	9·40	10·13	8·57	11·15	11·79	10·32	12·81	13·54
April 1961	6·73	9·15	9·87	8·34	10·85	11·48	10·05	12·47	13·19
April 1962	6·37	8·66	9·34	7·89	10·27	10·86	9·51	11·80	12·48
April 1963	7·15	9·40	10·06	8·65	11·06	11·56	10·23	12·56	13·14
April 1964	7·01	9·21	9·86	8·48	10·84	11·33	10·03	12·31	12·88
April 1965	7·03	9·19	9·65	8·57	10·66	11·20	10·12	12·20	12·74
April 1966	6·78	8·87	9·32	8·28	10·29	10·81	9·77	11·78	12·30
April 1967	6·59	8·61	9·05	8·03	9·99	10·49	9·48	11·44	11·94
April 1968	6·31	7·90	8·38	7·69	9·29	9·70	9·08	10·60	11·09
April 1969	5·98	7·81	8·27	7·29	9·13	9·59	8·60	10·44	10·83
April 1970	5·66	7·40	7·83	6·90	8·64	9·08	8·15	9·89	10·26
April 1971	6·59	8·35	8·75	7·61	9·43	9·83	8·69	10·46	10·85
April 1972	6·20	7·86	8·23	7·16	8·87	9·25	8·18	9·84	10·21
April 1973	5·63	7·05	7·39	6·66	8·03	8·37	7·49	8·86	9·20
April 1974	6·46	7·65	7·95	7·44	8·54	8·88	8·24	9·35	9·69
April 1975	5·66	7·82	7·82	6·46	8·63	8·63	7·16	9·36	9·36
April 1976	5·93	7·78	7·78	6·61	8·46	8·46	7·23	9·05	9·05
April 1977	5·70	6·53	6·53	6·28	7·10	7·10	6·78	7·58	7·58
April 1978	6·79	6·79	6·79	7·32	7·32	7·32	7·76	7·76	7·76
April 1979	8·42	8·42	8·42	8·42	8·42	8·42	8·42	8·42	8·42
November 1980	7·81	7·81	7·81	7·81	7·81	7·81	7·81	7·81	7·81
November 1981	7·71	7·71	7·71	7·71	7·71	7·71	7·71	7·71	7·71
November 1982	8·09	8·09	8·09	8·09	8·09	8·09	8·09	8·09	8·09
November 1983	8·57	8·57	8·57	8·57	8·57	8·57	8·57	8·57	8·57
November 1984	8·61	8·61	8·61	8·61	8·61	8·61	8·61	8·61	8·61
November 1985	8·34	8·34	8·34	8·34	8·34	8·34	8·34	8·34	8·34
July 1986	8·32	8·32	8·32	8·32	8·32	8·32	8·32	8·32	8·32
April 1987	8·14	8·14	8·14	8·14	8·14	8·14	8·14	8·14	8·14
April 1988	7·83	7·83	7·83	7·83	7·83	7·83	7·83	7·83	7·83
April 1989	7·25	7·25	7·25	7·25	7·25	7·25	7·25	7·25	7·25

[1] The combined value of child tax-allowances after clawback and family allowance/child benefit.

[2] Based on the movement in the General Index of Retail Prices at April 1989.

[3] Child tax allowance ceased after the 1978-79 tax year end and up-rating dates are shown from 1979 onwards.

[4] And subsequent children.

Child Support

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update to April 1990 the information provided in the reply of 28 November 1988 to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) *Official Report*, columns *93-96*, relating to child support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figures, updated to April 1989, are set out as follows. The table cannot be updated to April 1990 until the movement in the index of retail prices to that month is known.

(a) Date	*(b)* *M/C UB rate* £	*(c)* *Dep increase* £	*(d)* *Child Benefit/ Family allowance* £	*(e)* *Total child[1] support* £	*(f)* *Column (e) as a percentage of column (b)*	*(g)* *Column (e) expressed at April 1989 prices[2]* £	*(h)* *Column (g) as index April 1989 = 100*
5th July 1948	2·10	0·375	0·25	0·625	29·8	9·02	62·2
30th August 1951	2·10	0·625	0·25	0·875	41·7	10·74	74·1
24th July 1952	2·70	0·65	0·25	0·90	33·3	10·20	70·3
19th May 1955	3·25	0·75	0·40	1·15	35·4	12·24	84·4
6th February 1958	4·00	1·10	0·40	1·50	37·5	14·17	97·7
6th April 1961	4·625	1·35	0·40	1·75	37·8	15·70	108·3
7th March 1963	5·45	1·60	0·40	2·00	36·7	16·68	115·0
28th January 1965	6·50	1·85	0·40	2·25	34·6	17·77	122·6
28th October 1967	7·30	2·10	0·40	2·50	34·2	18·06	124·6
11th April 1968	7·30	2·05	0·75	2·80	38·4	19·40	133·8
10th October 1968	7·30	1·90	0·90	2·80	38·4	19·16	132·1
6th November 1969	8·10	2·20	0·90	3·10	38·3	20·08	138·5
23rd September 1971	9·70	2·80	0·90	3·70	38·1	20·58	141·9
5th October 1972	10·90	3·30	0·90	4·20	38·5	21·53	148·5
4th October 1973	11·90	3·70	0·90	4·60	38·7	21·46	148·0
25th July 1974	13·90	4·50	0·90	5·40	38·8	22·20	153·1
7th April 1975	15·90	4·70	1·50	6·20	39·0	21·66	149·4
20th November 1975	18·00	5·50	1·50	7·00	38·9	21·89	151·0
18th November 1976	20·90	6·60	1·50	8·10	38·8	22·03	151·9
4th April 1977	20·90	5·60	2·50	8·10	38·8	20·26	139·7
17th November 1977	23·80	6·50	2·50	9·00	37·8	21·66	149·4

(a) *Date*	*(b)* *M/C UB rate* £	*(c)* *Dep increase* £	*(d)* *Child Benefit/ Family allowance* £	*(e)* *Total child[1] support* £	*(f)* *Column (e) as a percentage of column (b)*	*(g)* *Column (e) expressed at April 1989 prices[2]* £	*(h)* *Column (g) as index April 1989 = 100*
4th April 1978	23·80	4·40	4·60	9·00	37·8	20·85	143·8
16th November 1978	25·50	3·70	6·00	9·70	38·0	21·60	149·0
2nd April 1979	25·50	1·70	8·00	9·70	38·0	20·42	140·8
15th November 1979	29·95	3·40	8·00	11·40	38·1	21·63	149·2
24th November 1980	33·40	2·50	9·50	12·00	35·9	19·74	136·1
23rd November 1981	36·40	1·60	10·50	12·10	33·2	17·78	122·6
25th November 1982	40·45	0·60	11·70	12·30	30·4	17·01	117·3
24th November 1983	43·75	0·30	13·00	13·30	30·4	17·54	121·0
26th November 1984	46·00	—[3]	13·70	13·70	29·8	17·22	118·8
28th November 1985	49·25	—	14·00	14·00	28·4	16·68	115·0
28th July 1986	49·80	—	14·20	14·20	28·5	16·64	114·8
6th April 1987	50·85	—	14·50	14·50	28·5	16·28	112·3
11th April 1988	52·95	—	14·50	14·50	27·4	15·66	108·0
10th April 1989	56·10	—	14·50	14·50	25·8	14·50	100·0

[1] Does not show the effect of child tax allowance to the standard rate taxpayer. In years prior to April 1979 some recipients of Unemployment Benefit would also have derived advantage from child tax allowance because of their receipt of earnings in the course of the tax year.

[2] Based on the movement in the general Index of Retail Prices between the dates shown and April 1989.

[3] Child dependency addition abolished from 26 November 1984.

Family Credit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families were or are *(a)* entitled to and *(b)* receiving family credit in 1988 and 1989; and what is his estimate of the number of families who will be entitled to it in 1990.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In 1988 the number of families eligible for family credit was about 500,000 amongst employees: information covering the self-employed is not available. Estimates of the eligible population in 1989 and 1990 cannot be made until information from the family expenditure surveys for those years becomes available.

During 1988 the average number of families receiving family credit was 277,000, of which 253,000 were employee cases. The latest information for 1989 is for July when the total family credit caseload was over 320,000.

Correspondence

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* the replies given to the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham in his letter dated 28 September.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is set out as follows:

Question: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures giving the disposable incomes, after taking into account means-tested benefits of single wage married couples with two children under five years and mortgages of *(a)* £20,000, *(b)* £30,000, *(c)* £40,000 and *(d)* £50,000 firstly when out of work and receiving Income Support and secondly when in work earning £100, £150, £200, £250 and £300 a week.

The information requested is set out in the table below:

Total net income of a married couple with two children (aged 3 and 4) who are purchasing their home in April 1989

Capital outstanding on mortgage £	*Total net income: Unemployed and claiming Income Support* *In receipt of Income Support for less than 16 weeks* £	 *In receipt of Income Support for over 16 weeks* £
20,000	115·57	135·47
30,000	125·52	155·48
40,000	138·79	181·91
50,000	152·06	208·45

Notes:

1. Total net income on income support comprises social security benefits plus help with housing costs, plus regular benefits in kind. This includes mortgage interest based on a gross interest rate of 13·8 per cent.
2. Assumes average local authority rates appropriate to family size.

Total net income: in work

Gross earnings	£ *per week*
100	128·38
150	137·07
200	167·53
250	200·53
300	233·53

Note: Total net income is defined as take-home pay plus social security benefits.

Question: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, how many and what percentage of families with children have mortgages distinguishing between working and out of work families and between those who earn: *(a)* under £150 per week, *(b)* £150-200, *(c)* £200-300 and *(d)* over £300.

The information requested is set out in the table below:

Number and percentage of families with children who have mortgages 1986

Gross weekly earned income	*Working families with mortgages 000's*	*Percentage of all such working families*	*Weekly mortgage interest* £
Under £150	450	46	22·90
£150-£200	580	62	21·70
£200-300	1,400	79	26·10
Over £300	1,420	88	40·70

Gross weekly earned income	*Working families with mortgages 000's*	*Percentage of all such working families*	*Weekly mortgage interest £*
Total	3,850	73	30·50

	Unemployed families 000's	*Percentage of all unemployed families*	*Weekly mortgage interest £*
Total	80	19	21·30

Source: 1986 Family Expenditure Survey.

Notes:

1. A "working family" is defined as one where at least one of the two parents is in full-time employment or self-employment (working 24 or more hours each week for employees in employment and 30 hours or more for the self-employed). "Unemployed" couples with children are defined by the supplementary benefit status of the head of the family.

2. For working families, gross weekly earned income excluded income from state benefits.

Community Charge

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will republish and complete his reply to the question dated 24 July, from the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham, showing the effect of the community charge on the numbers of *(a)* families and *(b)* persons dependent on means-tested benefits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The community charge transitional household relief scheme for England announced by my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) on 11 October will have a considerable impact on the numbers of people who will get community charge benefit. Detailed work on these estimates has not yet been completed. I will write to my right hon. Friend after the Government's public expenditure plans for 1990-91 have been made public. In broad terms between a quarter and a third of those liable to pay the full community charge will be entitled to community charge benefit.

Income Support

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of working families with children and a mortgage, whose net incomes after income tax, national insurance contribution, mortgage and local authority rates were within *(a)* 80 per cent. and *(b)* 70-79 per cent. of their income support entitlements.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that in 1989-90 approximately 10,000 working heads of families with children and mortgages had net incomes within 80 per cent. of their potential out-of-work net incomes. A further 20,000 had net incomes between 70 and 79 per cent. of their out-of-work net incomes. (Net in-work income is defined as gross wages less appropriate tax and national insurance deductions and housing costs. Full take-up of in-work benefits is assumed where appropriate.)

Income Levels

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to reply to the question from the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham dated 24 June, showing the number of working families and out-of-work families with children at specified income levels.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I will reply as soon as possible.

Civil Service Dispersal

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of those sections of his Department which have been relocated in the last five years, indicating the sites to which they have been moved; whether consideration is being given to future relocation of London-based sections of his Department to sites outside London; and whether the central borders of Scotland has been identified as a suitable area for any future moves.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Full details of all moves of sections of the Department over the last five years are not available but they include the following where sizeable numbers of staff are involved:

1985—Legal Aid work transferred to Preston

1987—Retirement pension work transferred to Newcastle upon Tyne

1987—Agency benefit work transferred to Newcastle upon Tyne

1987—Departmental records work transferred to Nelson, Lancashire

1988—Development work on the computerisation of social security benefits transferred to Lytham St. Annes.

My right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State announced on 16 January 1989 that 1,060 jobs in total would be relocated from London to Glasgow, Wigan and Belfast. This relocation is under way and should be completed during the summer of 1991. The sites for relocation have been chosen in line with the Government policy on relocation announced by my right hon. Friend the former Paymaster General in March 1988 taking into account labour markets, value for money and increases in efficiency.

Under this policy my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State also announced on 23 June 1988 that he was considering a report on the possibility of moving some of the Department's HQ work away from London. We hope to make an announcement about this shortly.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on how the independent living fund is helping disabled people in Suffolk and Norfolk; how many people are benefiting; in what ways; and how much is being paid to them.

Mr. Scott: The independent living fund enables severely disabled people to live independently in the community by providing regular financial help towards the cost of personal care and domestic support. The fund can also make one-off payments for specific items of equipment if this would reduce care costs. To date, the fund has helped more than 2,000 people, with weekly payments ranging from less than £5 to more than £400. I regret that separate information is not available for Suffolk and Norfolk.

Income Support

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of income support is allocated for poll tax payments in *(a)* Bristol, *(b)* south-west region and *(c)* nationally.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Income support levels were adjusted on a national basis in April this year to include help towards the average contribution to the community charge that recipients would be expected to pay. The amounts included were £1·15 a week for single people aged 18-24, £1·30 a week for single people aged 25 or over and £2·30 a week for couples. These amounts now form part of the overall benefit levels which will be up-rated from April next year.

Pensioner Incomes

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many pensioner couples have a total income currently of less than £80 a week;

(2) how many single pensioners have a total income currently of less than £60 a week.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available information refers to 1986. At that time, 1989 gross incomes of £60 and £80 would have been the equivalent of £51·35 and £68·47 respectively. In 1986, 25 per cent. of single pensioners had gross incomes below £51·35 and 3 per cent. of pensioner couples had gross incomes below £68·47.

Source: Family Expenditure Survey.

Severe Hardship

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list in the *Official Report* the criteria he uses for assessing *(a)* severe hardship when considering applications for entitlement to benefit from 16 and 17-year-olds and *(b)* whether individuals in these age groups are genuinely estranged from their parents.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Secretary of State has the power to direct that, where unavoidable severe hardship would result if benefit were to be withheld, a young person will be entitled to income support even though that young person would ordinarily not be so entitled. Such decisions are made by officials authorised to act on his behalf. Each case is considered on its individual merits and in the light of its particular circumstances. There can therefore be no fixed criteria. Examples of factors which may be considered include: the young person's health and vulnerability, including the threat of homelessness; the availability of any income or savings; the prospects of a speedy entry into YTS; the availability of casual work; whether the person has any friends or relatives who can offer him or her accommodation or other assistance; and the financial commitments of the person and the prospect of postponing any payments.

A young person who is estranged from his or her parents, and who has of necessity to live away from home because of that estrangement, may be entitled to income suport during the child benefit extension period. Decisions in such cases are made by adjudication officers. Guidance to adjudication officers is given by the chief adjudication officer in the adjudication officers guide, a copy of which is in the Library.

Contracted-out Rebates

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest estimates of the probable rates of contracted-out rebate for each quinquennium from now until the year 2018.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* The Government Actuary estimates that, on the same assumptions as those set out in his report "Review of certain contracting out terms" (Cm. 110), in particular assuming that the weightings by age and sex remain the same, the contracted out contribution reduction in successive five year periods would be as follows:

	Per cent.
1993-98	4·8
1998-2003	4·3
2003-08	3·9
2008-13	3·6
2013-18	3·5
2018 onwards	3·4

These figures assume that the 0·4 per cent. additional margin which has been included in the rebate of 5·8 per cent for 1988-93 will not be added in later periods. The gradually reducing level of the rebate reflects the declining proportion of those contracted-out who will be accruing guaranteed minimum pensions at an accelerated rate.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

CAP (Fraud)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the extent of fraud in the common agricultural policy and its monetary value.

Mr. Curry: It is not possible to estimate the extent of fraud in the common agricultural policy since, by definition, undetected fraud cannot be measured. In 1988, 482 cases of irregularity (the definition of which goes wider than fraud) were reported by member states with a value of 121 mecu (£82 million). These cases represent about 0.4 per cent. of CAP expenditure in that year.

Green Pound

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to seek a further green pound devaluation.

Mr. Curry: It is customary to take decisions on the level of green rates at the time of the annual price fixing.

Conservation

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice his Ministry gives to farmers about conserving the countryside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service offers advice to farmers on the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside. This covers such topics as the retention and maintenance of hedgerows, trees, areas of scrub, ditches and other wildlife habitats as well as, where possible, the creation of new ones.

Bovine Somatotropin

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on the use of bovine somatotropin to boost milk production; and if he has any plans to amend the Medicines Act 1968 so as to provide for greater control over the use of such substances.

Mr. Maclean: The Scrutiny Committee has recommended that a European Commission proposal to ban the use of BST until the end of 1990 should be debated, and arrangements are in hand. Meanwhile the scientific assessment of BST continues with the assistance of data generated in authorised field trials here and in other countries. The Medicines Act already provides strict safeguard controls by requiring that such substances must be licensed and that they must first be demonstrated to be both safe and effective in use. I have no plans to amend the Act.

Labelling

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the introduction of nutritional labelling.

Mr. Maclean: We are taking an active part in negotiation of the European Commission's nutrition labelling proposals and hope that a common position will be reached soon. The proposals are similar to the Ministry's nutrition labelling guidelines and provide for a voluntary system of nutrition labelling with a mandatory format so that consumers can compare products more easily. Nutrition labelling would be compulsory only when a nutrition claim was made. There is provision for a three-year lead-in period to allow labels to be changed and, given the close resemblance of the guidelines to the Commission proposals, I hope that manufacturers and retailers will be encouraged to provide as much nutrition information as possible within their resources according to the guidelines until Community legislation is in place.

I also refer my hon. Friend to the debate on nutritional labelling in Standing Committee on 1 November 1989.

Friends of the Earth

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of Friends of the Earth; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: I met officials of the Friends of the Earth on 31 October. We had a broad-ranging and constructive discussion covering many areas of mutual interest.

Fish Diseases

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether there has been any change in the incidence of diseases in cod and other fish caught in British coastal waters in the past year.

Mr. Curry: The evidence is that there has been no change in the incidence of disease in cod or other fish caught in British coastal waters in the past year. Disease is a natural phenomenon in fish as in all animals and can vary seasonally.

Papain

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will describe the effects of the tenderiser papain on the organs of a living animal.

Mr. Maclean: Research carried out by the Ministry has established that the tenderiser has no effect on the living animal. In the event of a delay between treatment and slaughter the enzyme is excreted harmlessly.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what evidence he has on the presence of residues of the tenderiser papain in partly cooked/rare meat;

(2) what information he has on the presence of residues of the tenderiser papain in butchers' meat.

Mr. Maclean: To be effective, papain must be present in the meat during cooking. It is introduced at levels of less than five parts per million. Cooking activates and then destroys the enzyme. It is a natural vegetable protein approved as safe for use in food by the United Kingdom's expert advisory committees.

Set-aside Land

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the purposes for which set-aside land will be employed by British farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Under the terms of the scheme, participants may use land for permanent or rotational fallow, for woodland, or for a range of non-agricultural uses. The most popular option is permanent fallow, which has attracted about 80 per cent. of uptake.

Eggs

Mr. Beith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many prosecutions have been initiated as a result of the discovery by his Department of free-range eggs which have not been packed in a packing station being sold from shops.;

(2) how many staff are employed by his Department in ensuring that free-range eggs are not sold in shops unless they have been through a packing station;

(3) what is the best estimate of the total number of shops in the United Kingdom currently selling free-range eggs which have not been packed in a packing station;

(4) what was the total cost to public funds of the visit made by Mr. Sweetman, of the regional egg marketing inspectorate, at Leeds, to the Good Life shop, Wooler, on 1 November, in connection with the sale of free-range eggs; and what was the amount of time spent by the officer concerned *(a)* in travelling for the purpose of the visit and *(b)* at the premises;

(5) whether he has any plans to publicise to consumers and to retailers the regulations restricting the sale of free-range eggs from shops which have not been packed in a packing station.

Mr. Curry: EC regulations require that all hens' eggs sold by retail (other than eggs sold by the producer directly to the final consumer on the producer's own premises, by door-to-door deliveries or in a local public market) are graded and packed by authorised packing centres. This applies to free range eggs as well as to those produced in other systems.

Enforcement of the regulations at retail level is a matter for local authorities and not my Department, and I have no estimate of the number of shops which currently breach the regulations. When requested, my egg marketing inspectorate gives assistance to the local authorities but it is not possible to identify what proportion of this assistance is devoted to the enforcement of the rules specific to free range eggs. The visit in question was made during the course of routine visits in Northumberland in the period 1-2 November by the regional egg marketing inspector.

The present rules concerning the sale of free range eggs came into operation on 16 July 1985 and were publicised (with other changes to the regulations) in a trade press notice of 17 July 1985 (a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House). This was reinforced by a further press notice on 27 August 1987 (a copy of this is also in the Library). My Department has taken pains to explain these rules to all who enquire about them or whose businesses include the marketing of eggs. We shall continue to offer such advice as necessary.

BSE

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what international co-operation in research into bovine spongiform encephalopathy is currently being undertaken by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* An international collaborative project to determine the transmissibility of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) to mink is currently being planned with colleagues in the USA.

International co-operation in research into BSE has been and will continue to be discussed in various international fora, including the EEC and the Organisation Internationale des Epizooties. In addition, a round table on BSE, attended by US and European delegates, was held in the United States of America in June 1989. From these discussions further collaborative research studies may be instituted.

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies he has commissioned on set-aside in Scotland; and what plans he has to review existing provisions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him today.

Hill Livestock Scheme

Mr. David Steel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response he has made to representations from the Scottish NFU regarding the MacSharry proposals for the HLCA system.

Mr. Rifkind: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 18 October at col. 129-30.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment Review Interviews

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, when an unemployed claimant is at a review interview and an employment service counsellor expresses doubt about whether they are available for or actively seeking work and completes a UB672, the claimant is entitled to ask for and receive a copy of the UB672; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: A copy of the UB672 would not normally be issued to the claimant as the form is an internal document used by the employment service to refer cases of doubt to the independent adjudication authorities.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the enterprise allowance scheme to ensure that adequate security of income is provided for potential entrepreneurs with family responsibilities who are dependent on social security.

Mr. Eggar: The enterprise allowance scheme is not a benefit. It is intended to supplement business income during the early months of trading while the business is being established. The allowance is higher than previous benefit for 70 per cent. of entrants. Recipients with family responsibilities may also qualify for in-work benefits such as family credits depending on their circumstances.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will estimate the number of employed and self-employed people in the northern region for each year since 1983.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is as follows:

Employees in Employment and Self Employed for Northern Region

(June each year) *(Thousands)*

	Employees in Employment	*Self employed*
1983	1,057	91
1984	1,059	92
1985	1,057	104
1986	1,061	105
1987	1,068	108
1988	1,094	113
1989	1,088	117

(Unadjusted for seasonal variations)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many registered unemployed persons there were in Liverpool on the latest available date; and how many registered job vacancies there were in Liverpool on that date.

Mr. Nicholls: The following information is available from the Library. In September 1989, there were 66,636 unemployed claimants in Liverpool travel-to-work area. In the closest aggregation of jobcentres there were 3,469 unfilled vacancies. Research shows that nationally only about a third of vacancies in the economy are notified to jobcentres.

Child Care

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to provide child care facilities for part-time workers.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The Government welcome measures taken by employers to help employees, including part-time employees, combine work and family responsibilities such as the provision of creche facilities, flexible working hours and family leave. However the Government consider that it is for employers and employees to decide which arrangements best suit their individual needs and resources.

Child Care Provision

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further measures his Department is taking to encourage workplace creches and other child care provision to enable mothers to return to work; and what representations he has had on this subject.

Mr. Nicholls: I am continuing to take every opportunity to encourage employers to help employees combine work and family responsibilities.

The Government welcome measures taken by employers including assistance with child care, flexible working hours, more part-time work and at higher occupational levels, and family leave. However, we believe that it is for employers and employees to decide which arrangements for combining work and family responsibilities best suit their individual needs and resources.

The Government are also taking steps to encourage the growth of childcare provision to assist working parents through the ministerial group on women's issues of which I am a member. The group recently announced progress on its five point plan designed to pave the way for the provision of child care to suit family needs. Within the last two years I and colleagues in the Employment Department have answered 12 questions in this House on this subject, received 29 letters from hon. Members and 34 from members of the public.

I have discussed the question of child care with my Advisory Committee on Women's Employment. This committee includes the chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission, my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), the hon. Member for Barking, (Ms. Richardson), representatives of the CBI, TUC and the Women's National Commission. I have also had discussions with the National Council for One Parent Families, the Working Mothers Association, and Pre-School Playgroups Association, Gingerbread and the National Childminding Association.

Civil Service Dispersal

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of those sections of his Department which have been relocated in the last five years, indicating the sites to which they have been moved; whether consideration is being given to future relocation of London-based sections of his Department to sites outside London; and whether the central borders of Scotland has been identified as a suitable area for any future moves.

Mr. Eggar: On 2 August 1989, I announced that 1,100 jobs from my Department's headquarters will be moved to Runcorn and Sheffield over the next two to three years. This represents another major dispersal of head office jobs in the employment department group to the north; and will mean that since 1979 over 5,000 administrative head office jobs have been relocated in the north. Previous major dispersals have been to Runcorn, to Sheffield, where the Manpower Services Commission was based and Bootle where parts of the Health and Safety Executive are now based.

When considering possible regional locations I looked at a range of factors and sites and concluded that, for operational and logistical reasons, jobs should be moved only to those locations where my Department has existing headquarters establishments.

When this stage of relocation is complete more that four out of five of my Department's administrative head office jobs will be located outside London. I am persuaded that there is unlikely to be scope for any further relocation.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the additional responsibilities given to the Health and Safety Executive since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 laid upon the Health and Safety Commission and Executive responsibility for virtually all aspects of industrial health and safety, and most aspects of the protection of the public from work activity. Within this overall competence, the Commission or Executive have acquired the following new responsibilities since 1979:

(i) carriage by road, classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances;
(ii) notification of new substances before they are placed on the market and of existing substances;
(iii) action under the European directive on the control of industrial major accident hazards, including new responsibility for protection of the environment from hazardous installations;
(iv) mains gas safety;
(v) asbestos licensing;
(vi) the enforcement of part 3 of the Food and Environment Protection Act and its related Control of Pesticides regulations;
(vii) responsibility under the Control of Pesticides Regulations for the registration and assessment of non-agricultural pesticides.
(viii) new and expanded nuclear safety work including preparations for licensing UKAEA sites and responsibilities from April 1990 in connection with nuclear safety research.

In addition new or substantially expanded work has been acquired in connection with the control of dangerous substances in harbour areas, radiation and noise and the health and safety implications of the development and use of new technology including programmable electronics and biotechnology. There has also been a significant growth of EC activity and directives in areas affecting safety and health, and a significant growth in public and international interest in relevant environmental and major hazards issues.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of Health and Safety Executive staff in each year since 1975.

Mr. Nicholls: The total number of permanent staff employed by the Health and Safety Executive in each year since 1975 is as follows:

	Number
1 August	
1975	2,937
1 April	
1976	3,282·5
1977	3,917
1978	4,104·5
1979	4,170
1980	4,110
1981	3,884
1982	3,712
1983	3,593
1984	3,563·5
1985	3,616
1986	3,585
1987	3,526
1988	3,410
1989	3,449
1 October	
1989	3,526·5

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers of *(a)* factory inspectors and *(b)* agricultural inspectors who left the Health and Safety Executive in each year since 1975.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the numbers of factory and agricultural inspectors who left HSE since July 1979 is as follows. Information is not available before 1976 and for 1976 to June 1979 could be obtained only at dispropoprtionate cost.

	Factor inspectors	Agricultural inspectors
[1] 1979-80	27	7
1980-81	32	8
1981-82	53	9
1982-83	22	7
1983-84	26	5
1984-85	28	8
1985-86	30	7
1986-87	35	7
1987-88	45	5
1988-89	38	5

[1] Figures cover July 1979 to March 1980 only.

The figures include inspectors who resigned, transferred to other Civil Service posts or retired.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the level of funding to the Health and Safety Executive in each year since 1975, expressed at 1975 price-levels.

Mr. Nicholls: The level of gross financial provision to the Health and Safety Commission and Executive for each year since 1975, expressed at the 1974-75 price level, is as follows:

	£ 000s
1974-75	13,320
1975-76	22,701
1976-77	26,802
1977-78	28,203
1978-79	27,555
1979-80	27,796
1980-81	31,275
1981-82	31,257
1982-83	30,224
1983-84	31,339
1984-85	30,566
1985-86	30,521
1986-87	29,831
1987-88	30,395
1988-89	30,092

For consistency, the figures have been adjusted to remove funds provided during 1981-82 to 1984-85 for HSE's dispersal to Bootle; and to remove provision in earlier years for the industrial air pollution inspectorate which transferred to the Department of Environment in 1987.

Agricultural Inspectors

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number and location of agricultural inspectors covering the east of Scotland area in each year since 1975.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on agricultural inspectors' location, corresponding to the Scotland east area, is available only from 1 April 1985 and is as follows:

Number of agricultural inspectors in:

	Edinburgh	Aberdeen	Inverness	Dundee[1]	Total
1 April					
1985	5	2	2	1	10
1986	6	3	2	1	12
1987	7	4	2	1	14
1988	7	4	2	—	13
1989	7	4	2	—	13
1 October					
1989	6	4	2	—	12

[1] HSE's Dundee office closed on 31 March 1988

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the total numbers of agricultural inspectors in post in each year since 1975 for *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: Numbers of agricultural inspectors in Scotland and Great Britain are as follows:

Agricultural inspectors in:

	Scotland	Great Britain
1 March		
1977[1]	n/a	191
1 April		
1977	17	187
1978	15	186
1979	16	190
1980	18	187
1981	17	176
1982	15	166
1983	17	159
1984	16	154
1985	16	162
1986	18	163
1987	21	166
1988	20	158
1989	19	165
1 October		
1989	18	167

[1] Agricultural inspectors joined HSE from MAFF from March 1976 with the field force being in place in March 1977.

Notes:
1. Figures for Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
2. Totals for Great Britain include inspectors in the inspectorate's and in HSE's headquarters engaged on line management work or contributing to international and national policy or standards work.

Factory Inspectors

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number and location of factory inspectors concerning the east of Scotland area in each year since 1975.

Mr. Nicholls: The earliest date for which figures are available for factory inspectors in HSE's Scotland east area is 1 November 1976. Details of inspectors' location within the area before 1985 are not available. The available information is as follows:

	Number of factory inspectors in:			
	Edinburgh	*Aberdeen*	*Dundee*[1]	*Total in Scotland East*
1 November 1976	—	—	—	26
1 April				
1977	—	—	—	29
1978	—	—	—	31
1979	—	—	—	32
1980	—	—	—	33
1981	—	—	—	31
1982	—	—	—	32
1983	—	—	—	27
1984	—	—	—	25
1985	18	5	3	26
1986	16	4	3	23
1987	16	4	3	23
1988	16·5	4	—	20·5
1989	19·5	4	—	23·5
1 October				
1989	21·5	5	—	26·5

[1] HSE's Dundee office closed on 31 March 1988.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the total number of factory inspectors in post for *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom in each year since 1975.

Mr. Nicholls: Numbers of factory inspectors in Scotland and Great Britain are listed. HSE does not enforce health and safety legislation in Northern Ireland.

Factory inspectors in:

	Scotland	*Great Britain*
1 July 1975[1]	n/a	557
1 January 1976	53	568
1 April		
1976	54	624
1977	60	676·5
1978	64	695·5
1979	65	742
1980	67	759·5
1981	64	735
1982	62	678
1983	55	654·5
1984	51	627
1985	53	652
1986	48	623
1987	45	621·5
1988	46·5	592·5
1989	46	604
1 October 1989	51	619

[1] HSE figures for factory inspectors in Great Britain became available from July 1975, and for Scotland from January 1976.
n/a = not available.

Totals for Great Britain include inspectors in the inspectorate and in HSE's headquarters engaged on line management work or contributing to international and national policy or technical standards.

Workplace Accidents

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were *(a)* the total number of accidents, *(b)* the total number of fatal accidents, and *(c)* the total number of major accidents reported at workplaces in (i) Scotland and (ii) the United Kingdom in each year since 1975.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information for injuries reported to Her Majesty's factory and agricultural inspectorates and to the local authorities in Scotland and Great Britain as a whole is given in the tables. Figures for Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Figures for the periods 1975-80, 1981-85 and 1986 onwards are not comparable owing to changes in reporting arrangements.

Year	*Numbers of reported occupational injuries[1] to employees in Scotland resulting in*		
	death[2]	*major injury*[3]	*absence from work of over 2 days*[4]
1975[5]	55	n/a	22,833
1976[5]	49	n/a	26,789
1977[5]	67	n/a	28,213
1978[5]	59	n/a	25,999
1979[5]	72	n/a	24,157
1980[5]	49	n/a	21,732
1981	57	1,233	39,277
1982	57	1,239	35,115
1983	55	1,169	n/a
1984	47	1,162	n/a
1985	37	1,176	n/a
1986-87[6]	41	1,878	13,958
1987-88	37	1,824	14,827

Year	*Numbers of reported occupational injuries[1] to employees in Great Britain resulting in*		
	death[2]	*Major injury*[3]	*absence from work of over 3 days*[4]
1975[7]	461	n/a	247,909
1976[7]	423	n/a	246,509
1977[7]	390	n/a	248,828
1978[7]	433	n/a	269,123
1979[7]	433	n/a	250,465
1980[7]	411	n/a	210,290
1981	351	11,079	259,252
1982	370	11,084	327,805
1983	370	11,270	n/a
1984	362	11,853	n/a
1985	321	12,112	n/a
1986-87[8]	307	18,764	143,152
1987-88	308	18,347	146,773

n/a—not available

[1] Injuries notified under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1980 (NADOR) for 1981 to 1985, and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR) for later years. Data for the years 1975-1980 are based on reports made under various legislation.

[2] Includes fatal injuries to members of the public arising from work activity in respect to those fatal injuries reported to local authorities 1981-1985.

[3] The category of major injury was first introduced by NADOR. The definition of a major injury was widened by RIDDOR.

[4] For 1975-80 injuries notified directly to HSE under various health and safety at work legislation. For 1981-82, injuries resulting in claims for industrial injury benefit. From 1983-85 figures are not available as industrial injury benefit ceased in 1983. From April 1986 injuries reported by employers under RIDDOR.

[5] For Scotland, injuries in 1975-80 are those reported to factory inspectorate only.

[6] Year from 1 April 1986 when RIDDOR came into force.

[7] For Great Britain, injuries reported in 1975-80 are those to factory and agricultural inspectorates only.

Workplace Inspections

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the total numbers of workplace inspections conducted by the factory inspectorate in *(a)* east of Scotland area, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* the United Kingdom in each year since 1975.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the form requested for the years 1975 to 1984. The following table shows the number of preventive inspection visits carried out by the factory inspectorate in the east of Scotland area, Scotland and Great Britain since 1 April 1985:

Date	*East of Scotland*	*Scotland*	*Great Britain*
(1 April—31 March)			
1985-86	5,375	9,209	90,081
1986-87	5,142	8,778	94,308
1987-88	5,750	10,409	100,815
1988-89	5,169	8,935	101,141

Figures for Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Adult Earnings

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many adults in full-time employment in the west midlands currently earn less than £120 per week.

Mr. Nicholls: It is estimated from the new earnings survey that about 13 per cent. of adults in full-time employment in the west midlands, whose earnings were not affected by absence, earned less than £120 in April 1989.

Staff Shortages

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions have been given to reduce the length of new claims interviews in unemployment benefit offices as a result of staff shortages.

Mr. Eggar: An average time of 40 minutes is allowed for each new claim interview. No national guidance has been issued advising that the interview length be shortened.

During the summer period some offices experienced peaks in the number of claims made and had to resort to a shorter interview followed up at a later date by a second interview.

Bridging Allowance

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds in (i) Scotland and (ii) the United Kingdom are in receipt of a bridging allowance; and what proportion of those who had exhausted their entitlement to a bridging allowance still had not secured a training place under the youth training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: On the 12 October, the latest date for which figures are available, 1,385 young people were in receipt of YTS bridging allowance in Scotland and 8,096 in Great Britain. Separate arrangements apply in Northern Ireland.

The guarantee to young people under 18 who are not in full time employment or education of a suitable YTS place continues to be met nationwide. At the end of September 110,821 YTS places were unfilled out of the 500,000 YTS places in contract.

Disabled People (Quotas)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many firms in *(a)* manufacturing industry, *(b)* the service sector and *(c)* the construction industry are adhering to the quota system in the employment of disabled people; and what percentage of the firms in each of these groups they represent.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to make changes in the quota system as it affects the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: The quota scheme is amongst the matters being considered in the internal review of services to people with disabilities which my Department has been undertaking, the results of which will be made known as soon as possible.

Training

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what information he has on the level of employer investment in training employees, net of salaries;

(2) what information he has on the level of employer spending on training of employees, net of salaries, in each of the European member states.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* It is estimated that employers in Great Britain spent £2·8 billion on non-labour costs on training in 1986-87. This figure is based on a survey of employers' training activities carried out in 1987. The survey included agricultural firms with less than 10 employees and the armed services. The estimated expenditure for all employers, including staff costs, was £18 billion. Figures are not available on this basis for other member states.

The EC labour costs survey shows expenditure on training by employers in the production and construction industries in member states as a percentage of labour costs. The figures are shown in the table and exclude salaries except for apprentice wages.

	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
Ireland	1·3	1·4	0·4	0·3
Luxembourg	0·5	0·7	0·4	0·1
Belgium	0·4	0·4	1·0	1·0
Netherlands	0·4	0·1	0·6	0·4
Italy	0·3	0·4	0·2	0·2

Training Schemes (Safety)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to ensure that all people on training schemes are *(a)* covered by health and safety legislation relevant to their industry, *(b)* fully insured and *(c)* provided with safety clothing and footwear.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) on 17 October 1989 at columns 57-58.

DEFENCE

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are taken by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force to detect and intercept vessels carrying intended immigrants from Vietnam to Hong Kong.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Responsibility for the detection and interception of Vietnamese boat people attempting to enter Hong Kong rests with the Royal Hong Kong marine police. Royal Navy patrol craft occasionally assist in the detection task as part of their general patrol duties in Kong Kong waters. Vietnamese boat people vessels detected by the Royal Navy are immediately notified to the Hong Kong civil authorities for them to take further action.

Service Women (Job Opportunities)

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the steps being taken to increase job opportunities for women in the Army, Navy and the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Army plans to increase job opportunities for women in line with the recommendations of the report on the study into the long term role and employment of women in the Army, which identified 6,000 additional posts in the Regular Army and 4,000 posts in the Territorial Army that could be opened to women. The RAF is increasing the number of women in ground trades from 5,000 to 7,000, some 10 per cent. of the total ground trades trained strength, over the next five years and has begun recruiting women as pilots and navigators for non-combat roles. The Royal Navy is currently reviewing the possible future employment of the Women's Royal Naval Service and we expect to make an announcement around the end of the year.

AWACS Verification

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the policy and development implications of the renewed open skies verification regime for the sale and use of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation airborne warning and control system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A great deal of work remains to be done on the open skies initiative and it is too early to draw any conclusions on how it might be put into effect.

Ethnic Recruitment

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date he received the report on the study into ethnic minority recruitment in the armed services and on what date he will make a statement about it.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The report on the study into ethnic minority recruitment to the armed services was received on 11 July 1989. The report is under consideration within the Ministry of Defence and an announcement will be made shortly.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence he has of racial discrimination in the armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no evidence to substantiate claims of racial discrimination in the armed forces. The armed forces are subject to the Race Relations Act 1976 and no form of racial discrimination is tolerated. Complaints of racial discrimination brought by members of the armed forces are fully investigated under the redress of grievance procedures of the service disciplinary Acts.

UDR Offences

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details for each of the years from 1980 to 30 September 1989 of *(a)* full-time members and *(b)* part-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment serving in Northern Ireland who have (i) voluntarily resigned having been involved in an offence, (ii) been discharged having been convicted of an offence and (iii) had their engagements terminated following the commission of an offence, but before trial; and what was the nature of the offence in each case.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am afraid that information dealing with the period prior to 1985 can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The following information covers both the permanent cadre and the part-time element of the UDR:

(i) voluntary resignations having been involved in an offence 16

(ii) discharges having been convicted and awarded custodial sentences, including suspended sentences 54

(iii) it is not our policy to terminate an individual's engagement before he has been tried and convicted of an offence, although there were three cases where the individuals did not apply to re-engage when their current engagements terminated while they were under investigation or on remand.

Information on the nature of each offence is not readily available.

Regular Army Offences

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details for each of the years from 1980 to 30 September 1989 of members of the Regular Army serving in Northern Ireland, who have *(a)* voluntarily resigned having been involved in an offence *(b)* been discharged having been convicted of an offence and *(c)* had their engagements terminated following the commission of an offence, but before trial; and what was the nature of the offence in each case.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Members of the Regular Army serving in Northern Ireland apart from the UDR are not allowed to resign voluntarily after having been involved in an offence. On the second part of the hon. Member's question, separate records are not kept for discharges of soldiers convicted of offences committed in Northern Ireland. It is not our policy to discharge soldiers who are accused of committing offences before they have been tried and convicted.

UDR Re-vetting

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the circumstances in which current and future members of the Ulster Defence Regiment will be re-vetted in light of paragraph 5 of the joint statement issued following the meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 18 October.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is a range of circumstances in which it would be appropriate to carry out screening reviews. However, it would not be appropriate to give details and I therefore have nothing to add to my answer of 19 October to the hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) at column *256*.

Lance Missile

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) by how much the operational life of the Lance missile could be extended by a programme of refurbishment;

(2) when the Lance missile will come to the end of its effective operational life.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is general practice to keep the performance of all weapon systems under review. On current estimates it is believed that the Lance missile will be unsustainable beyond the mid 1990s.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by how much the recent refurbishment of the rocket motors to the Lance missile has extended its effective operational life.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The recent refurbishment was designed to maintain operational effectiveness throughout the missile's planned operational life; it was not intended to extend the operational life.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989", vol. 1, p. 51, fig. 12, how many Lance missiles are deployed to accompany the 88 Lance launchers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of Lance missiles deployed in Europe is classified information.

Tornado Missiles

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* Tornado GR1s and *(b)* Tornado F3s are currently deployed in frontline service; how many are in reserve; and how many are in storage.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Nine squadrons of Tornado GR1 and four squadrons of Tornado F3 are currently in operational front line service. The precise numbers of the operational aircraft and reserves are classified. Eight early production Tornado F3s are in storage at RAF St. Athan awaiting modifications. No Tornado GF1s are in storage.

Royal Navy Ships

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Navy destroyers and frigates are currently permanently available to fulfil NATO roles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All Royal Navy destroyers and frigates are declared to NATO, although at varying levels of readiness and availability. Precise details are classified.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many, and what type of, Royal Navy ships are regularly committed to patrolling the Gulf and Indian ocean area.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 18 July 1989 at column *79*. We have no commitment to patrolling in the Indian ocean.

Combat Aircraft

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989", volume 1, p. 47, how many of the combat aircraft on each side are *(a)* air defence fighters, *(b)* reconnaissance aircraft and *(c)* electronic warfare aircraft;

(2) pursuant to the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989", volume 1, p. 46, how many of the combat aircraft on each side are *(a)* air defence fighters, *(b)* reconnaissance aircraft and *(c)* electronic warfare aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Many modern combat aircraft are designed to be capable of performing several different roles. For this reason, it would be misleading to break down the figures as requested.

BAOR

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made as to the likely effects on the British Army of the Rhine of the use of nuclear artillery shells by United Kingdom forces against WTO forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to comment on operational matters of this kind.

Merchant Ships

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made as to the minimum number and capacity of the United Kingdom's merchant ships needed to meet the wartime requirements of the United Kingdom's armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The defence requirement for merchant shipping in crisis and war is very carefully assessed and regularly reviewed. The details of this particular requirement are classified.

Conventional Forces

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what figures his Department has provided to the conventional forces in Europe negotiations regarding the numbers and types of the United Kingdom's armed forces; and whether he will make these available to Parliament.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The most recent figures for United Kingdom equipment holdings are contained in the NATO publication "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts", dated November 1988, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. NATO has proposed a formal exchange of data as part of a CFE treaty, but no such exchange has yet taken place.

SS21

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment as to the accuracy, circular error probability, of the Soviet SS21.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to give this type of information, although the SS21 is considerably more accurate than the FROG missile which it is replacing.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest assessment of the number of Soviet SS21 launchers deployed in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since 1981, well over 200 Soviet SS21 launchers have been deployed in Europe west of the Urals.

Trident

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment as to the financial savings that would accrue from a cancellation of the fourth Trident submarine in 1991.

Mr. Neubert: The position remains as set out by MOD officials in evidence to the Select Committee on Defence in response to a question raised by the Clerk to the Committee on 11 May 1989, and published in its report, "The Progress of the Trident Programme" (Defence Committee Fifth Report HC 374, 21 June 1989).

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment as to the yearly running costs of maintaining *(a)* a three-boat Trident force and *(b)* a four-boat Trident force.

Mr. Neubert: It is too early to state with any precision the likely running costs of the Trident force, other than to say they are not anticipated to be significantly different from those for Polaris.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of warheads that each Trident D5 missile is assumed to carry according to the counting rules adopted in the START negotiations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In their joint summit statement of December 1987, the United States and Soviet Governments confirmed their assumption that the Trident II missile would be deployed with eight warheads. The United Kingdom Government, which is not, of course, a party to the START negotiations, has already stated that the United Kingdom deploys a maximum of 128 warheads per submarine.

Soviet Short-Range Missiles

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment as to the number of Soviet short-range nuclear missiles that accompany the 1,450 short-range nuclear launchers deployed by the Warsaw pact in Europe, west of the Urals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to give this type of information.

START Negotiations

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment as to the percentage reduction in the total number of strategic nuclear weapons that would occur as a result of the successful outcome of the current START negotiations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not possible to forecast the precise percentage reductions in the number of United States and Soviet strategic offensive weapons systems which may result from a START agreement.

Population Decline

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment of the impact upon the armed forces of the decline in the number of 16 to 19-year-old males in the United Kingdom between 1989 and 1993; and how great his Department assesses that decline to be.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The greatest impact of the decline in the number of 16 to 19-year-old males will be in the recruiting field. The services expect a drop of 10·8 per cent. in the number of potential male other rank recruits and a drop of 5·7 per cent. in the number of potential male officer recruits between 1989 and 1993. Consequently, competition for suitably qualified young men will increase. The services will continue to make every effort to recruit the numbers they require.

Trained Service Personnel

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest assessment of the short-fall in the number of trained service personnel in each of the armed services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Shortfalls in service manpower are measured by comparing adult trained strengths against trained manpower requirements. As at 30 June 1989, shortfalls were:

Royal Navy 786, Royal Marines 10, Army 4,113, Royal Air Force 3,566.

In order to encourage greater efficiency in the use of manpower, policy decisions have been taken to aim manpower plans at levels a little below the full requirement. Not all of these shortfalls are, therefore, unplanned.

Free-fall Bombs

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether a programme of refurbishment would enable the United Kingdom's WE177 free-fall bombs to be kept in serviceable operation beyond the 1990's.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The existing United Kingdom free-fall nuclear bomb is subject to regular inspection, maintenance and refurbishment, and will remain in service only if it continues to meet the requirements for safety and serviceability.

British Registered Cars

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions there are in British registered cars entering the sovereign base area from *(a)* north Cyprus, and *(b)* from the south; what are the reasons for the differences in such restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As long as British-registered vehicles are legally imported to the island of Cyprus, and properly insured in accordance with local legislation, they may freely enter the sovereign base areas.

Loan Service Personnel

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what definition his Department uses of the term loan service personnel;

(2) whether military personnel are seconded to assist in the training of foreign armies or armed units other than as loan service personnel;

(3) whether special forces may be used as loan service personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Service personnel may be loaned from the United Kingdom Armed Forces for service with a Commonwealth or foreign country on either loan service or secondment terms. The principal difference is that loan service personnel are administered and paid by the United Kingdom authorities in the normal way while seconded personnel are wholly administered and receive their pay and allowances directly from the host nation. Individuals selected for loan service or secondment may be drawn from all parts of the Armed Forces.

Boscombe Down

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about corrosive liquid alleged to have fallen from aircraft at the aircraft and armament experimental establishment at Boscombe down; and if he will compensate those whose property has been damaged.

Mr. Neubert: We have received a few reports of car paintwork damaged by droplets of a fluid which may have been discharged from an aircraft operating from the aircraft and armaments experimental establishment at Boscombe down on the afternoon of 25 October. The MOD accepts that it is probable that this damage was caused by the discharge of the fluid, which was a variant of antifreeze. MOD will consider claims for compensation from those whose property has been damaged.

SCOTLAND

Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by region those Forestry Commission woodlands disposed of during each of the last three years, stating for each disposal the hectarage involved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 3 February 1989 at column 415 to a question from him on the same subject. A list of sales of Forestry Commission woodlands between 22 October 1984 and 21 December 1988 was placed in the Library of the House at that time. A re-ordering of that list into separate years could only be carried out at disproportionate cost.

The woodlands sold by the commission between 22 December 1988 and 31 March 1989 are as follows:

Name of property	*County/region*	*Area (hectares)*
England		
Bushes Wood	Buckinghamshire	5·0
Kings Wood Pentewan	Cornwall	60·0
Pendarves Wood	Cornwall	17·0
Crag Wood Ulpha	Cumbria	3·5
Farleigh Wallop Lot 7	Hampshire	11·0
Scales Park & East Wood	Hertfordshire	90·0
Hampstead Est. Cpts. 41 & 42	Isle of Wight	23·0
Broadmeadows	Lancashire	26·2
Pt. Little Wood	Norfolk	1·1
Oxborough Woods	Norfolk	36·5
Oxborough Woods	Norfolk	16·5
Oxborough Woods	Norfolk	9·5
Featherstone Castle Est.	Northumberland	24·0
Titlington	Northumberland	56·1
Plumpton Wood	North Yorkshire	7·7
Hand Leasow Wood	Shropshire	48·0
Stiperstones	Shropshire	1·0
Lordshill	Shropshire	3·0
Whettleton & Rottingwood	Shropshire	37·5
Rough Hill	Warwickshire	9·0
Higher House and Land	West Yorkshire	6·2
Wales		
Coednant Barcutan	Clwyd	4·7
Pwll Glas	Clwyd	5·3
Pen-yr-Heol Ddu	Dyfed	10·2
Allt Ty Cam	Dyfed	4·4
Coed Glan Leri	Dyfed	7·2
Talog Package	Dyfed	14·0
Talog Package	Dyfed	11·0
Talog Package	Dyfed	9·0
Talog Package	Dyfed	5·0
Wern Halog Woods	Dyfed	16·3
Trevella Woods	Gwent	25·7
Poolhead Wood	Gwent	5·0
Coed-y-Trauch, Coed Llyneu	Gwent	21·1
Lower Machen	Gwent	7·5
Madryn Castle Woodlands	Gwynedd	82·1
Llwynbedw Isaf	Gwynedd	5·3
Access to Waterloo Wood	Gwynedd	1·0
Dinas Mawddwy Lot 2	Gwynedd	58·2
Mynogan Cpts. 1-3, 6, 8, & 12	Gwynedd	318·8
Pentre Tips	Mid Glamorgan	27·8
Moelgilau	Mid Glamorgan	36·0
Scotland		
Thicket and Broomy Braes	Borders	31·8
Tir Arthur	Central	74·0
Dullarg Wood	Dumfries and Galloway	24·0
Lochfergus	Dumfries and Galloway	13·0

Name of property	*County/region*	*Area (hectares)*
Barrace Additional	Dumfries and Galloway	6·6
High Valleyfield	Fife	28·0
Auchinroath	Grampian	27·8
Loch Insh Plantation	Highland	19·5
Borthwick	Lothian	29·8
Big Wood Pencaitland	Lothian	32·4
Blackbyres Plantation	Strathclyde	5·0
Morenish	Tayside	20·0
Firbush Plantations	Tayside	113·0

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will allow fibre-producing or other animals to be added to existing set-aside scheme provision in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. While Community rules allow member states to permit land fallowed under the set-aside scheme to be used for extensive grazing of agricultural animals, the Government have decided not to take up this option. In arriving at this decision we recognised that the grazing of set-aside land could create unfair competition for existing livestock producers, and particularly for those hill and upland farmers who have few, if any, alternatives to livestock rearing. Community rules do not allow member states to restrict the grazing option to certain types of animals—whether used for fibre, milk or meat—even in cases where these would pose fewer competition problems.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures showing the set-aside take-up in each EEC country.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest comparative information available to us is set out in the table as follows:

Member State	*Number of applications (1988-89)*	*Area to be set aside (hectares)*	*Proportion of set-aside area as percentage of*		*Average set-aside per applicant (hectares)*
			Arable land	*Area in cereals*	
Belgium	32	329	[1]—	[1]—	10·2
France	1,002	15,707	[1]—	0·1	15·6
Greece	n/a				
Ireland	77	1,310	0·1	0·3	17·0
Italy	[2]9,301	[2]155,606	1·8	3·1	16·7
Netherlands	195	2,621	0·3	1·3	13·4
Spain	518	34,229	0·3	0·4	66·1
West Germany	25,289	169,729	2·4	3·6	6·7
United Kingdom	1,750	54,779	0·9	1·3	31·3
Totals	38,164	434,310	0·9	1·3	11·3

[1] Lower than 0·1 per cent.

[2] Provisional figures.

The scheme was not applied in Denmark or Luxembourg in the 1988-89 agricultural season; and Portugal is exempt.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies he has commissioned on set-aside and what plans he has to review existing provisions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The North of Scotland College of Agriculture has been commissioned to carry out a study to evaluate the uptake and economic impact of the set-aside scheme, as part of a United Kingdom-wide study. This will involve on-farm interviews of a sample of participating farmers. Consideration is currently being given to the need for any further research into the agronomic and environmental impact of the scheme, over and above projects already being undertaken by the Scottish agricultural college.

The provisions of the scheme are already under close review, in the light of experience gained during the first year of its operation. My right hon. and learned Friend will in due course consider, with the other agriculture Ministers, whether any changes in the scheme rules are warranted.

Organic Farming

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action his Department is taking to promote research projects on organic farming, and what funding has been allocated to these projects.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My Department is currently funding a number of research and development projects by the Scottish agricultural colleges which are both directly and indirectly relevant to organic farming. The cost of this work in 1989-90 is about £200,000. The Edinburgh university centre for human ecology and the Edinburgh school of agriculture are undertaking a joint pilot project over two years to demonstrate the viability of organic farming. The Scottish Development Agency is contributing £175,000 to this project which is also supported by the European Community and Safeway plc.

Farmers (Surpluses)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to make assistance available to help farmers in Scotland convert from surplus to non-surplus crops and livestock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Council regulation (EEC) No. 1094/88 requires all member states to introduce aid schemes to encourage the conversion of production towards non-surplus products. A proposal by the EC Commission for a Council regulation listing eligible products and setting out the main conditions for payment of aid is currently before the Agriculture Council. Once a Council regulation is adopted, and the necessary detailed implementing regulation has been made by the EC Commission, the agriculture departments will consider the content of a conversion scheme for the United Kingdom.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state what measures he intends to take to protect poll tax payers from increases of more than £3 per week, over previous domestic rates payments.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has announced that a scheme of transitional relief will operate in Scotland. Details of the scheme are at present the subject of discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. The scheme will be targeted at households comprising former ratepayers, pensioners and the disabled.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a table showing the total provision of sheltered housing by dwellings and by bedspaces, and of amenity housing by dwelling by public agencies on 31 March or the latest available date; and if he will provide a breakdown of that provision by local authority, Scottish Homes, new towns and housing associations.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested, at 31 March 1989, is set out in the following table. Scottish Homes did not begin operation until 1 April 1989 so the figures given relate to the Scottish Special Housing Association.

Provision of special needs housing at 31 March 1989[1]

	Local authority	*New town*	*SSHA*	*Housing association*	*Total*
Sheltered housing[2]					
Dwellings	14,705	434	1,841	9,650	26,630
Bedspaces	27,519	774	3,220	15,239	46,752
Amenity housing dwellings	9,185	1,581	292	1,256	12,314

[1] Where district information is outstanding for 1989, details for earlier year have been included.

[2] Includes sheltered wheelchair.

Public Sector Landlords

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide information showing the total number of applications made to him by public sector landlords under section 69 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and previously under section 3 of the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 and section 1 of the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Amendment Act 1980; if he will give his information for each of the years to date since 1980; and if he will further give the total number of cases where he has authorised a landlord to serve a notice of refusal for each of the years to date since 1980.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is set out in the following table.

Year	[1] *Number*	[2] *Number*
1980	3	—
1981	8	1
1982	—	—
1983	4	2
1984	4	2
1985	12	7
1986	5	3
1987	15	7
1988	36	22
[3] 1989	18	10

[1] Applications.

[2] Authorisations to serve notices of refusal.

[3] To 30 September 1989.

Laboratory and Radiodiagnostic Services

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions his Department has had with the Scottish Council of the British Medical Association about the proposed competitive tendering for laboratory and radiodiagnostic services within Greater Glasgow health board, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Officials of the Scottish Home and Health Department met representatives of the Scottish Council of the British Medical Association and of the Scottish Joint Consultants Committee on Friday 6 October to discuss a number of matters of mutual concern including competitive tendering in clinically related services.

Lithotriptor Centres

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, when he expects the pilot scheme of new invoicing between the Scottish lithotriptor and customer boards to end.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The pilot scheme was introduced for the financial year 1989-90. No decision has yet been made about arrangements for the next financial year.

Substandard Housing

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of houses that are *(a)* below the tolerable standard, *(b)* require comprehensive modernisation, *(c)* require major repairs and *(d)* are affected by dampness, in the public and private sectors, respectively, in each district and islands area; and if he will estimate the cost of carrying out the necessary repairs and improvements.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Returns from local authorities show that the number of houses in Scotland which are below the tolerable standard as at 31 March 1988, in the public and private sectors, is as set out in table 1. Details of local authority stock with dampness and condensation dampness as at 31 March 1988 are set out in Table 2. Comparable information on dampness for other than local authority houses is not held centrally.

The Government have neither information on the number of houses requiring comprehensive modernisation or major repairs, nor information which would allow an estimate to be made of the cost of any necessary works.

Table 1
Dwellings below the tolerable standard by tenure
Scotland, as at 31 March 1988

	Public sector[1]	*Housing association*	*Private sector*	*Tenure not known*
SCOTLAND	906	285	35,368	22,318
Borders				
Berwickshire	0	0	826	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	4	0	541	0
Roxburgh	0	0	255	0
Tweeddale	n/a	n/a	n/a	425
Central				
Clackmannan	0	0	474	0
Falkirk	43	0	435	0
Stirling	6	1	566	0
Dumfries and Galloway				
Annandale and Eskdale	0	0	189	0
Nithsdale	0	0	801	0
Stewartry	0	0	159	0
Wigtown	0	0	78	0
Fife				
Dunfermline	10	0	406	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0	733	0
North East Fife	37	0	1,361	0
Grampian				
Aberdeen	314	30	1,120	0
Banff and Buchan	1	0	1,543	0
Gordon	0	0	408	0
Kincardine and Deeside	n/a	n/a	n/a	375
Moray	46	0	1,170	0
Highland				
Badenoch and Strathspey	0	0	253	0
Caithness	0	0	285	0
Inverness	10	0	584	0
Lochaber	0	0	131	0
Nairn	0	0	39	0
Ross and Cromarty	0	0	2,500	0
Skye and Lochalsh	0	0	650	0
Sutherland	0	0	519	0
Lothian				
East Lothian	12	0	773	0
Edinburgh	0	0	4,732	0
Midlothian	6	82	464	0
West Lothian	0	0	510	0
Strathclyde				
Argyll and Bute	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,000
Bearsden and Milngavie	3	0	26	0
Clydebank	0	0	12	0
Clydesdale	2	0	360	0
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth	0	8	57	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	19	10	172	0
Cunninghame	0	0	2,118	0
Dumbarton	9	0	100	0
East Kilbride	0	0	103	0
Eastwood	0	0	12	0
Glasgow	n/a	n/a	n/a	16,010
Hamilton	0	0	820	0
Inverclyde	0	103	1,009	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	12	0	230	0
Kyle and Carrick	0	0	339	0
Monklands	0	0	222	0
Motherwell	99	0	677	0
Renfrew	263	0	844	0
Strathkelvin	0	0	33	0
Tayside				
Angus	4	1	887	0
Dundee	0	50	2,200	0
Perth and Kinross	0	0	668	0
Orkney Islands	6	0	1,134	0

	Public sector[1]	*Housing association*	*Private sector*	*Tenure not known*
Shetland Islands	0	0	928	0
Western Isles	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,508

[1] Local authority, new towns, SSHA and Government Departments.
n/a = Not available.

Table 2
Local authority dwellings with dampness
Scotland as at 31 March 1986

	Rising and penetrating damp only	*Condensation and damp*
SCOTLAND	40,476	77,819
Borders		
Berwickshire	0	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0	300
Roxburgh[1]	—	—
Tweeddale	0	0
Central		
Clackmannan	425	0
Falkirk	510	5,560
Stirling	110	0
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	0	0
Nithsdale	450	783
Stewartry	0	0
Wigtown	20	5
Fife		
Dunfermline	18	0
Kirkcaldy	0	0
North East Fife	260	186
Grampian		
Aberdeen	Not known	Not known
Banff and Buchan	0	0
Gordon	0	238
Kincardine and Deeside	0	259
Moray	67	0
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	0	0
Caithness	1	0
Inverness	0	242
Lochaber	390	150
Nairn	0	0
Ross and Cromarty[1]	0	95
Skye and Lochalsh	0	0
Sutherland	0	0
Lothian		
East Lothian	30	1,418
Edinburgh[1]	620	1,178
Midlothian	0	0
West Lothian	0	0
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	Not known	2,669
Bearsden and Milngavie	0	0
Clydebank	0	750
Clydesdale	35	786
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	n/a	n/a
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	2,963
Cuninghame	124	0
Dumbarton[1]	715	2,490
East Kilbride	0	0
Eastwood	0	0
Glasgow[1]	16,485	15,093
Hamilton	7,721	7,501
Inverclyde	0	9,121
Kilmarnock and Loudoun[1]	280	4,499
Kyle and Carrick	0	41
Monklands[1]	0	175
Motherwell	8,564	6,561
Renfrew	0	10,300
Strathkelvin	0	0
Tayside		
Angus	0	0
Dundee[1]	2,300	2,331
Perth and Kinross	500	1,000
Orkney Islands	0	0
Shetland Islands	761	572
Western Isles	90	561

[1] Returns with outstanding queries
n/a Not available.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will show the number of *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* families with children and *(c)* other households living in housing which is below the tolerable standard.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation (Costs)

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the most recent statistics for people in bed and breakfast accommodation in Scotland, paid for out of public funds.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no overall figures for the number of persons in bed and breakfast accommodation paid for out of public funds. It is estimated that the number of households placed in such accommodation by local authorities under the provisions of the homeless persons legislation in Scotland at 30 June 1989 was 270.

Gaelic Broadcasting

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conclusions he has now reached on Comunn Na Gaidhlig's proposal for a Gaelic broadcasting council.

Mr. Lang: No decision has yet been taken on proposals for the establishment of a Gaelic broadcasting council. The Government are currently giving very careful consideration to the future of Gaelic broadcasting and an announcement of their conclusion will be made shortly.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of Comunn Na Gaidhlig to discuss Gaelic television.

Mr. Lang: The Secretary of State met representatives of Comunn Na Gaidhlig on 17 April 1989 to hear their views on the future of Gaelic broadcasting.

Nuclear Waste (Dounreay)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in the geological investigations at Dounreay for a deep repository for low and intermediate level radioactive wastes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Investigations have not yet commenced. An application by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on behalf of Nirex for planning permission to conduct test boring was refused by the planning authority, Highland regional council, on 12 July. An appeal was lodged by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on 24 August and is at present under consideration by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Whitson-Fairhurst Houses

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number and location of Whitson-Fairhurst houses in Scotland; and what funds his Department has allocated to alleviate the problems inherent in this type of construction.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on Whitson-Fairhurst houses built for the private sector in Scotland is not held centrally. The number and location of such dwellings originally built for the public sector, including houses subsequently sold under right to buy, are shown in the following table.

Aggregate capital allocations are made to local authorities to enable broad programmes of work to proceed; funds are not allocated specifically for work on any one type of house. It is for individual local authorities to determine their own policies and priorities for investment in their own housing stock and for assistance to the private sector; and to programme capital expenditure accordingly within the resources made available. If councils identify a particular need for resources to cope with the inherent structural problems found in Whitson-Fairhurst houses then they should in the first instance include proposals for alleviating these problems in their housing capital programmes.

Whitson-Fairhurst houses in Scotland originally built for the public sector

District	*Number of houses*
Ettrick and Lauderdale	50
Roxburgh	50
Falkirk	100
Nithsdale	46
Wigtown	50
Dunfermline	154
Aberdeen	204
Inverness	100
Edinburgh	101
Bearsden and Milngavie	56
Clydebank	692
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	84
Dumbarton	385
Hamilton	140
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	100
Monklands	200
Motherwell	179
Renfrew	80
Strathkelvin	66
Dundee	128
Perth and Kinross	150
SCOTLAND TOTAL	3,115

Note: These figures are estimates based on returns by local authorities as at February 1985.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department has undertaken into methods of repairing or reinstating Whitson-Fairhurst houses; and what advice his Department gives to local authorities regarding approved methods of dealing with this type of house.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department has no programme of research into methods of reinstating Whitson-Fairhurst houses. The work which must be done to rectify the inherent defect in such houses is well known. The Scottish Development Department does not directly advise local authorities of approved methods of repairing such houses: authorities are aware that such advice is available from PRC Homes Ltd.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations has he received with regard to railway links in Scotland and those between Scotland and the Channel tunnel.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has received a number of representations from individuals, Members of Parliament and organisations on rail links within Scotland and between Scotland and the Channel tunnel. The provision of such links is however a matter for British Rail and the terms of the representations have been made known to BR through contact at either ministerial or official level.

Lowland Airports Policy

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence he has received from businesses in Scotland concerning Scottish lowland airports policy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is presently receiving, from businesses in Scotland, copies of their responses to the Secretary of State for Transport's consultative document on Scottish lowland airports policy. The consultation exercise ends on 29 November and any submissions received will be taken fully into account in the review now in progress.

YTS

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds there are in Scotland; and how many in each of those age groups have secured a training placement under the youth training scheme.

Mr. Lang: The projected Scottish populations of 16 and 17-year-olds in 1989 are:

	Numbers
(a) 16-year-olds	71,378
(b) 17-year-olds	76,716
Total	148,094

At September 1989 there were 50,708 YTS trainees in Scotland. This figure is made up primarily of 16 and 17-year-olds but will include some 18-year-olds. The training agency no longer collects data on numbers of YTS trainees by age.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many YTS places have been contracted with managing agents in Scotland; and if he will list them by regional council area.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of YTS places contracted with managing agents in Scotland in total and by regional council area are set out in the table:

Regional Council area	*Number of YTS places contracted*
Strathclyde	29,101
Dumfries and Galloway	1,705
Grampian	4,757
Tayside	4,280
Lothian	6,719
Borders	864
Central	4,164
Fife	5,133
Orkney	244
Shetland	204
Western Isles	290
Highland	2,565
Total	60,026

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is considering realising the assets of the Scottish Development Agency.

Mr. Lang: At the request of my right hon. and learned Friend the agency has submitted proposals for the disposal of parts of its property and investment portfolios. Discussions on these proposals are progressing satisfactorily with the aim of ensuring that any disposals are carried out in an effective manner consistent with Government policy. The agency has disposed of properties and investments on an individual basis for a number of years.

Schools (Spending)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the capital spend on *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools within the local authority education system in Scotland in each year since 1978 to 1989 up to and including 1988-89; and give these figures both at outturn prices and expressed at 1988-89 prices.

Mr. Lang: The information available is given in the following table, which has been compiled from local authority financial returns. Expenditure on primary and secondary schools is not separately identified in these returns. The reduction in expenditure in real terms during the period reflects a substantial and progressive decline in pupil numbers.

Capital expenditure by local authorities on primary and secondary schools

Year	*At outturn prices*	*£ million At 1988-89 prices*
1978-79	49·503	108·608
1979-80	44·958	84·563
1980-81	49·637	78·752
1981-82	55·165	79·749
1982-83	49·728	67·135
1983-84	43·359	55·945
1984-85	43·431	53·399
1985-86	48·368	56·371
1986-87	43·011	48·570
1987-88	44·340	47·576
[1]1988-89	57·157	57·157

[1] provisional

Note: The outturn figures have been converted to 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the policy considerations on which he based his recent decisions to amend provisions relating to the poll tax; and what consideration he gave to alternative amendments.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Experience of the operation of the community charge in Scotland has enabled us to identify improvements which will result in chargepayers being treated more equitably. We are therefore making a number of changes to the legislation. These include changes to the standard community charge arrangements, widening of the exemption for people who are severely mentally impaired and the introduction of a transitional relief scheme to assist people who have faced a significant increase in expenditure as a result of replacing domestic rates with the community charge.

Pentland Firth (Crossing)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Orkney Islands council regarding the construction of infrastructure for the proposed short sea crossing of the Pentland firth between Burwick and Gills bay.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Orkney Islands council has applied to the Secretary of State for a harbour empowerment order to operate as a harbour authority at Gills bay. They already hold such powers at Burwick. The council has also inquired about the availability of ERDF funds for the terminals and has been told that no such funds are available.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department has received any request for support for the proposed short sea crossing of the Pentland firth between Burwick and Gills bay, and the associated infrastructure developments.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No request has been received for central Government grant towards the Burwick and Gills bay terminals. In January 1989 Orkney Ferries plc requested to be considered for a tariff subsidy similar to that paid to P & O Ferries by my Department. I said at that time that I would want to see the ferry service in operation before considering such a request.

Prisons

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give *(a)* the optimum operational capacity of each prison in Scotland and *(b)* the actual numbers of prisoners currently housed in each prison in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

	Design capacity	*Prisoners*[1]
HMP Aberdeen	139	132
HMP Barlinnie	979	812
HMYOI Castle Huntly	144	110
HMI Cornton Vale	225	125
HMYOI Dumfries	144	137
HMP Dungavel	[illegible]	118
HMP Edinburgh	547	514
HMP Friarton	82	48
HMP & Detention Centre Glenochil	678	415
HMP Greenock	176	161
HMP Inverness	84	94
HM Remand Institution Longriggend	176	228
HMP Low Moss	400	307
HMP Noranside	119	111
HMP Penninghame	73	71
HMP Perth	510	426
HMP Peterhead	183	122
HMYOI Polmont	408	390
HMP Shotts	528	459

[1] Housed as at 27 October 1989.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total prison population in Scotland, in each of the years since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average daily prison population in 1988 is provisionally estimated as 5,229. For earlier years, corresponding figures are given in appendix 2 of the annual report "Prisons in Scotland Report for 1987" (Cm 551) copies of which are available in the Library.

Schoolchildren (Clothes)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of expenditure by local education authorities in Scotland on clothes for schoolchildren.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 3 November 1989]*: The latest available figures from local authorities are in respect of financial year 1987-88 and are as follows:

Education Authority	*Expenditure (£'000)*
Borders	53
Central	367
Dumfies and Galloway	2
Fife	390
Grampian	78
Highland	133
Lothian	847
Strathclyde	3,321
Tayside	260
Orkney	6
Shetland	—
Western Isles	7

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 7 November 1989

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will study the system of voluntary removal of a suspected child abuser from the home before trial, as in the United States of America.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We need to consider the issues which are raised by voluntary removal in relation to the Law Commission's recently issued consultative document "Domestic Violence and Occupation of the Family Home", including the American experience.

Crime (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek a report from the chief constable of South Yorkshire on what proportion of crimes in South Yorkshire are screened out after the initial investigation; on what basis this occurs; and by which police division.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable of South Yorkshire who has recently carried out a survey throughout the force, that after the initial investigation has been completed about 20 per cent. of all recorded crimes are "screened out". Certain types of crime, including all serious crimes, are exempt from the screening process. Of the remainder, crimes are only screened out if there is insufficient information on which further investigation could usefully be conducted. Information about the proportion of crimes screened out in each division is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Football Grounds (Deaths)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many deaths have taken place at Football Association grounds during each of the past 10 years, and as to how many of these deaths were caused by *(a)* physical problems, including fires, overcrowding, etc., *(b)* natural causes and *(c)* criminal acts.

Mr. John Patten: The information known to the Home Office about fatalities at Football Association grounds relates primarily to incidents at English Football League grounds. Details of the known incidents at such grounds over the last 10 years leading to fatalities among the general public are as follows:

Date	*Location*	*Number of Fatalities*
12 January 1980	Middlesbrough	2
11 May 1985	Bradford	56
11 May 1985	Birmingham	1
15 April 1989	Sheffield	95
TOTAL		154

Immigration

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if citizens of Pakistan are now regarded as Commonwealth citizens for the purposes of the immigration rules.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Yes.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO exercise Wintex/Cimex 1987 and exercise Wintex/Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercises themselves; and what are the ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office plays its part in testing those procedures in which we have an interest. Staff participate as required; it would not be appropriate to supply the detail requested.

Naturalisation

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long on average it is taking to process applications for British naturalisation; and when he would expect an application lodged in March 1988 to be resolved.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The average time taken to complete applications for naturalisation during September 1989 was 24 months. It is not possible to give a reliable estimate of the average time likely to be taken to complete applications received at any particular date.

Prevention of Terrorism Act

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how observations from interested persons or organisations should be submitted for consideration by Lord Colville in his next annual report on the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1989.

Mr. David Waddington: Observations, at this stage in writing, may be sent direct to Lord Colville or received on his behalf by the Home Office (Room 647) not later than 20 December 1989.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to extend the provisions of the Official Secrets Act to the Channel Isles, the Isle of Man and the Falkland Islands.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 3 November 1989]*: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary have no plans to do so. A person who commits an indictable offence under the Official Secrets Acts 1911 to 1989 in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Falkland Islands may however be tried for the offence in the United Kingdom.

TRANSPORT

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO exercise Wintex/Cimex 1987 and exercise Wintex/Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercises themselves; and what are the ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department plays its part in testing those provisions in which we have an interest. Staff participate as required; it would not be appropriate for me to supply the details requested.

Accidents

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* children and *(b)* adults have been killed or injured in road accidents since the new licensing laws were introduced and for the previous comparable period.

Mr. Atkins: The requested information is given in the following table. Results for 1989 are provisional. The change in the licensing laws took place on 22 August 1988, so that results for the third quarter of 1988 include approximately equal periods under the old and new regulations.

For the three quarters following the change in licensing laws, the number of children killed was 11 per cent. lower than in the previous comparable period, the number seriously injured about the same, but overall casualties rose by 3 per cent.

For adults the corresponding changes are a 3 per cent. rise in fatalities, a 5 per cent. fall in serious injuries and a 2 per cent. rise in all casualties.

Quarterly results for road casualties are often erratic. There is nothing in the results to suggest that the change in licensing laws has had any marked effect on road accidents.

a. Child casualties[1]: GB: 3rd Quarter, 1987 to 2nd Quarter, 1989

Period	*Killed*		*Seriously injured*		*All severities*	
	Number	*Percentage change on same quarter in previous year*	*Number*	*Percentage change on same quarter in previous year*	*Number*	*Percentage change on same quarter in previous year*
1987 Quarter 3	130	—	2,501	—	12,318	—
Quarter 4	91	—	1,857	—	9,279	—
1988 Quarter 1	81	—	1,755	—	8,637	—
Quarter 2	125	—	2,144	—	11,057	—
Quarter 3	100	−23	2,251	−10	11,698	−5
Quarter 4	103	13	1,773	−5	9,658	4
1989 Quarter 1[2]	66	−19	1,831	4	8,916	3
Quarter 2[2]	96	−23	2,146	—	11,299	2

[1] Casualties aged 14 or under.

[2] Provisional

b. Adult casualties[1]: GB: 3rd Quarter, 1987 to 2nd Quarter, 1989

Period	*Killed*		*Seriously injured*		*All severities*	
	Number	*Percentage change on same quarter in previous year*	*Number*	*Percentage change on same quarter in previous year*	*Number*	*Percentage change on same quarter in previous year*
1987 Quarter 3	1,279	—	15,197	—	72,456	—
Quarter 4	1,332	—	15,506	—	75,743	—
1988 Quarter 1	1,023	—	13,254	—	66,111	—
Quarter 2	1,052	—	12,992	—	64,627	—
Quarter 3	1,196	−6	14,358	−6	73,290	1
Quarter 4	1,372	3	15,034	−3	77,227	2
1989 Quarter 1[2]	1,112	9	12,153	−8	65,026	−2
Quarter 2[2]	1,037	−1	12,474	−3	68,544	6

[1] Casualties aged 15 or over, or with unknown age.

[2] Provisional

Roads (Sussex)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will be in a position to announce possible routes for the previously announced plans to dual the A27 between Lewes and Polegate; if he anticipates a major alteration to the existing road at any point; if he intends to proceed with the roundabout at the junction of the A26 Newhaven road; what measures he is considering in relation to the level crossing at Beddingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It is too soon to be able to give detailed information about the timing and nature of the proposals for the improvement of the A27 between Lewes and Polegate. Consultants will be appointed shortly to undertake preliminary studies and to identify possible solutions on which to consult the public, possibly in 1991-92. Their brief will be to consider all feasible alternatives, including a combination of on-line and off-line options, and to address the problems of the Beddingham level crossing.

It is our intention to proceed in advance with the provision of a roundabout at the A26 junction. It is programmed for construction next year.

Motorway and Trunk Road Schemes

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the major motorway and trunk road schemes which his Department has *(a)* let since the start of the current financial year and *(b)* plans to let during the rest of the financial year.

Mr. Atkins: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on 3 November at column *343*.

Cycle Lanes (London)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the road mileage in each of the London boroughs that provide cycle lanes.

Mr. Atkins: Such information as is readily available about specific facilities for cyclists is given in DTP transport statistics report "Road Lengths in Great Britain in 1987-88", a copy of which is in the Library.

Plutonium

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in what proportion of accidents he anticipates a plutonium air transport cask, tested to the criteria recommended by the International Atomic Energy, Agency's standing advisory group on the safe transport of radioactive materials, would retain its integrity.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is the subject of an ongoing study for further consideration at an IAEA advisory group meeting in 1990.

Radioactive Material

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the basis for the recommendations of the standing advisory group on the safe transport of radioactive material of the International Atomic Energy Agency that transport regulations be amended to require testing such a flask at an impact speed of 85 m per second.

Mr. McLoughlin: Two papers were presented at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) technical committee meeting in December 1988. This subject will be further considered at an IAEA advisory group meeting in 1990.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what technical progress has been made in the field of probability and consequence calculations for possible plutonium air transport cask accidents since the publication of the ACTRAM report.

Mr. McLoughlin: Studies are continuing but in this complicated field I do not expect to be able to report progress in the relatively short term.

High Speed Freight

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Government have any plans to provide for the operation of high speed rail freight services from the northern regions by-passing London into mainland Europe.

Mr. Portillo: This is a matter for British Rail, which will shortly be setting out its proposals in the plan that it is publishing in compliance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987.

London Assessment Studies

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport further to his reply to the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) on 23 October at column *373*, whether all London hon. Members will be given copies of all the four schemes; whether community groups concerned with the proposals will be sent all four copies of the schemes at no cost to themselves; and what will be the cost of the full report of each scheme.

Mr. Atkins: Hon. Members will receive copies of the consultants' reports which are relevant to their constituencies. Copies will also be provided for display in public libraries.

Community groups will be able to purchase copies of the reports. The cost is yet to be decided. Free summaries will be available from the consultants on demand.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his reply to the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) on 23 October at column *373*, how long the consultation period for the London assessment studies will be, once the consultants' schemes have been published; in what form he intends to lay his proposals before Parliament; who will be responsible for the consultation; which groups he will consult; and if he will give details of the consultative process.

Mr. Atkins: There will be an opportunity for anyone wishing to comment on the way forward to do so by late February 1990. Full details of the arrangements for making comments to the Department will be given when the consultants' reports are published in December.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his reply to the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) on 23 October at column *373*, what has been the cost to date of the consultants; and on what basis the consultants will be retained after the publication of the results.

Mr. Atkins: The total cost of the four London assessment studies to date has been £8½ million.

It is too early to say if and on what basis the consultants will be retained following publication of their final reports.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that no schemes based on London assessment studies will go ahead until a full public inquiry has been held in each area that is encompassed by the schemes.

Mr. Atkins: Any scheme, whether involving roads or public transport, which emerges as a result of decisions on the London assessment studies will be subject to the appropriate procedures.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to give a similar guarantee to the Lea valley and the other green areas involved in London assessment studies to that which he gave in respect of Parkland walk.

Mr. Atkins: Each case must be considered on its merits in the light of the consultants' assessment of their options.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) on 23 October at column *373*, how the environmental implications of the schemes have been assessed and costed; what are the costs; what formula has been used to assess the environmental implications of the schemes; and whether he has taken any account of the recommendations of the Pearce report in assessing the value of green and open spaces.

Mr. Atkins: The study consultants are completing a full environmental assessment of all their options. The results of that work will appear in their reports.

Mutfordlock Crossing

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the absence of objections at the public inquiry into the Suffolk county council scheme to build a new crossing at Mutfordlock, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft, he will make it his policy to reach a decision on the scheme before announcing the next round of transport supplementary grants.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The decision to confirm orders submitted by the Suffolk county council was issued on 31 October.

Roads (East Anglia)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a further announcement on implementation of those proposals in the White Paper "Roads to Prosperity," which apply to roads in Suffolk and Norfolk.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* My right hon. Friend expects to publish a roads report later this year, setting out in a little more detail the schemes in the expanded road programme.

He has announced his decision that the A11 Thetford bypass in Norfolk, currently under construction, is to be built now entirely to dual carriageway standard. This is the first of many major improvements that will come out of the expanded road programme.

We are pressing ahead with the appointment of design agents for our new schemes and studies. We recently announced details of the appointments made so far of consultants and agent authorities to prepare 53 new road schemes and seven new studies. Further announcements on the remaining schemes will be made over the next few months.

Speed Retarders

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the effect on accident levels on roads where speed retarders, such as sleeping policemen, have been introduced.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The urban safety projects conducted jointly by the Department and local authorities indicate that low-cost "traffic calming" measures including road humps can reduce casualties by 10 to 15 per cent. in residential areas. Earlier trials road humps at selected sites (TRRL Digest LR878) achieved 50 per cent. casualty reductions. The new regulations we are making shortly will aid their use.

A1

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many complaints have been received about traffic delays on the A1; and if he will travel to the north of England by that road to assess the validity of such complaints.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* I am familiar with the problems motorists encounter on the A1. We have no record of the overall number of complaints made about delays. Those received are usually as a result of necessary roadworks to maintain and improve this very busy trunk road.

The expanded trunk road programme announced earlier this year contains a number of schemes to improve the A1 from London to the Scottish border. It includes proposals to bring additional sections up to motorway standard.

I have visited the A1 within the last two weeks.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current debt of the Severn bridge.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The provisional accounts show a debt to the Consolidated Fund of £113·4 million at 31 March 1989.

ENVIRONMENT

Rents

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of household income he treats as an affordable rent.

Mr. Chope: We expect landlords providing rented housing with the help of public subsidy to charge rents within the reach of those in low paid employment. It is for the landlords to decide the actual rents to be charged.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on how his new proposals for the poll tax safety net will affect Birmingham.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment published provisional exemplifications on 6 November which show community charge payers in Birmingham contributing £60 to the safety net in 1990-91. The safety net will be abolished in later years and they will make no contribution after 1990-91.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the numbers of adult residents of *(a)* each London borough and *(b)* each district council likely to be entitled to the maximum rebate during the first year of operation of the community charge in England and Wales; and if he will express these figures as a proportion of the estimated population of each local authority liable to community charge.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply. The information requested is not available.

Empty Council Houses

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses were empty but available for letting in the northern region in April.

Mr. Chope: Information for April 1989 was reported by local authorities in their annual housing investment programme returns (HIP1).

The number of empty local authority dwellings available for letting at this date in the northern region (excluding Cumbria) was 2,814.

Sellafield

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many test boreholes British Nuclear Fuels plc will investigate to prove the suitability and acceptability of the geology at Sellafield for a deep repository for low and intermediate level radioactive wastes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The numer of test boreholes that will have to be drilled, either to prove the suitability of the geology at Sellafield for a deep radioactive waste repository or to reject the site as unacceptable, depends on the results of the current investigations. The full extent of the drilling that will be required will only become clear as the programme of work proceeds.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to why British Nuclear Fuels plc is applying for planning permission to sink a second test borehole at the Sellafield site; what results were obtained from the first test borehole; what was the cost of the investigations surrounding the first test borehole; to whose budget this cost will be charged; what is expected to be the cost of the second test borehole; and if any further test boreholes are envisaged.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: British Nuclear Fuels plc has applied for planning permission to drill a second test borehole at their Sellafield site as part of a programme of work it is undertaking on behalf of UK Nirex Ltd., which is the organisation responsible for developing a deep repository in the United Kingdom for radioactive waste. The boreholes are required to confirm the geological suitability of the site. Although the first borehole is still incomplete, the results so far confirm the geological prognosis. The cost of drilling the boreholes is a matter for UK Nirex Ltd. The cost of all site investigations will be borne by the company. If the outcome of the first phase of investigations is favourable, further test boreholes would need to be drilled as part of the next phase of geological investigations.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's estimate of the number of homeless people under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Chope: The numbers of people under the age of 18 years among the households accepted as homeless are not reported by local authorities and my Department has no estimates.

Water Main (South London)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the fourth collapse of the 30 in water main running through Battersea and Wandsworth and the steps being taken to prevent recurrence.

Mr. Moynihan: This is a matter for Thames Water, but I understand that it is doing all that it can to minimise such incidents; the most important measure to minimise the risk of failure of this pipeline will be the completion of the relevant section of the London ring main, expected to be in 1992.

Earthquakes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by location and date the number of earthquakes that have been recorded in England and Wales during the last 10 years; what damage was recorded; and on what seismographic scale.

Mr. Moynihan: The seismic monitoring network which is operated by the British Geological Survey records several hundred earthquakes each year in Britain and offshore. However, only those above a magnitude of 2·5 on the Richter scale—about a dozen a year—are generally felt. Those recorded in the last decade in England and Wales are listed in the following table.

In general, even where moderate shaking was felt, little or no damage was caused—though about a dozen events in the last decade have caused minor damage such as cracks to plaster and two events (at Longtown in Cumbria on Boxing Day 1979 and on the Lleyn peninsula, in north Wales in July 1984) caused damage to chimneys and roof tiles.

The national monitoring network is currently being extended to improve its geographical coverage, e.g. in south-east England and Northern Ireland. This results from an initiative by my Department, together with the British Geological Survey, to bring together those in Government and industry with interests in seismic matters. My Department is also funding an 18-month research project, which started in September this year, to provide a preliminary assessment of seismic hazards and risk in the United Kingdom.

Earthquakes with a Richter magnitude greater than 2·5 recorded in England and Wales by the British Geological Survey, 1979-89

Year and Location	*Magnitude*	*Date*
1979		
Mansfield, Notts.	3·1	7 October
Mansfield, Notts	3·0	9 October
Longtown, Cumbria	4·8	26 December
1980		
Longtown, Cumbria	4·1	1 January
Cwmbran, Gwent	3·0	12 January
Longtown, Cumbria	2·7	25 January
Longtown, Cumbria	2·6	28 January
Longtown, Cumbria	3·2	7 May
Talke area, Staffs	2·7	7 July
Talke area, Staffs	3·1	8 July
Stoke area, Staffs	2·5	17 July
Stoke area, Staffs	2·7	19 July
Longtown, Cumbria	2·5	30 July
Stoke coalfield, Staffs	3·0	7 August
Stoke coalfield, Staffs	2·6	14 August
Talke area, Staffs	3·2	9 November
Talke area, Staffs	2·5	9 November

Year and Location	*Magnitude*	*Date*
Longtown, Cumbria	3·5	13 December
1981		
Constantine, Cornwall	3·5	25 February
Talke area, Staffs	2·5	6 April
Stoke coalfield, Staffs	3·1	24 May
Nottingham	2·7	2 June
Liskeard, Cornwall	2·5	12 June
Talke area, Staffs	2·8	5 August
Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham	2·5	18 October
Flamborough Head, Humberside	3·7	27 October
Cwmbran, Gwent	2·7	9 November
1982		
Pont-Faen, Powys	2·6	4 April
Stoke on Trent, Staffs	2·7	9 April
near Basingstoke, Hants	3·0	19 July
near Ffestiniog, Gwynedd	2·6	9 August
1983		
Wigan, Greater Manchester	2·6	28 November
1984		
East Retford, Nottinghamshire	3·2	22 March
near Weymouth, Dorset	3·1	3 April
Felindre, Powys	3·3	15 April
Nottingham	3·1	30 May
Selby, North Yorkshire	3·0	4 June
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	5·4	19 July
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	2·9	19 July
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	2·5	19 July
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	2·5	20 July
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	2·8	23 July
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	4·0	29 July
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	2·5	29 July
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	2·8	30 July
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	2·7	4 August
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	3·6	6 August
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	4·3	18 August
Accrington, Lancashire	3·2	13 October
1985		
offshore Ramsgate, Kent	3·0	15 April
near Scunthorpe, Humberside	2·6	1 June
Black Mountains, Powys	2·5	21 August
Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire	2·6	16 November
Buckingham	2·5	18 November
Fleet, Hampshire	2·7	2 December
1986		
Lleyn peninsula, Gwynedd	2·7	15 April
Constantine, Cornwall	2·9	2 September
Oxford	2·9	26 December
1987		
Market Drayton, Salop	2·6	23 February
Bridgnorth, Salop	2·5	12 March
Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire	2·7	1 May
Manchester	2·6	5 December
1988		
Ambleside, Cumbria	3·2	12 September
Ambleside, Cumbria	3·0	12 September
Bridgwater, Somerset	2·8	23 October
1989		
No earthquakes with a magnitude greater than 2·5 have yet been recorded.		

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 10 Nirex reserve sites for the disposal of radioactive waste.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not received a list of the reserve sites identified by Nirex.

Water Privatisation

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total gain per year to each of the water plcs as a result of writing off all their debt to the Exchequer;

(2) what is the loss to the Exchequer as a result of the non-payment of interest on loans to the water authorities which have been written off.

Mr. Howard: The write-off of debt owed to the Exchequer by the 10 water plcs is just one element of the capital restructuring of the industry, which is designed to enable the companies to carry out their functions within the new regulatory framework set up by the Water Act. The write-off will result in a corresponding reduction in the assets of the national loans fund, but the Government will have new assets mostly in the form of shares in the holding companies, proceeds from the sale of which will be paid to the Exchequer to the benefit of taxpayers. The size of these proceeds will depend on market conditions at the time of the sale of shares. It is not possible to make meaningful comparisons with what would have occurred had the previous capital structures and regulatory framework remained in place.

Mortgage Defaulters

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households defaulted on mortgage repayments in the latest available month; and if he will give the figures for the same period in 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The available information about mortgage arrears relates only to mortgages advanced by building societies and local authorities. The Building Societies Association records numbers of arrears relating to building society mortgages on a half-yearly basis. The latest information is for June 1989 and is compared with the figures for earlier years in the following table.

Building society mortgage arrears: United Kingdom

	Loans over 6 months in arrears	
June	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1986	66,980	0·97
1987	63,150	0·88
1988	57,880	0·79
1989	54,360	0·71

My Department collects annual information on arrears in respect of mortgages made by local authorities. The information for recent years is shown in the following table.

Local authority mortgage arrears: England

	Loans over 6 months in arrears	
March	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1986	15,840	3·1
1987	13,200	3·1
1988	9,040	2·5
1989	7,760	2·5

ENERGY

North Sea Oil

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the total production of North sea oil since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department's most recent published figures show that the cumulative production of oil, condensate and natural gas liquids between the end of 1979 and August of this year stood at 1,069·2 million tonnes—this includes a provisional figure for the month of August.

Pressurised Water Reactors

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies he has undertaken into the financial viability of the pressurised water reactor programme announced by his predecessor.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The financial viability of new power station projects is a matter for the body concerned. The CEGB presented evidence to the Hinkley C inquiry on the comparison between the costs of a PWR and fossil-fuelled generation.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any proposals to speed up the flue gas desulphurisation programme.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The flue gas desulphurisation programme is an operational matter for the industry.

Electricity Privatisation

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will amend the Electricity Act so as to retain the discretion of the Secretary of State to award second-tier direct-contract electricity supply licences after privatisation to premises with a load under 1 MW.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The Electricity Act provides for the Secretary of State to exercise such discretion within his general duties under the Act.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements he proposes for selling to the privatised British distribution companies electricity generated by French nuclear power stations and imported via the cross channel connectors; what companies he proposes to establish for this purpose; whether he has appointed any chairman-designate to such companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Public electricity suppliers, or any other suppliers, will be free to enter into commercial arrangements with Electricite de France for the purchase of electricity. We have no intention of establishing a company to import electricity from France.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of price per KW of the nuclear levy through which the area electricity boards will recoup the cost of meeting their non-fossil-fuel obligation after privatisation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The fossil fuel levy will depend on the prices charged for nuclear and fossil-fuelled electricity. Contract negotiations are currently taking place. I cannot anticipate their outcome.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy with whom he proposes that the obligations to supply electricity will rest after privatisation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Obligations to supply electricity will rest with those authorised to supply by licence or exemption under sections 5 and 6 of the Electricity Act 1989.

Internationally Traded Energy

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the change in internationally traded heavy fuel oil prices over the month to 25 September; and what was the fluctuation in internationally traded coal prices over the same period.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The change in the spot price of heavy fuel oil at Rotterdam over the month to September 25, 1989 and the fluctuation in internationally traded coal prices over the same period are as follows:

	Fuel Oil Rotterdam *$/tonne*	*Steam Coal Amsterdam/ Rotterdam* *$/tonne*
August 25	87·0	43·5
September 25	98·0	43·5
Percentage change	12·6	0·0

Note:
All prices are FOB spot prices for 1 per cent. Sulphur content.
Sources:
Petroleum Argus.
Coal Week International.

Shell Ethylene Pipeline

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of Shell Chemicals United Kingdom Limited north western ethylene pipeline proposals.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Shell Chemicals UK Limited has submitted an application under the Pipelines Act 1962 for authorisation to construct a cross-country pipeline from Grangemouth to Stanlow for the conveyance of ethylene. It has been instructed to publish and serve the necessary notices under the Pipelines Act 1962, without prejudice to the right of the Secretary of State subsequently to refuse the application.

An environmental statement under the Electricity and Pipe-line Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1989, has been prepared by Shell.

Details of Shell's proposals and copies of the environmental statement are available for public inspection at the offices of planning authorities along the proposed pipeline route and at the offices of my Department.

CIVIL SERVICE

Executive Agencies

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list both those executive agencies for the Civil Service already set up with their start up dates and those announced as candidates with their target dates, together with the number of staff in each agency or prospective agency.

Mr. Luce: The current list of those Government activities already established as executive agencies under the Next Steps initiative, together with the number of staff employed and their start up dates is as follows:

Executive agency	*Staff numbers*	*Start up date*
Vehicle Inspectorate	1,550	1 August 1988
Companies House	1,150	3 October 1988
HMSO	3,200	14 December 1988
National Weight and Measures Laboratory	50	18 April 1989
Warren Spring Laboratory	300	20 April 1989
Resettlement Agency	550	24 May 1989
Civil Service College	200	6 June 1989
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	50	6 July 1989
Historic Royal Palaces	350	1 October 1989
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	300	30 October 1989

For the current list of candidates for executive agency status announced by Departments, together with the numbers of staff employed, I refer the hon. Member to the appendix to the Government reply to the Fifth Report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee (CM841, published on 30 October). Target dates for individual launches are primarily a matter for the Ministers responsible.

Promotions

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will provide an estimate of the administrative cost per promotee in Civil Service promotions from executive officer to higher executive officer.

Mr. Luce: This information is not held centrally.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Parliamentary Questions

Mr Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the subjects on which he is not prepared to answer parliamentary questions.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* It is not possible to provide a definitive and exhaustive list of subjects within my responsibilities on which I might exceptionally decline to answer questions on grounds other than cost and commercial confidence. Each question tabled to me will continue to be considered on its merits.

Ulster Museum

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to put the security arrangements for the Ulster museum out to competitive tender.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The Department of Education is presently considering the results of a market testing exercise conducted by the Ulster museum into the possibility of putting a number of its services, including security, out to competitive tender.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Northern Region

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list major inward investment in the Northern region since 1983, giving the cost of each project, the amount of Government grant and the number of jobs involved.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Major inward investment decisions announced for the Northern region since 1 January 1983 are as follows :

Major Inward Investments in the Northern Region since 1983

Company	*Jobs*	*Project Costs £,000*	*RSA Grant £,000*
Hamilton Ltd	217	1,106	225
Tolaram Polymers Ltd	61	14,377	350
Brandtex Ltd	127	347	25
Electrolux Ltd	101	4,060	611
S P Tyres Ltd	450	2,132	Nil
Nissan UK Manufacturing Ltd	2,700	349,900	35,000
NSK Bearings Europe Ltd	108	15,093	450
Black and Decker	500	9,760	1,000
Draeger Ltd	128	2,385	266
TC Industries of Europe Ltd	108	5,970	1,295
Tabuchi Electric (UK) Ltd	185	2,983	300
Superbadge Ltd	116	1,402	383
Stewart-Warner Ltd	100	2,470	350
Black and Decker	409	22,000	2,450
British Alcan Aluminium Ltd	367	5,165	1,500
Komatsu Ltd	262	16,500	1,200
Liner Manufacturing Ltd	202	616	200
NSK Bearings Europe Ltd	230	32,000	1,600
THC Fabricators UK Ltd	170	6,151	575
Philips Components Ltd	150	9,909	900
Kodak Ectona Fibres Ltd	237	57,800	2,000
Grove Coles Ltd	294	4,395	800
House of Mayfair	162	6,500	700
Black & Decker	665	9,910	2,000
Key Tech Europe Ltd	260	11,288	1,200
Philips Components	419	4,279	500
F Hills & Sons Ltd	377	820	80
Transfer All Purpose Foils Ltd	130	5,344	819
Swaddlers Ltd	135	8,780	950
Newcastle Chronicle and Journal Ltd	250	5,372	700
Mitsumi Electric	400	2,500	Nil
TRW Repa Ltd	250	900	[1]Nil
Northern Contractors Ltd	250	[1]—	Nil
Winchmore Knitting Factory Ltd	285	2,600	Nil
Goldstar Electric Ltd	330	8,000	Nil
Basf Chemicals Ltd	100	6,000	Nil
Swilynn (UK) Ltd	505	14,145	2,950
Nissan UK Manufacturing Ltd	1,060	216,000	14,400
Millicom Info Systems Ltd	180	3,047	450
Cookson Fukuda Ltd	79	24,318	650
Millicom Cellular UK Ltd	300	3,558	450
Hashimoto Forming Industry Co Ltd	135	9,850	1,500
Fujitsu Microelectronics Ltd	500	400,000	30,000
3M UK Ltd	112	11,882	1,700

[1] Not published.

1. Major inward investment projects have been defined as those first time investments, or expansions of existing investment, by foreign owned companies which involve capital costs of over £5 million

and/or the creation or safeguarding of 100 or more jobs.

2. Figures supplied for government grant are for offers of Regional Selective Assistance (RSA) accepted by foreign-owned companies since 1 January 1983. Comparable information on other forms of assistance is not readily available. (Not all inward investments receive RSA).

3. In accordance with usual practice the inclusion of individual cases has been restricted to those already announced or published. Details of nine further inward investment projects involving capital spend of £170·4 million and jobs of 3,132 have yet to be published.

4. The Northern Region is the North East Region plus Cumbria.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many cases of suspected insider dealing were referred by the Stock Exchange to his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Insider dealing did not become a criminal offence until 23 June 1980. Since then the number of cases of suspected insider dealing referred to the Department of Trade and Industry by the Stock Exchange each year is as follows:

	Number
1980[1]	7
1981	18
1982	23
1983	17
1984	12
1985	6
1986	14
1987	30
1988	25
1989[2]	26

[1] From 23 June 1980.

[2] To date.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many preliminary reports on suspected cases on insider dealing were sent by the Stock Exchange insider dealing unit in each month in 1988.

Mr. Redwood: The number of reports on suspected cases of insider dealing sent by the Stock Exchange insider dealing group to the Department of Trade and Industry in each month in 1988 was as follows:

	Number
January	1
February	1
March	1
April	1
May	1
June	2
July	2
August	2
September	1
October	2
November	9
December	2

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the progress of the European co-ordinating regulations on insider trading.

Mr. Redwood: The EC Council of Ministers unanimously agreed a common position on the draft directive on co-ordinating regulations on insider dealing on 18 July 1989. This common position has now been considered by the European Parliament and the directive is likely to be adopted by the Council of Ministers on 13 November. Member states will be required to implement it by 1 June 1992.

On 13 September the United Kingdom became the first country to sign the Council of Europe convention on insider trading. Like the directive, the convention provides for co-operation between states that have ratified it but differs from the directive in not setting minimum standards for national regulations.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in what circumstances he would now reopen cases referred to him by the Stock Exchange since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to possible insider dealing offences. Insider dealing did not become an offence until June 1980.

All cases are considered on their merits. If significant new evidence of a possible offence came to light my right hon. Friend would be prepared to reconsider a case where it had earlier been decided that no further action was appropriate.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the Government's policy towards granting the Stock Exchange powers of prosecution for cases of insider dealing.

Mr. Redwood: Clause 195 of the Companies Bill provides for the Secretary of State to consent to the bringing of prosecutions in respect of insider dealing offences by persons or bodies other than himself. It is intended to use this power to consent to such prosecutions by the International Stock Exchange in suitable cases.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the latest figure for the numbers employed in his Department to investigate cases of insider dealing.

Mr. Redwood: Most investigations into possible insider dealing offences are undertaken by inspectors appointed under section 177 of the Financial Services Act. There are currently 32 such inspectors, of whom one is an official of the Department. There is in my Department a unit of six staff, whose main task is to consider possible insider dealing cases for investigation by inspectors, to liaise with such inspectors and to follow up inspectors' reports. In addition, lawyers from solicitors branch give advice and conduct prosecutions as necessary. They are supported by professional investigation officers who are involved as needed.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the number of cases of suspected insider dealing where proceedings for prosecution were instituted by his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Insider dealing did not become a criminal offence until 23 June 1980. Since then the number of cases of suspected insider dealing offences where proceedings for prosecutions were instituted by the Department of Trade and Industry in each year is as follows:

	Number
1980[1]	0
1981	1
1982	1
1983	1
1984	0
1985	0
1986	2
1987	3
1988	3
1989[2]	7

[1] From 23 June 1980.

[2] To date.

Prosecutions for insider dealing offences have also been instituted by other prosecuting authorities.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many cases of insider dealing referred by the Stock Exchange to his Department have been reopened since the passage of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Ferranti

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the Coopers Lybrand interim report on the current Ferranti situation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

No. This is a matter for the Ferranti board which commissioned the report.

THE ARTS

Libraries (Model Byelaws)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make it his policy that paragraph 4 of the model byelaws for library authorities issued by his Department will not be used as justification for excluding people with physical disabilities, mental handicaps or AIDS from entering and using libraries.

Mr. Luce: Model byelaw 4 was intended to give library authorities the power to exclude from public libraries persons who are offensively unclean or suffering from infectious or contagious diseases. Application of the byelaw is at the discretion of library officers and they, I believe, in exercising their power, act reasonably and with justification in the interests of all the users of the library.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from disability organisations regarding the model byelaws for library authorities issued by his office.

Mr. Luce: Within the last two years the only representation I have received has been from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation about the public libraries' discretion to admit powered wheelchairs and library users with infectious or contagious diseases.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he proposes to revise the model byelaws issued to library authorities.

Mr. Luce: I shall consider the need for a revision of the model byelaws after secondary legislation arising from the Local Government and Housing Bill 1989 is complete.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether the model byelaws issued by his Department for use by library authorities permit libraries to refuse admission to disabled people using powered wheelchairs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Model byelaws allow local authorities, in framing their own byelaws, to regulate the use of their facilities and the conduct of persons in premises where these facilities are provided.

Model byelaw 5 specifies that the consent of a library officer is required before a wheeled vehicle, other than an invalid chair, can be brought into a library. The model byelaw allows library authorities to limit the exception to hand-propelled invalid chairs. I believe that, where library authorities have chosen to give the library officers the power to exclude powered wheelchairs, this is done reasonably and with due consideration to the circumstances that prevail in the library at that time.

Non-professional Arts

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts how much his Department currently spends in supporting the non-professional arts.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The Office of Arts and Libraries does not fund arts organisations directly: that is the responsibility of the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Associations. The council's policy is not to fund amateur activities which, by their nature, are largely self-supporting. It does provide professional support to some amateur activity, as well as funding festivals and other events which may include some amateur work, but it is not possible to cost this accurately.

EC Culture

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the competence of the European Community in cultural matters.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The Treaty of Rome makes no specific provision regarding culture as such, although there is a reference in article 36 to the protection of national treasures.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the cultural dimension of the policies of the European Community.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The meetings of the European Ministers responsible for cultural matters provide a useful opportunity to work together and exchange information on matters of mutual interest.

Arts Budget

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what evidence he has that national arts companies and organisations are budgeting for a deficit.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* My attention has been drawn to the difficulties that some arts organisations have encountered as a result of price movements and other developments. The Arts Council expects those organisations to take account of these factors in setting their budgets for the coming year.

Sale Room Prices

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what his Department estimates the rise in inflation of sale room prices for works of art over the past 10 years.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* Based on information available for the period September 1979–July 1989 the rise in prices is as follows:

	Percentage increase
Old Master Paintings	266
19th Century European Paintings	254
Impressionist Paintings	974
Modern Paintings	880
Continental Ceramics	138
Chinese Ceramics	204
English Silver	188
Continental Silver	165
French and Continental Furniture	169
English Furniture	314
Aggregate	396

Tate in the North

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the cost of opening all floors of the Tate in the North, at Liverpool.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The development of the Tate gallery, Liverpool was planned in two phases. The second phase, which includes the conversion of a fourth floor, is estimated to cost £3 million at 1988 prices. The Tate gallery is raising these funds from the private sector.

School Visits

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the fall in visits by school parties to *(a)* theatres and *(b)* museums.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* I am currently monitoring the information available with the help of the Museums and Galleries Commission and the Arts Council.

Ministers of Culture

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will list the meetings of the European Ministers of Culture that *(a)* he and *(b)* his predecessor Ministers have attended to represent officially Her Majesty's Government since 1979.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:*

(a) I have attended the following meetings as Minister for the Arts:

EC Ministers of Culture Brussels	—20 December 1985
EC Ministers of Culture Amsterdam	—13 June 1986
EC Ministers of Culture Brussels	—12-14 November 1986
Council of Europe 5th Conference of European Culture Ministers, Sintra	—15-17 September 1987
EC Ministers of Culture Copenhagen	—10-11 December 1987
EC Ministers of Culture Brussels	—27 May 1988
EC Ministers of Culture Athens	—28-30 November 1988
EC Ministers of Culture Santiago de Compostela	—30-31 March 1989
EC Ministers of Culture Brussels	—17-18 May 1989
EC Ministers of Culture Blois	—2 November 1989

(b) I regret that full information concerning my predecessors' attendances at the meetings concerned is not readily available.

National Galleries and Museums (Correspondence)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will place in the Library a copy of the letter from the chairmen of national galleries and museums, which he received in July.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* I do not propose to do so.

Grants

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish a table showing the current level of grants by *(a)* the Arts Council and *(b)* the regional arts associations to enable client arts companies to pursue (i) social, (ii) educational and (iii) local activities.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* I am informed that it is not possible to give a precise breakdown on the basis of these categories.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish tables showing the level of purchase grants in *(a)* cash and *(b)* real terms for each national gallery and museum in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* Purchase grants for each of the national museums and galleries for which I am responsible have been as follows:

£ thousand

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
British Museum	1,517	1,692	1,590	1,617	1,737	1,460	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400
British Museum (Natural History)	113	157	171	181	190	190	190	190	190	190
Imperial War Museum	90	110	87	97	147	100	100	100	100	100
National Gallery	3,109	2,930	2,988	3,331	3,331	2,750	2,750	2,750	2,750	2,750
National Maritime Museum	244	178	182	203	203	205	205	205	205	205
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	750	[1]750
National Portrait Gallery	291	302	278	310	301	310	310	310	310	310
Science Museum	355	362	336	434	416	461	375	375	375	375
Tate Gallery	1,888	1,794	1,860	2,041	1,815	1,815	1,815	1,815	1,815	1,815
Victoria and Albert Museum	1,130	1,160	1,184	1,320	1,320	1,145	1,145	1,145	1,145	1,145

	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Wallace Collection	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]—

After adjustment by the GDP deflator, the figures are:

British Museum	1,517	1,542	1,353	1,315	1,346	1,073	996	947	882	836
British Museum (Natural History)	113	143	146	147	147	140	135	128	120	114
Imperial War Museum	90	100	74	79	114	73	71	68	63	60
National Gallery	3,109	2,670	2,542	2,709	2,582	2,020	1,957	1,860	1,733	1,643
National Maritime Museum	244	162	155	165	157	151	146	139	129	122
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	473	[1]448
National Portrait Gallery	291	275	237	252	240	228	221	210	195	185
Science Museum	355	330	286	353	322	339	267	254	236	224
Tate Gallery	1,888	1,634	1,583	1,660	1,582	1,333	1,292	1,227	1,144	1,084
Victoria and Albert Museum	1,130	1,060	1,007	1,073	1,023	841	815	774	722	684
Wallace Collection	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]—

[1] The National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside was established in 1986.

[2] The terms of the bequest to the nation preclude acquisitions.

PSA Buildings

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts which national museums and galleries have not yet accepted responsibility for their buildings from the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* All of the national museums and galleries sponsored by my Department are now responsible for their building and maintenance programmes and received grant-in-aid for these purposes.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Sector Employees

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will ensure that the agreement of trade unions is sought prior to any changes to remove employment rights from public sector employees as part of any future plans to privatise public sector jobs.

Mr. Lilley: The Government ensure that there is appropriate consultation with employees and their representatives about changes that affect them.

Northern Region

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many small businesses have been registered for value added tax in the Northern region for each year since 1983; and how many have been deregistered.

Mr. Ryder: Records are not maintained by size of business or in such a way that will enable figures for the Northern region to be identified with precision. However, the local VAT offices at Carlisle, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Washington and Middlesbrough cover an area bounded by Carlisle and Berwick in the north to Barrow and Scarborough in the south.

The numbers of VAT registrations and deregistrations processed by these offices in the years in question were:

Year	*Registrations*	*Deregistrations*
1983	6,679	5,595
1984	6,664	5,859
1985	7,456	7,521
1986	7,745	7,343
1987	7,926	6,648
1988	9,756	7,386
1989[1]	7,803	5,821

[1] to 30 September

Greater London (Legislation)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to ensure that prints of legislation relating to London and Greater London such as Greater London Council (General Powers) Acts are available to members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Greater London Council (General Powers) Acts and other local Acts relating to Greater London Council matters were published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, from which copies may still be obtained.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO exercise Wintex/Cimex 1987 and exercise Wintex/Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercises themselves; and what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Mr. Ryder: The Treasury plays its part in testing those procedures in which we have an interest. Staff participate as required; it would not be appropriate for me to supply the details requested.

Business Statistics Office (Newport)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff have been employed in the business statistics office in Newport in each of the past five years.

Mr. Lilley: The number of staff in post at the Business Statistics Office at 1 April of each of the last five years were:

	Number
1985	705·0
1986	706·5
1987	682·5
1988	660·5
1989	658·0

Imports

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the percentage rate of growth of imports year by year from 1984 to 1989 of *(a)* capital goods and *(b)* consumer goods.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The percentage growth in the volume of imports in each year from 1984 is as follows:

Overseas Trade Statistics basis

	Percentage change on previous year:					
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
(a) Capital goods	18	7·0	1·5	11·0	24	[1]21
(b) Consumer goods (including passenger motor cars)	3	2·5	9·0	8·5	16	[1]17

[1] 1989 figure is the first 9 months of 1989 over the same period in 1988.

Excluding the more erratic items—ships, North Sea installations and aircraft.

Official Report

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the price of the *Official Report*.

Mr. Ryder: Following a review by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, I have authorised increases of 65p in the prices of the daily part and Standing Committee debates and of £3 in the price of the weekly part. Subscription rates will be adjusted accordingly and the scale of charges for reprints of Members' speeches appearing in the *Official Report* will also be raised. These increases, coupled with careful control of production costs, are further steps towards eliminating the central subsidy required, a goal that has now been achieved with respect to the fortnightly index, bound volumes and the volume index where prices will remain unchanged. The rises will come into effect from the beginning of the new Session.

Small Business Tax Accounts

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps the Inland Revenue are taking to simplify tax accounts for small businesses.

Mr. Lilley: As from next April, detailed tax accounts will no longer be needed from many small businesses. Taxpayers will still need to keep accurate business records, but three line accounts will be accepted with tax returns. This relaxation could simplify dealing with tax for up to a million small businesses.

Civil Service Pay

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) by what percentage the pay of *(a)* grade 7 civil servants and *(b)* grade 5 civil servants would need to rise to equal the median pay levels of comparable private sector jobs;

(2) what was the outcome of the recent exercise on comparisons of senior Civil Service pay levels with the private sector.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* This year's pay negotiations for civil servants at grades 5 to 7 were informed by a survey of data on private sector pay levels and benefits for comparable jobs. The results of the survey are confidential to the parties and cannot therefore be released.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will raise the pay levels of civil servants to match those of comparable jobs in the private sector;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect on morale of the comparative levels of pay in the Civil Service and the private sector;

(3) when he next intends to undertake a comparison of private sector pay levels against Civil Service pay levels.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The longer term pay determination arrangements under the new flexible pay agreements, now covering nearly all civil servants, provide for surveys of private sector pay levels every four years. The appropriate data on pay for comparable jobs in the private sector are taken into account together with other factors, such as affordability, recruitment and retention patterns etc., in each of the negotiations about pay increases for civil servants. Morale can be influenced by many factors, one of which may be pay. As far as pay is concerned, all the recent settlements under the new flexible pay agreements have been overwhelmingly accepted by staff.

Civil Service Dispersal

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of those sections of his Department which have been relocated in the last five years, indicating the sites to which they have been moved; whether consideration is being given to future relocation of London-based sections of his Department to sites outside London; and whether the central Borders of Scotland has been identified as a suitable area for any future moves.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* No sections of the Treasury have been relocated in the last five years. A review of the location of its activities is taking place under the policy that my right hon. Friend the, then, Paymaster General announced on 31 March 1988 at columns *610-11*. No decisions have yet been taken.

War Games

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if war games used by firms to instil aggressiveness are deductible against tax.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* Payments which are not of a capital nature are deductible for tax purposes in calculating trading profits if they are made wholly and exclusively for the purposes of the payer's trade.

Income

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the income per capita in each of the regions of England as a percentage of the United Kingdom level in 1979-80 and in each succeeding year up the latest available year.

(2) what was the income per capita in Northern Ireland as a percentage of the United Kingdom level in 1979-80 and in each succeeding year up to the latest available year.

(3) what was the income per capita in Scotland as a percentage of the United Kingdom level in 1979-80 and in each succeeding year up to the latest available year.

(4) what was the income per capita in Wales as a percentage of the United Kingdom level in 1979-80 and in each succeeding year up to the latest available year.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* Figures for total personal sector income per capita are available for calendar rather than for fiscal years and these are as follows:

Total personal sector income per capita

(United Kingdom = 100)

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
North	90·4	92·4	93·7	95·0	92·4	90·6	92·5	91·7	91·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	93·6	94·2	93·0	94·1	93·1	91·2	92·6	93·2	92·5
East Midlands	96·1	95·8	95·6	95·6	95·3	96·3	95·1	95·3	93·5
East Anglia	95·1	97·0	96·1	95·5	95·2	99·6	99·1	97·7	98·9
Greater London	123·2	122·6	124·2	122·3	121·9	122·8	125·0	124·1	126·6
Rest of South East	109·1	109·2	110·5	109·7	111·8	112·1	111·2	111·7	112·5
South East	114·8	114·6	116·0	114·7	115·8	116·3	116·6	116·6	118·0
South West	95·2	97·9	96·2	96·9	97·5	97·1	96·6	96·6	96·7
West Midlands	95·1	91·5	89·2	88·9	88·8	87·9	88·4	89·2	89·0
North West	94·5	94·6	94·3	94·0	93·1	92·7	92·4	92·5	91·7
Wales	89·3	90·2	87·7	89·6	88·9	87·5	87·9	85·4	84·2
Scotland	94·3	94·1	95·8	96·6	96·7	97·8	96·0	96·9	95·9
Northern Ireland	83·8	81·7	82·4	84·7	84·5	84·4	82·2	82·2	81·5

The figures for the last four years were published in Economic Trends No. 421 November 1988, a copy of which is available in the Library. They are income estimates for the personal sector which in addition to households include private non-profitmaking bodies, unincorporated private businesses, private trusts and the funds of life assurance companies and pension schemes. The figures include income from employment, self-employment, rent (including imputed rent of owner-occupied dwellings), dividends plus net interest and social security benefits.

Figures for 1987 are provisional and a revised set including the year 1988 will be available in March-April 1990.

Figures for income per capita of the household sector (as opposed to the personal sector) have also been produced for 1984 and 1987 and these were published in Economic Trends No. 429 July 1989; a copy of which is available in the Library.

The per capita income is calculated by dividing total income by resident population, including children, in each region.

Trader Salesmen

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what resources he is making available to sanctioning the tax returns of self-employed trader salesmen in London.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the obligations and responsibilities required of by Her Majesty's Government in the event of the United Kingdom joining the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 31 October 1989]:* These are contained in the resolution of the European Council of 5 December 1978 on the establishment of the European monetary system (EMS) and related matters.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Fylingdales

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held between the Soviet Union and the United States concerning the future of Fylingdales early warning station; and what was the outcome.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United States Administration keep us well briefed on those aspects of their talks with the Soviet Government which could affect our interests. It is not for us to divulge details.

Refuseniks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations have been made to the Russian authorities about the case of Marina Gorelik of Moscow.

(2) what representations have been made to the Russian authorities about the case of Isaak Aronovich Shifrin of Leningrad.

Mr. Maude: We have not previously raised these particular cases with the Soviet authorities but we will be happy to do so if the hon. Member will provide details.

Loan Service Personnel

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what amount of military aid he allocated in 1987-88 for the provision of loan service personnel to Belize;

(2) what amount of military aid he allocated in 1987-88 for the provision of loan service personnel to Thailand;

(3) what amount of military aid he allocated in 1987-88 for the provision of United Kingdom military training for Belize service personnel;

(4) what amount of military aid he allocated in 1987-88 for the provision of United Kingdom training for Thai service personnel.

Mr. Maude: It is not our practice to disclose the cost of assistance to individual countries.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Computer Centre (Livingston)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many firms submitted bids to run the Department's computer centre at Livingston.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: After considering the capabilities of a number of different firms, three companies were invited to tender for running the computer operations at ACC1 Livingston.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether his Department or staff working within his Department, submitted a bid to retain in-house the contract for running the computer centre at Livingston.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: The option of running the area computer centre (ACC) in-house was considered on the basis of a full assessment by the line managers concerned of how the ACC would be run in-house under Civil Service management, in the same way as the Department's existing large computer centres. A bid was not made by the Department's staff. The ACC operations at Livingston constitute new work and the jobs of existing civil servants are not affected.

Computer Contracts

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans his Department has for putting out to tender other contracts running different aspects of the Department's computer work.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: It is the Government's policy to seek value for money by testing the market. Further computer work in the Department may be put out to tender. The decision to do so will be made on a case-by-case basis as the need arises.

Unemployed Claimants

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if when unemployed claimants take advantage of employment on trial and subsequently leave the job within the period in w[illegible]hey are allowed to without being held to be voluntarily unemployed transitional protection received during the previous claim will be reinstated in full if they are home owners who were receiving full help with their mortgage interest payments, will these be reinstated in full; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: Yes, providing the claimant satisfies the conditions for employment on trial for unemployment benefit purposes. We have also ensured that people who undertake employment for a trial period will continue to receive the higher earnings disregard, and similar concessions have been made available to people, such as lone parents, who are not required to be available for employment.

Homeless Families

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to restore the £6 housing benefit subsidy per week for each child aged under 11 years in a homeless family in bed-and-breakfast accommodation which resulted from recent changes in the benefit system.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: The arrangements for subsidising housing benefit paid to homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, including those with children under the age of 11, enable local authorities to receive an equivalent level of support in 1989-90 to that provided to them through income support prior to 10 April 1989.

Pensioners

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the advertising undertaken to alert potential beneficiaries of their possible entitlement to the extra £5 pension this autumn with a view to ascertaining the extent to which pensioners were misled by those adverts, and to avoiding any such inadvertent confusion in future.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: I do not accept that the advertising was misleading. One of the major intentions of the publicity was to ensure that those in doubt made a claim.

Hostel Board and Lodging Charges

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the Department will monitor the changes in the hostel board and lodging charges in respect of the cost of administration of the new arrangements to *(a)* the hostels and their management committees, *(b)* local authorities, and *(c)* Department of Social Security local offices.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: The Department will monitor carefully all aspects of the hostel changes, and will consider any points raised by hostels about administration costs. A grant of £0·5 million has been made available to local authorities to support their costs in taking on the payment of housing benefit to hostel dwellers.

Offices (Doncaster and Wath-on-Dearne)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by month and by social security office for the current year the number of short fixed-term temporary staff employed in Doncaster and Wath-on-Dearne social security offices, the reasons, and their qualifications.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: No fixed-term temporary staff have been employed at either Wath-on-Dearne or Doncaster (East) in the current year. The figures for Doncaster (West) are as follows:

	Number
1 January	3
1 February	7
1 March	7
1 April	7
1 May	4
1 June	4
1 July	3
1 August	3
1 September	2
1 October	9
1 November	12

The recruits were offered fixed-term contracts rather than permanent positions in view of the need to reduce staffing levels in 1990 when major computerisation is introduced. Temporary staff on fixed-term contracts are required to have similar qualifications to those employed on a permanent basis.

Civil Service Transfers

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, upon the creation of agencies providing his Department's operations, all existing Civil Service staff will be transferred to those agencies with at least existing salary scales, promotion prospects and conditions of service.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The staff of agencies will remain civil servants and members of the Department. We have not so far identified the need for any changes in conditions of service: if we do so, any such changes will be introduced only after the appropriate consultation with staff and their representatives.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Neale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to publish a response to the Occupational Pensions Board report on protecting pensions.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the Occupational Pensions Board for its report. As a result I will be bringing forward legislation at the earliest opportunity to strengthen the benefit security of members of occupational pension schemes and to provide for help for individuals in dealing with pension schemes. These measures reflect both the recommendations of the Occupational Pensions Board and the comments which have been made by right hon. and hon. Members, interested organisations and the public.

To improve benefit security, I propose four measures. First, we will strengthen the protection for early leavers from occupational pension schemes, which we introduced in 1985, by requiring schemes to revalue all future early leavers' preserved pension rights. Pension rights which go beyond the guaranteed minimum pension will have to be revalued in line with prices, up to a maximum of 5 per cent. a year. Secondly, where a pension scheme winds up, the same revaluation requirement will also apply to future pensions and to pensions in payment. Thirdly, again on wind up, any deficiency in a scheme's assets to meet scheme liabilities, including these new liabilities, will become a debt on the employer. Fourthly, we shall introduce a new ceiling on self-investment for pension schemes which will allow them to hold no more than 5 per cent. of their assets in the employer's business; schemes will of course be given time to meet this requirement.

I also intend to initiate a number of further steps to improve the range of help and advice available to individual pension scheme members. To provide an alternative to the High Court as a means of resolving scheme members' grievances, I propose that there shall be a pensions ombudsman. I propose, too, improved tracing services—based on a register of pension schemes—to help individuals discover which company is responsible for pension rights acquired in previous employment, and I wish to see the activities of the Occupational Pension Advisory Service extended and funded more securely. There will also be amendments to the disclosure regulations to improve information available to scheme members.

I shall be implementing other OPB recommendations which include better protection and increased choice for members involved in bulk transfers between pensions schemes.

I shall be seeking the co-operation of the industry in implementing these initiatives. Discussions with the relevant organisations will be set in hand immediately.

Family Benefits

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* mothers and *(b)* single-parent fathers are currently receiving child benefit; how many of each are receiving single-parent supplement; and what have been the comparable numbers in each of the past two years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 23 October 1989]:* The information is not available in the exact form requested. The following is the estimated number of women and men receiving child benefit and one parent benefit for the latest three years:

	Child benefit		*One parent benefit*	
December	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*
1986	6,626,000	135,000	544,000	63,000
1987	6,578,000	134,000	615,000	66,000
1988	6,572,000	134,000	643,000	64,000

SCOTLAND

Health Service

92. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has had in the past month concerning Government proposals for changes in the National Health Service relating, in particular, to the impact on the Health Service in Scotland.

93. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has had in the past month concerning Government proposals for changes in the National Health Service relating, in particular, to the impact on the Health Service in Scotland.

94. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has had in the past month concerning Government proposals for changes in the National Health Service relating, in particular, to the impact on the Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: During October, my right hon. and learned Friend and I continued consultations with a wide range of interested bodies and individuals. In particular, I met on 23 October the Scottish Committee on Hospital Medical Services. Further discussions have taken place at official level with those who have expressed an interest in the proposals for GP practice budgets and for self-governing trusts.

Laboratory and Radiodiagnostic Services

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many health boards are currently exploring the possibility of placing out laboratory and radiodiagnostic services to competitive tendering.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All health boards are examining the services which they provide to ensure that quality is maintained and value for money achieved.

Lithotriptor Centres

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will compile centrally statistics which show the use by National Health Service patients and private patients of the Scottish lithotriptor centres.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO exercise Wintex/Cimex 1987 and exercise Wintex/Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercises themselves; and what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office plays its part in testing those procedures in which we have an interest. Staff participate as required; it would not be appropriate to supply the detail requested.

Community Charge

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates his Department has for the costs of administration in implementing the community charge transitional payment scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has made it clear that local authorities will be reimbursed for the reasonable costs they incur in administering the new transitional relief scheme. The administration costs will clearly depend upon the nature of the scheme, and we are at present discussing that with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Monuments (Policy Review)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to reply to the policy review on the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments—England, Wales and Scotland that was undertaken by Peat, Marwick, McClintock; and when he expects to act on the report's recommendations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The consultants' review was commissioned as part of a policy review of the three Commissions undertaken jointly by the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Development Department, and CADW (Welsh Historic Monuments). We announced our decisions on the main points of principle raised in the Peat, Marwick, McLintock reports recommendations relating to the Scottish Commission on 22 February at columns *588-89*. There remain further points of detail which affect all three Commissions. We aim to conclude this work by the end of the year.

Mortgage and Rent Arrears

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing levels of rent arrears in public sector housing in Scotland as a whole and in each district and island area on 30 September for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 31 October 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 26 January 1989 to the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) at columns *723-26*. Updated information for 1988 is given in the table:

Rent arrears in Scottish public sector at 30 September 1988

	£
SCOTLAND	32,933,736
Local Authorities	30,067,921
Berwickshire[1]	54,638
Ettrick and Lauderdale	40,664
Roxburgh	100,708
Tweeddale	15,813
Clackmannan	800,903
Falkirk	667,830
Stirling	635,700
Annandale and Eskdale	121,708
Nithsdale	322,710
Stewartry	31,137
Wigtown	173,229
Dunfermline	669,523
Kirkcaldy	698,990
North East Fife	117,675
Aberdeen	1,144,379
Banff and Buchan	277,064
Gordon	76,225
Kincardine and Deeside	48,878
Moray	105,555
Badenoch and Strathspey	17,900
Caithness	109,666
Inverness	n/a
Lochaber	53,259
Nairn	n/a
Ross and Cromarty	268,364
Skye and Lochalsh	27,400
Sutherland	29,279
East Lothian	416,583
Edinburgh	1,709,041
Midlothian	279,632
West Lothian	239,049
Argyll and Bute	167,810
Bearsden and Milngavie	126,374
Clydebank	1,567,976
Clydesdale	191,031
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	446,934
Cumnock and Doon Valley	391,219
Cunninghame	304,415
Dumbarton[1]	445,232
East Kilbride	40,059
Eastwood	38,237
Glasgow	10,241,488
Hamilton	487,120
Inverclyde	318,000
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	214,026
Kyle and Carrick	333,026
Monklands	958,767
Motherwell	1,063,807

	£
Renfrew	1,226,984
Strathkelvin	459,718
Angus	117,843
Dundee	1,019,368
Perth and Kinross	188,615
Orkney Islands	57,583
Shetland Islands	111,934
Western Isles	296,853
New Towns	1,071,975
Cumbernauld	201,464
East Kilbride	230,889
Glenrothes	291,405
Irvine	115,910
Livingston	232,307
SSHA	1,793,840

n/a Not available.

[1] Figures include rate arrears.

Council House Sales

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list details of sales of council housing to sitting tenants up to the latest convenient date, by district within regional sub-totals; and what is the percentage of the relevant stock that existed at 30 September 1979 which has been sold to date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is set out in the following table:

Total sales from 1 April 1979 to 30 June 1989 as a percentage of stock

	Total sales from 1 April 1979 to 30 June 1989	*[1] Percentage of stock sold since 1 April 1979*
Local authorities	123,692	13·92
Borders	3,160	
Berwickshire	613	21·40
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,101	22·29
Roxburgh	1,115	17·79
Tweeddale	331	20·36
Central	9,100	
Clackmannan	1,496	15·67
Falkirk	5,477	16·41
Stirling	2,177	16·77
Dumfries and Galloway	4,763	
Annandale and Eskdale	1,134	23·50
Nithsdale	1,933	23·09
Stewartry	711	28·49
Wigtown	985	20·97
Fife	12,664	
Dunfermline	4,809	20·81
Kirkcaldy	5,376	20·35
North East Fife	2,479	31·58
Grampian	11,462	
Aberdeen	4,400	11·68
Banff and Buchan	2,535	20·46
Gordon	1,367	22·69
Kincardine and Deeside	714	20·03
Moray	2,446	23·20
Highland	4,574	
Badenoch and Strathspey	331	31·67
Caithness	814	20·32
Inverness	1,275	18·32
Lochaber	717	21·49
Nairn	228	20·56
Ross and Cromarty	773	12·52
Skye and Lochalsh	160	23·26
Sutherland	276	16·12
Lothian	19,160	
East Lothian	3,322	20·49
Edinburgh	10,403	18·36
Midlothian	2,780	21·33
West Lothian	2,655	11·79
Strathclyde	47,973	
Argyll and [illegible]	1,064	13·13
Bearsden [illegible]ilngavie	406	22·34
Clydebank	1,355	11·54
Clydesdale	965	10·06
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	633	14·55
Cumnock and Doon Valley	1,096	10·64
Cunninghame	3,259	13·85
Dumbarton	1,158	8·83
East Kilbride	389	24·03
Eastwood	490	24·22
Glasgow	14,441	8·24
Hamilton	2,760	12·10
Inverclyde[2]	1,933	9·66
Kilmarnock and Loudon	2,149	11·77
Kyle and Carrick	3,652	19·97
Monklands[2]	2,025	7·09
Motherwell[2]	2,796	7·03
Renfrew[2]	5,363	13·60
Strathkelvin	2,039	19·17
Tayside	9,639	
Angus	2,664	18·29
Dundee	3,619	9·08
Perth and Kinross	3,356	20·59
Orkney Islands	326	23·04
Shetland Islands	359	15·84
Western Isles	512	23·14

[1] Expressed as a percentage of stock as at 30 September 1978.

[2] Figures not available for quarter 2 1989.

Public Rights of Way

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to give himself power to call a public inquiry into the actions of a local authority where a public right of way has been altered, closed or changed in any way.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* There are sufficient powers, under current legislation, to allow for public inquiries where appropriate.

WALES

Health Service (Expenditure)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage of the gross domestic product per head for Wales spent on the National Health Service calculated on the Welsh gross domestic product.

Mr. Grist: In 1987–88 gross expenditure on the National Health Service in Wales was £1,136·5 million, which is equivalent to 8 per cent. of the provisional 1987 figure for Welsh GDP of £14,156 million.

Nursery Schools

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children are attending nursery schools in each Welsh county; and what proportion they are of the under-five child population.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information as at January 1989 is as follows:

	Number of pupils	*Pupils as percentage of under-five population*
Clwyd	326	1·3
Dyfed	207	1·0
Gwent	1,130	3·8
Gwynedd	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	1,228	3·3
Powys	—	—
South Glamorgan	803	2·8
West Glamorgan	227	1·0

This information relates solely to children in nursery schools. There is a total of 50,202 children under five in primary/nursery schools, of which 23,613 are in nursery classes, 69 per cent. and 32·5 per cent. respectively of the under-five population.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the numbers of children attending local authority nursery schools in Newport, Gwent; and what proportion they are of the under-five child population.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In January 1989, 415 children attended maintained nursery schools in Newport, Gwent representing 4·4 per cent. of the under-five population. Some under-fives also attend nursery classes in primary schools but no figures are available.

Cadw

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the total per head of the population of Wales that was spent by Cadw in each of the past three years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is set out in the table:

Year	*Total expenditure £'000*	*Estimated population[1] '000*	*Estimated expenditure per head of population £*
1986-87	4,173	2,821	1·48
1987-88	5,806	2,836	2·05
1988-89	5,251	2,857	1·84

[1] The population figures are based on estimates calculated on the 30 June for each year.

Rescue Archaeology

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase the funds available for rescue archaeology in the wetlands of Gwent.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Funding for rescue archaeology is determined on an annual basis in consultation with the four archaeological trusts in Wales. The Department has specifically made available additional resources in respect of the recently discovered wetland site in Caldicot country park. To date our commitment to that particular site exceeds £40,000 and its future is the subject of discussions between the Department and the local authorities which own the site.

Schools (Local Management)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment his Department has made of the cost of implementation of local management of schools in Wales and its year-on-year cost after implementation.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have announced proposals for specific grant support for expenditure of over £6 million over the period 1989-90 to 1991-92 for the introduction of local management, the training of governors, and LEA inspection.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment his Department has made of the training required by *(a)* head teachers and *(b)* school governors for the implementation and running of local management of schools in Wales and the cost for each during implementation and year on year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Local education authorities have a duty to provide training for school governors and head teachers. We have made available £582,000 in 1989-90 for management training and appraisal for head teachers as a national priority under the LEA training grants scheme. In 1990-91 £470,000 will be available for management training alone. Expenditure of up to £400,000 is also available this year through education support grant for governor training and Government support will be at a comparable level in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

NHS Treatment Centres

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when, pursuant to his answer of 30 October to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, he will be in a position to provide details on the operation of treatment centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The discussions between the Welsh Office and managers and clinicians in the NHS, to which I referred in my answer of 30 October, are at an advanced stage. Subject to their satisfactory conclusion my right hon. Friend would hope to write to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

Ancient Monuments Commission

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to reply to the policy review of the Royal Commission on ancient and historical monuments—England, Wales and Scotland undertaken by Peat, Marwick, McClintock; and when he expects to act on the report's recommendations.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The consultants' review was commissioned as part of a policy review of the three Royal Commissions undertaken jointly by the Department of the Environment, Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, and the Scottish Development Department. Decisions relating to the Welsh Commission on the main points of principle raised in the KPMG report were announced on 20 February 1989. There remain further points of detail which affect all three commissions. These are under active consideration and are the subject of discussion with the commission in Wales. We aim to conclude this further work by the end of the year.

EMPLOYMENT

Part-time Workers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation which establishes a minimum wage for part-time employees.

Mr. Nicholls: No. A national minimum wage would raise employers' costs and destroy jobs.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation which guarantees equal opportunities for part-time workers in the areas of training and promotion.

Mr. Nicholls: No. These are matters which are best determined by employers and their employees taking into account local conditions and the needs of both the work force and the business. Government legislation on these issues is neither necessary nor appropriate.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation which guarantees equal rights for part-time workers, including pay, maternity leave, a sick pay scheme and a revised pension plan.

Mr. Nicholls: No. Pay and conditions are matters to be negotiated between employers and employees to suit their individual circumstances. The 1·4 million growth in part-time employment in Great Britain since 1983 shows its popularity with employers and employees alike.

Assaults on Staff

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many assaults on members of employment service staff were reported in *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* the first nine months of 1989.

Mr. Eggar: In 1988 the number of reported physical assaults on employment service staff was 65. There were also 212 reported incidents of threatening behaviour or verbal abuse. The figures for the first nine months of 1989 are 107 and 711 respectively. A direct comparison of the two periods is misleading since in September 1988 the reporting system was improved and the definition of an assault was broadened.

Staff Shortages

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployment benefit offices and jobcentres have been closed during normal opening hours because of staff shortages during the last 12 months.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service does not keep detailed records of short-term closures during normal opening hours by its 2,000 offices.

Employment service managers have the authority to vary opening arrangements in the event of serious staff absences. Typically these absences impact most heavily on small offices with managers responding by closing at lunch time or in the case of part-time offices reducing the number of days they are open.

Currently some 20 offices are closed or are providing much reduced services because of industrial action by some staff. I deplore the industrial action, but I am grateful for the efforts being made by other staff members to avoid hardship to unemployed people and to ensure that benefits are paid on time.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the present number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who were unemployed in the Greater London area on 1 November.

Mr. Nicholls: The following information is available in the Library. On 14 September 1989, the latest available date, there were, seasonally adjusted, 149,000 male and 57,200 female unemployed claimants in the Greater London region.

Engineering (Training)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to be in a position to make a statement about future arrangements for training in the engineering industry.

Mr. Nicholls: Consultations with the engineering industry training board and organisations representing employers in the engineering industry have now been completed. My right hon. Friend hopes to be in a position to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, in making arrangements for the future of training in engineering, he will ensure that existing provision by EITB for the training of women engineers, for adult training in modern technology skills and for the promotion in schools of engineering as a career, is safeguarded and will be continued by the successor body.

Mr. Nicholls: While the Government recognise the value of these EITB services, they believe that it is for industry to decide whether a voluntary successor body should continue to provide particular services currently run by the industrial training board.

Disabled People (Quotas)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many members of the staff of his Department are engaged on ensuring that the Disabled Persons Employment Act 1944 in respect of the quota system for disabled people is implemented.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* All jobcentre staff involved in filling vacancies have some responsibility to help to ensure that the quota system is implemented. The main responsibility falls on disablement resettlement officers and the disablement advisory service. During the quarter ending 7 July 1989 664 staff were engaged in these services specifically for people with disabilities.

Claimants

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have transferred from unemployment benefit to *(a)* sickness benefit, and *(b)* other benefits in each month since January 1987.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

Information is not collected in the form requested. An estimate of the number of spells of sickness and invalidity benefit which linked with a claim to unemployment benefit made in the previous eight weeks is shown in the table for each month from January 1987 to March 1988, the latest month for which statistics are available. Information is not available for other benefits.

Spells of SB/IVB linking with unemployment

Month commencing	*Number*
5 January 1987	19,000
4 February 1987	21,000
6 March 1987	20,000
6 April 1987	16,000
6 May 1987	19,000
5 June 1987	19,000
6 July 1987	20,000
5 August 1987	21,000
4 September 1987	22,000
5 October 1987	25,000
4 November 1987	19,000
4 December 1987	14,000
4 January 1988	22,000
3 February 1988	21,000
4 March 1988	18,000

DEFENCE

Fylingdales

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications of the 1972 ABM treaty for the continued operation of Fylingdales early warning station.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom is not a party to the anti-ballistic missile treaty, and we therefore have no locus to interpret it. We are, however, satisfied that the modernisation programme for the Fylingdales ballistic missile early warning system fully conforms with the obligations of the United States under the treaty.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what installations the Soviet Union has which serve a similar purpose to the Fylingdales early warning station.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Soviet Union completed the deployment in the mid-1970s of a system of ballistic missile early warning radars at six locations around the periphery of the USSR. A further network of more modern, and technically advanced, early warning radars are being deployed at eight locations around the periphery of the USSR. The Soviet Union has recently accepted that a ninth station, at Krasnoyarsk, represents a violation of the 1972 ABM treaty and has announced its decision to dismantle it.

Service Widows

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now bring the pensions of pre-1973 service widows into line with those paid to those widowed since 1973; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Under the rules of the armed forces pension scheme the payment of pensions to the widows of servicemen depends upon the terms and conditions in force at the date on which their husbands completed their service, or died in service. The rules of the scheme were changed in 1973 and these changes applied only to personnel giving service on or after 31 March 1973. In accordance with normal principles and practice for occupational pension schemes, the revised rules did not apply retrospectively to include former members of the scheme, and there are no plans to do so now.

Loan Service Personnel

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many loan service personnel are currently deployed in Belize;

(2) how many loan service personnel are currently deployed in Thailand;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of all the countries which have had access to training by members of Her Majesty's armed forces serving overseas on secondment or loan during each of the last four years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British service personnel served on loan or secondment in each year from 1986-89 in the following countries:

Australia
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belize
Bermuda
Brunei
Dominica
Fiji
Gambia
Ghana
Hong Kong
Indonesia
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait
Lesotho
Mauritius
New Zealand
Nigeria
Oman
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Sudan
Swaziland
United Arab Emirate
Zimbabwe[1]

In addition British service personnel served on loan or secondment in the following countries in the years shown:

	Year
Botswana	1988 and 1989
Chile	1986
Grenada	1989
Malaysia	1988 and 1989
Singapore	1988
Turks and Caicos	1988 and 1989
Uganda	1986 and 1987

There are currently 12 United Kingdom loan service personnel deployed in Belize, a reduction from the figure of 14 which was published in the Eighth Report of the House of Commons Defence Committee (HC 624, Session 1987-88).

There are no loan service personnel currently deployed in Thailand.

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[1] Since January 1986 a wing of the British military advisory and training team has been specifically allocated to train Mozambican troops in Zimbabwe.

Specific details about personnel serving on loan or secondment are generally in confidence between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the country concerned.

Cambodian Troops

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether British troops have provided military training to the Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces or the National Sihanoukist Army.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to comment on allegations of this nature.

Frigates

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many frigates need to be ordered between now and 1994 in order to maintain an average annual ordering rate of 2·6 surface escorts per year.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* Thirteen would be needed.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ladies Toilets

Ms. Walley: To ask the Lord President of the Council what steps he intends to take to ensure an adequate supply of hand towels are available in all the ladies toilets in the House of Commons.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Authorities of the House make every effort to ensure that an adequate supply of hand towels is maintained in those lavatories set aside for the use of lady Members. Any difficulties over the adequacy of supplies should in the first instance be referred to the Serjeant at Arms.

Hon. Members (Medical Screening)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the annual payment to West Lambeth health authority by the House of Commons for medical screening for hon. Members; how many have used this facility; and what is the cost per patient.

Mr. Beith *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* During the years 1986-88, 353 Members received medical screening at a total cost of £35,130·18 (an average of £99·52 per Member). In addition, a separate charge is levied for any set of X-rays provided as part of the screening process. During 1988, 17 such X-rays were suppled at a total cost of £510. The unit cost for this service has recently been increased to £40. Payment for the screening exercise is made direct to the united medical and dental school of Guy's and St. Thomas's hospitals and payment for X-rays to St. Thomas's hospital, which provides that service.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Poll Results

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received the results of the Horticultural Development Council poll and the poll of mushroom growers.

Mr. Gummer: Yes. The results of the polls are as follows:

HDC Poll

Response to question: are you in favour of retaining the HDC for a further five years?

	In favour	*Against*	*Spoiled forms*	*Forms not returned*	*Total registered October 1989*	*Percentage of the voting who were in favour*
Number of growers	1,103	994	158	1,157	3,412	52·6
Percentage	(32·3)	(29·1)	(4·6)	(33·9)	—	—
	£	£	£			
In value of levy terms	459,578	259,642	299,154		—	63·9
Percentage	(45·2)	(25·5)	(29·4)		—	—

Note—Poll figures rounded to 1 decimal point

Sector	*In terms of grower numbers Per cent.*		*In terms of levy value Per cent.*	
	For	*Against*	*For*	*Against*
Field Vegetables	51·4	48·6	61·1	38·9
Protected Crops	48·4	51·6	62·7	37·4
Hardy Nursery Stock	52·6	47·4	71·8	28·2
Soft Fruit	72·8	27·2	78·8	21·2
Bulbs and Outdoor Flowers	44·1	55·9	40·9	59·1

Note—Poll figures rounded to 1 decimal point

Poll of mushroom growers

Response to question: are you in favour of joining the HDC?

	In favour	*Against*	*Spoiled forms*	*Forms not returned*	*Total poll*	*Percentage of the voting who were in favour*
Number of growers	88	22	—	253	363	80·0
Percentage	(24·2)	(6·1)	—	(69·7)	—	—

	In favour	*Against*	*Spoiled forms*	*Forms not returned*	*Total poll*	*Percentage of the voting who were in favour*
Litres of spawn purchased 1988	2,437,214	531,118	—	709,871	—	82·1
Percentage	(66·3)	(14·4)	—	(19·3)	—	—

Note—Poll figures rounded to 1 decimal point

The result of the poll is in favour of continuing the HDC, and all organisations representing producers and workers employed in the industry are also in favour. The Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and I have therefore decided to confirm the decision originally announced on 10 July 1989 in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill). Arrangements will also be made to bring mushrooms within the scope of the operations of the council. This decision is subject to the approval of Parliament.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO Exercise Wintex/Cimex 1987 and Exercise Wintex/Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercises themselves; and what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Mr. Maclean: My Department plays its part in testing those procedures in which we have an interest. Staff participate as required; it would not be appropriate for me to supply the detail requested.

Mobile Bakeries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how his Department plans to make mobile bakeries available to local authorities after nuclear attack;

(2) what is the current annual cost of storage and maintenance for the stock of mobile bakeries held by his Department; and what are the expected changes to these costs following the current refurbishment programme;

(3) what is the estimated cost of replacing the mobile bakery units held by his Department;

(4) what the estimated total cost will be for refurbishing the mobile bakery units held by his Department for use in a time of crisis;

(5) when the refurbishment of the stock of mobile bakeries held by his Department will be complete;

(6) where the mobile bakeries held by his Department for use in time of crisis are stored.

Mr. Maclean: The refurbishment of mobile bakery units to ensure that they fully meet modern health and safety operational requirements is due to be completed early in 1990 at a total cost of £1,170,092. The current cost of replacing this equipment would be approximately £2·5 million.

The mobile bakeries are a part of the stockpile of food and emergency feeding equipment. Expenditure on these activities is set out in class IV vote 4 of the 1989-90 Supply Estimates. It is not possible to identify separately the costs specifically relating to the storage and maintenance in store of the bakery equipment but they are not expected to change significantly as a result of the refurbishment programme.

Bakery equipment is held in each home defence region and would be deployed to augment local emergency baking facilities as instructed by the regional government food and agriculture officer.

Horses and Ponies (Exports)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to maintain minimum values below which the export of horses and ponies is forbidden after 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The system of minimum values designed to prevent the export of horses for slaughter is a purely national arrangement. As part of the single market programme the Commission has made a proposal for a community regulation on the protection of animals during transport and as drafted this makes no provision for our controls on horse exports to continue. Whilst I can hold out no hope that other member states will be persuaded to apply the minimum value arrangements throughout the Community, our objective will be to ensure that there will be adequate welfare standards during all journeys and that these are implemented and enforced rigorously throughout the Community to protect horses and ponies.

Zoonoses Order 1989

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will revoke the Zoonoses order 1989 as it applies to poultry.

Mr. Maclean: No.

Catering Industry

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which sections of the catering industry are within his ministerial resonsibility.

Mr. Maclean: My Department is concerned with all aspects of the food chain of which the catering industry is an integral part.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what his Department is doing to research the problem of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Maclean: The Department is currently funding an extensive programme of research into bovine spongiform encephalopathy, including studies into the epidemiology of the disease, transmission to offspring of affected animals and to other species, molecular biological and genetic aspects, clinico-pathology and embryo transfer. The cost of the programme this year is estimated to be over £2 million. There is also international collaboration and discussion with colleagues in the EC, the United States of America and with the Organisation Internationale des Epizooties.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if all animal parts susceptible to bovine spongiform encephalopathy are being banned from use in food production;

(2) if animal foodstuffs are thoroughly checked for bovine spongiform encephalopathy;

(3) what measures are being taken to diagnose bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle.

Mr. Maclean: All suspected cases of BSE are being slaughtered and destroyed so that they cannot enter the food chain. It is also the Government's intention, as an ultra-precautionary measure, to ban from human consumption certain bovine offals which might be capable of harbouring the BSE agent in case any animals with pre-clinical disease are still being slaughtered for human consumption. There is no test available for the presence of BSE in live animals or products derived from them.

Animal Foodstuffs

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if animal foodstuffs are imported from countries where there are no restrictions on the use of diseased carcases in animal feed.

Mr. Maclean: Whether or not exporting countries place restrictions on the use of diseased carcases in animal feeding stuffs, our import conditions require, among other things, that animal-based proteins intended for use as animal feeding stuffs undergo pre-export heat treatment. This has to be confirmed by their veterinary authorities and provides the necessary safeguards against the introduction of animal diseases.

Plant Health Inspectors

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many plant health inspectors he has employed in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The number of plant health inspectors employed by my Department in each of the last 10 years was as follows:

	Number
1979	69
1980	70
1981	76
1982	85
1983	79
1984	85
1985	83
1986	83
1987	77

Water Authority Sewage

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the practice of farmers spreading sewage supplied by water authorities on their land; what regulating controls there are; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The use of sewage sludge in agriculture is controlled by the Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Regulations 1989 which were made, as respects England, by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and which are complemented by a code of practice. The regulations, which implement EC directive 86/278/EEC, specify the requirements to be observed before and after use including analysis of the sludge and soil. So far this year my Department has received six letters on this question, mostly concerning the need to minimise any public health risk.

Animal Products

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the introduction of a fourth criterion in addition to those of quality, safety and efficacy with regard to animal products tested under the Medicines Act 1968.

Mr. Maclean: The purpose of the licensing under the Medicines Act is to protect public and animal health and I do not believe that socio-economic or other additional criteria contribute to this purpose.

PRIME MINISTER

South Africa

Q27. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has made to the state President of South Africa.

The Prime Minister: The Government have made representations to President de Klerk on a number of issues and is encouraged by President de Klerk's recent moves: the release of Mr. Sisulu and others is a major step in the right direction and we urge President de Klerk to continue on the path towards negotiations.

Unemployment

Q84. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on progress in reducing unemployment.

The Prime Minister: In September 1989 the number of unemployed claimants, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom was 1,695,000. Unemployment has been falling for 38 consecutive months. It is now at its lowest level for nearly nine years, and well below the European Community average.

Magistrates

Q90. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will transfer responsibility for the magistracy from the Home Office to the Lord Chancellor's Department; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The allocation of functions between Ministers and Departments is kept under regular review. There are currently no plans to transfer the Home Office's responsibilities for the magistrates courts to the Lord Chancellor's Department.

European Currency Exchanges

Q105. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the degree of progress made by member states in achieving freedom of currency exchanges; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The timetable for the removal of restrictions on movements of capital by member states is set down in a Council directive of 24 June 1988 and was endorsed by the European Council in Hanover in June 1988. Removal of these restrictions is essential to the completion of the single market and it is in the interests of all member states that the timetable is met.

Homelessness

Q111. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit the Bondway emergency night shelter in Vauxhall and participate in the nightly soup run for the homeless on the South Bank.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Charles Powell

Q20. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister for how long she now expects Mr. Charles Powell to remain as principal private secretary in her office.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Powell serves as my private secretary for foreign affairs and will serve in my office until it is time for him to leave.

Visits

Q22. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next plans to visit Wales.

Q31. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit by train.

Q119. **Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit Lancaster.

Q122. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Towcester.

Q176. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit Lancashire.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Civil Service (Scotland)

Q121. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps she has taken to ensure adherence by Scottish Office civil servants to the rules covering their communicating with political parties; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: All staff in the Scottish Office are aware that civil servants must be impartial as between political parties. Very recently, as part of a routine updating of standing instructions, staff in the Scottish Office have been reminded of the importance of maintaining the principle of impartiality.

Inner Cities

Q169. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on progress with the Government's inner cities strategy.

The Prime Minister: Excellent progress continues to be made in the regeneration of our inner cities under the Government's action for cities programme, spending on which is planned to increase from £3 billion in 1988-89 to about £3·5 billion this year. Unemployment in the 57 inner-city target areas has fallen by 23 per cent. over the past year.

Insider Trading

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what was the content of recent statements made by her press office in relation to Ministers and insider trading.

The Prime Minister: My press office made it clear that they had no knowledge of the story put out by *The Scotsman* and were therefore not in a position to comment.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today; then I shall depart for the United States of America to address the United Nations General Assembly.

Cambodia (SAS)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister whether she has given her authority for the deployment of members of the Special Air Services to train troops in Cambodia.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* It has been the practice of successive Governments never to discuss the activities of the special forces.

HEALTH

North-Western Regional Health Authority

7. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the level of funding to the North Western regional health authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Funding for the North Western regional health authority for 1989-90 is £1,238,710,000. This is an all-time record, representing a real terms increase of 33 per cent. over 1978-79, compared with 30 per cent. for England as a whole. Revenue and capital allocations for 1990-91 will be notified to all regional health authorities after the Autumn Statement.

NHS Reorganisation (Liverpool)

15. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the proposed re-organisation of the National Health Service in Liverpool.

Mr. Freeman: If the hon. Member is referring to the review of how to improve the pattern of acute services in Liverpool, this was commissioned by the Mersey regional health authority. The region has asked districts to take the suggestions of the review into account in its own long term planning. Any major service change is, of course, subject to the normal consultative process.

NHS Reform

16. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many other groups of doctors, in addition to Sarum '89 he has met to discuss his proposals for reform of the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: My colleagues and I have had very many meetings with representative bodies of the medical profession, with other groups and with individual doctors.

35. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received in association with the proposed Health Service reforms with regard to general practitioners' prescribing budgets.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received 706 representations specifically referring to the proposals on prescribing budgets. In addition to this we have received 12,213 representations about the White Paper proposals in general, many of which have raised questions about, among other things, indicative prescribing budgets. Many of the letters expressed concern about the continued availability of medicines under the new system. We have been able to reassure correspondents that, as the representatives of the profession have now accepted, general practitioners will be able to continue to prescribe all those medicines which individual patients might need.

58. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next plans to meet representatives of the British Medical Association to discuss changes in the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The BMA and my Department have not yet fixed a date for my next meeting with representatives of the BMA. I have no doubt that we will continue to have constructive discussions on how best to implement the proposals in the White Paper "Working For Patients".

59. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to restate the overriding duty of a general practitioner to consider only the best interests of his or her patient when considering what drugs or medication to prescribe in forthcoming legislation affecting the National Health Service

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government have always made it clear that their proposals for reforming the NHS would not in any way prevent people getting the medicines that they need. The representatives of the medical profession accepted on 28 September that the management arrangements proposed by the Government for indicative prescribing budgets would not infringe in any way the right of a general practitioner to prescribe all those medicines which individual patients might need.

63. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the proposals to allow district health authorities to purchase health care from hospitals will affect patient care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: These proposals will result in better standards of health care and more choice for patients. They will enable district health authorities to use their resources to obtain the best value for money in terms of high quality consumer-responsive services for their population. Districts will have a clear responsibility to ensure that a full range of health care services is available. They will specify the services required from each hospital or unit, whether or not it is under their direct managerial control. They will also specify the quality standards expected and ensure that these are met. Districts will be able to improve services as they will be financed on a basis which enables them to use any units which meets their requirements. They will use this freedom, in close consultation with local GPs, to obtain the most appropriate pattern of services for their population and to offer the maximum possible choice to patients.

27. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether general practitioners' ability to refer patients for treatment will be affected by the proposed reform of the National Health Service.

79. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the implications of the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" for general practitioners' freedom to refer patients for treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer given to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 23 October at column *318*.

Self-governing Hospitals

17. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that patients are aware that the proposed self-governing hospitals will not be opting-out of the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government have made it quite clear, in published documents on the NHS review proposals, and in statements to the House and in public, that NHS trusts will remain firmly within the NHS. We shall continue to take every opportunity to explain our proposals and to dispel any misconceptions.

The Chief Executive of the NHS Management Executive has recently announced (18 October) a new initiative to improve communications and stimulate a better understanding of the Government's proposals amongst NHS staff. This will help to ensure that the people who have direct contact with patients have the necessary information to explain the implications of the NHS review proposals to them.

62. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which services will have to be retained by National Health Service self-governing hospitals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It will be for district health authorities to determine, in the light of local circumstances, what services are required to meet the health care needs of their resident popultion and to secure provision of those services through contracts. As part of this process, health authorities will identify those services which must be provided locally. Where a unit which applies for NHS trust status is the only sensible option for providing such services my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will approve arrangements for their continued provision on establishment of the NHS trust. Any later changes will be subject to my right hon. and learned Friend's further approval if they cannot be agreed locally.

67. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service hospitals have now indicated their interest in self-governance.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received 186 expressions of interest in NHS trust status. Some are for non-hospital facilities and others include more than one hospital.

73. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress towards establishing self-governing hospitals he expects to achieve by 1992.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on 3 November.

Apart from the units which are preparing applications for NHS trust status in 1991, others will prepare applications to become trusts later. I expect to receive applications in about 18 months time from hospitals and units wishing to become self-governing NHS trusts from April 1992.

75. **Mrs. Rosie Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department has taken to develop the necessary commissioning expertise within district health authorities so that they will be in a position to purchase services from self-governing hospital trusts from April 1991; and whether his Department has any plans to revise this implementation date.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On 2 November, Duncan Nichol, the chief executive of the NHS management executive announced a major programme of work to support DHAs in adopting their new role. The project will draw on the results of local initiatives in 11 districts and ensure that the lessons learned are shared quickly across the service. We have no plans to change the timetable for implementing the White Paper reforms.

90. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many requests for information he has received from hospitals interested in acquiring self-governing status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 186 expressions of interest in acquiring NHS trust status have been received. Some of these are for non-hospital facilities and others include more than one hospital.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which managers of hospitals for mentally handicapped people have expressed an interest in opting out under the arrangements outlined in the Government White Paper.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Eleven units for mentally handicapped people have expressed interest in NHS trust status. A number of other expressions of interest in NHS trust status, for whole district services and for community services, also include units for mentally handicapped patients. There is, of course, no question of any hospital "opting-out" of the NHS.

Mr. Graham Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the result of the recent ballot of staff of Queen's medical centre on opting-out.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that a ballot relating to the expression of interest in NHS trust status from the University hospital in Nottingham was held at the request of Nottingham Trades Council, the results of which are a matter for the trades council. There is, of course, no question of any hospital "opting-out" of the NHS.

Cottage Hospitals

19. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy on the promotion and support of cottage hospitals under the proposed new funding arrangements for the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Small hospitals can have a valuable role to play in providing a range of services if that is what is needed locally. Under our proposals district health authorities will have responsibiity for ensuring provision of a comprehensive range of services for their resident population. They will be able to take full account of services offered by cottage hospitals in deciding where to place contracts.

Practice Budgets

20. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received any expressions of interest from general practitioners' practices about operating their own practice budgets, as proposed in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Although we have not yet asked GPs to indicate formally their interest in being directly funded as practice budget holders, the level of interest shown by eligible practices has been encouraging.

National Health Service Expenditure

21. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the gross domestic product was spent on the National Health Service in the most recent year for which figures are available, and what was the percentage in 1978.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1988, 5·2 per cent. of the United Kingdom's gross domestic product was spent on the National Health Service compared with 4·9 per cent. in 1978.

25. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department expects to spend on the National Health Service in 1990-91.

Mr. Freeman: Planned expenditure for 1990-91 for the National Health Service in England currently stands at £22·1 billion. At this time of the year we are awaiting the Chancellor's Autumn Statement; I cannot, of course, anticipate its contents.

66. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total increase or decrease in real terms, taking inflation into account, in Health Service spending in England and Wales over the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: In the past 10 years, since 1979-80, gross expenditure on the National Health Service in England and Wales has increased by 38 per cent. in real terms. Over the period since 1978-79 real terms expenditure has increased by 40 per cent.

East Anglia Regional Health Authority

22. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the chairman of the East Anglia regional health authority, and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met the chairman on 20 September at one of the bi-monthly meetings with regional health authority chairmen. He discussed various matters of common interest.

44. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional funding he anticipates will come to the East Anglia regional health authority as a result of the new allocation formula announced in the White Paper.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Actual allocations for 1990-91 have yet to be decided and are dependent on the outcome of this year's public expenditure survey. Under the new formula, which will be more sensitive to population growth, East Anglia's share of the resources available nationally will increase and continue to increase as the region's share of population increases.

Pendle Community Hospital

23. **Mr. Lee:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of the Pendle community hospital.

Mr. Freeman: The Pendle community hospital is a £6 million development in community hospital care which will open in September 1991. It will provide 24 beds which general practitioners can use for treating patients suffering from a range of medical conditions not requiring the full services available at the district general hospital. In addition to this, so that day cases will benefit from ready access to physiotherapy and occupational therapy, an acute outpatients department will have extensive clinical facilities in medical, surgical and paediatric services. There will also be 45 beds for the elderly who need medical treatment and rehabilitation care.

Community Care

24. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he plans to increase the participation of disabled people in the planning of their own community care services.

47. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about his plans for ensuring that disabled people are fully consulted when their community care needs are assessed.

48. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he plans to promote choice for the individual disabled person or carer in the new arrangements for community care services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Member to the statement which my right hon. and learned Friend made to the House on 12 July announcing our main proposals for the future organisation of community care. In that statement my right hon. and learned Friend outlined arrangements designed to widen choice to individuals in need of community care and provide more appropriate services closer to their wishes and needs. Our forthcoming White Paper will set out in detail how we intend to achieve these aims.

72. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to increase and encourage advocacy opportunities for disabled people with regard to community care provision.

85. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he plans to put support for the principle of advocacy into practice in future arrangements for community care services.

Mr. Freeman: I assume that the right hon. and hon. Members have in mind the provisions of sections 1 and 2 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which deal with the appointment and rights of authorised representatives of disabled persons in connection with local authority welfare services. We have already implemented six key sections of this Act, but we have always made it clear that further implementation would depend on the availability of the necessary resources. With section 1 there is the additional complication that implementation would require detailed procedures to be set out in regulations. We hope to begin consultations soon with the local authority associations about the costs of implementing these sections, together with section 3, and with those associations and other interested bodies about the appointment procedures which would be set out in regulations under section 1.

Post-abortion Syndrome

26. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the 1976 study of post-abortion syndrome, commissioned from the Royal College of General Practitioners, will be published.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is a major United Kingdom study of the short and long-term sequelae of abortion. Since it began in 1976 papers have been published covering induced abortions and their early sequelae; the outcome of pregnancy following induced abortion; and the sequelae of induced abortion. I understand that completion of the analysis of the large amount of data collected by the researchers is taking much longer than expected. They hope to be in a position to produce a final report in the middle of next year.

Health Authority Chairmen

28. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department will draw up a code of conduct to ensure that the private business interests of chairmen of health authorities are kept clearly separate from their public responsibilities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The statutory position is already quite clear. Under regulation 14(1) of the National Health Service (Regional and District Health Authorities: Membership and Procedure) Regulations (SI 1983 No. 315) a chairman of a health authority is required to declare any pecuniary interest, direct or otherwise, in any contract or other matter which is the subject of consideration by the health authority. He may not then take part in any consideration or discussion of the contract (or matter) or vote on any question in respect of it.

Kidney Unit, Leicester

29. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make available additional resources to the Leicestershire health authority to enable it to fully open the kidney unit at the general hospital.

Mr. Freeman: I understand Trent regional health authority has agreed with Leicestershire health authority to open three new beds in the renal unit at Leicester general hospital at a cost of £90,000 per annum. The beds are available now and I understand the health authority plans to have the necessary staff in post by 20 November. The health authorities hope to open a further three beds next year, bringing the unit to its full complement a year earlier than originally planned.

NHS (Accountancy and Auditing)

30. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the accountancy and auditing systems operating within the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: The statutory auditors regularly review the effectiveness of the well-documented accountancy and audit arrangements in the NHS, and the annual report of the director of NHS audit sets out their findings. For 1987-88, the auditors found material errors leading to qualification of their certificate in respect of five health authorities of the 334 audited; the audits of the 1988-89 accounts have not yet all been finalised.

Dentists

31. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he anticipates there being any increase in demand for dentists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. Dental health is steadily improving in this country and the nature of dental services is changing. Dental manpower reviews undertaken in 1983 and 1987 in conjunction with the profession recommended reductions in the overall undergraduate intake to United Kingdom dental schools in order to slow down the rate of increase in the numbers of dentists. The next review of dental manpower will take place next year and will report during 1991.

General Practitioner Contract

32. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further discussions he proposes with the British Medical Association before he implements the new general practitioner contract.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have no plans for further discussions with the British Medical Association on the subject of the GPs' new contract before that contract is introduced. My officials are still consulting them on technical and drafting details of the new statement of fees and allowances.

50. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the allocation of travelling time for general practitioners in rural areas under the new contract obligation of 26 hours patient contact time.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is accepted that the 26-hour requirement in the revised terms of service for general practitioners includes travelling time when GPs make home visits. There is no specific element within the 26 hours which is allocated to travelling time because GPs in some rural areas will need more travelling time for home visits than those in urban areas.

82. **Mr. Ian Bruce** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a progress report on the implementation of the general practitioners' new contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The NHS (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1989 were laid on 16 October and certain parts come into operation today. The revised statement of fees and allowances will be sent to all GPs later this month with a copy of their revised terms of service. FPCs will shortly receive a circular of guidance on the management of the GP's new contract. These arrangements will enable GPs and FPCs to make detailed plans for the full implementation of the new contract from 1 April next year.

"Working for Patients"

33. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has recently received concerning the effect on women of the proposals contained in the White Paper "Working for Patients"; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a small number of representations. Our proposals will benefit women, as all patients, by bringing all parts of the NHS closer to the standards already achieved by the best.

38. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how patients will be affected by the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients."

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The point of all our proposals is to produce a better NHS providing the type and standard of service a patient has a right to expect throughout the country. Hospitals will have more freedom to manage their own affairs and so will be able to respond better and quicker to individual patients and their GPs. District health authorities for their part will in future be able to concentrate on identifying the health needs of the populations they serve and then making sure that they receive a comprehensive range of high quality services. They will be able to use contracts to specify the quality of services to be provided. Extra funding will go directly to hospitals which can best provide the services needed. This means that the hospitals to which most patients want to go will be funded accordingly.

Clinical audit will make sure that there is systematic quality control of treatments throughout the Health Service with, for the first time, all doctors looking critically at what they and their colleagues are doing so that they can improve their effectiveness and outcomes. Patients will have shorter waiting times and better appointment systems; 100 more consultants will be appointed in addition to the existing year-by-year growth in numbers. The new GP contract will result in improved services and some large GP practices will be able to seek to make more effective use of NHS funds for their patients.

The effect of all these, and the other proposals in the White Paper, will be to make the NHS more consumer conscious and better able to provide a high quality service.

42. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement on his discussions with the British Medical Association regarding the White Paper "Working for Patients."

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I had a useful meeting with the British Medical Association on 18 October. We both took away ideas for further consideration. I am always ready to enter into constructive discussions with the BMA about how best to implement the proposals in the White Paper.

49. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to ensure that the proposals in the National Health Service White Paper will not mean that patients will be compelled to travel long distances for treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No patient will be made to travel long distances for treatment against their will. Surveys have shown that a majority of patients are willing to travel to get earlier or better treatment. When doctors refer patients to hospital they will take the circumstances and wishes of patients fully into account.

51. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will outline further improvements that patients can expect to result from the implementation of the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are a number of detailed proposals in the White Paper, "Working for Patients", which will lead to substantial improvement for patients when implemented. These include ensuring that patients are given reliable appointment times, better waiting and counselling facilities, much fuller information about the services available and about their own care and quicker notification of diagnostic test results. We are asking everyone working in the Health Service to recognise the importance of the individual patient. In future it will be easier to choose and, if necessary, change GP.

55. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations he proposes to have with the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing, the Confederation of Health Service Employees, the National Union of Public Employees and the National and Local Government Officers Association concerning the Government's White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My fellow Ministers and I have had several meetings with representatives of all the trade unions mentioned about how best to implement the reforms set out in the White Paper.

57. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress towards implementing the proposals in the National Health Service White Paper.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are making good progress in putting into action the changes outlined in the White Paper "Working for Patients". I am confident that the NHS will be ready to implement the basic elements of the new and better systems of matching growth and resources with expansion of patient services by April 1991 if Parliament approves the necessary legislation. We have made £82 million available to finance progress towards implementation this year.

We have issued detailed guidance on many subjects including the new contracting system for all district health authority hospitals and community units and on education and training for non-medical staff.

We have recently launched a project to support district health authorities in detailed work on developing the key role which DHA's will have under the new system of identifying and obtaining the best pattern of services which will most effectively meet all the health needs of the populations they serve.

We have received more than 180 expressions of interest from potential NHS hospital trusts; 79 of them are proceeding towards being in the first wave of applicants for self-governing status within the NHS in April 1991 and I expect many more to be ready for later waves of applicants in future years.

We are spending more than £1 million on the development of self-audit systems by the medical profession and a £4·5 million scheme has been launched to develop information technology skills. Demonstration projects, aimed at improving the quality of care and service to patients, have been announced for five out-patient departments. The principles of general management are being introduced into the family practitioner committee system.

Good progress is also being made in relation to medical education and research. As I explained in a speech on 10 July, since sent to all hospital doctors, I intend to take powers to ensure, for instance, the continuation of high standards of undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing medical education and research in all NHS hospitals. I will also ensure that postgraduate training posts are provided in NHS hospital trusts in accordance with the national objectives set out in "Achieving a Balance". Medical education and research will be further enhanced by the proposed increased in the service increment for teaching (SIFT) to meet 100 per cent. of the median excess costs of teaching hospitals. This will be distributed by regions in consultation with medical schools.

60. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the aims of the proposals affecting family practitioner committees in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The proposals in the White Paper which directly affect family practitioner committees are designed to equip each committee to take on the major tasks of implementing in 1990 new contracts of service for medical and dental practitioners; of helping to introduce the reforms proposed in the White Paper "Working for Patients" which affect family doctors; and generally to manage and develop effectively all the primary health care services for which they are responsible in the light of the Government's proposals in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health".

76. **Mr. Carttiss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the implications for patient choice of the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

83. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how patients' choice will be affected by the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Our proposals will help to ensure that patients are given reliable appointment times, better waiting and counselling facilities, much fuller information about the services available and about their own care and quicker notification of diagnostic test results. We are asking everyone working in the Health Service to recognise the importance of the individual patient.

Social Workers

34. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to deal with the national shortage of qualified social workers.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given by my hon. and learned Friend to him on 19 June at columns *37-8*.

Hospital Building Schemes

36. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to encourage health authorities to take advantage of unconventional financing hospital building schemes as envisaged in paragraph 9:14 of "Working for Patients"; how many such schemes have been proposed to, and approved by, him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: As stated in the White Paper "Working for Patients" the Government welcome any proposals which make imaginative use of the private sector's skills, including financing, which can result in the more cost-effective and quicker development of new and existing services. The key factor, however, is to ensure that best value for money is achieved through the use of such finance, and the Department has recently issued guidance to health authorities on the procedures to be followed where private sector finance is involved.

It is for health authorities to demonstrate the best value for money can be achieved through the use of private sector finance. To date I have received only one substantive case, for a district general hospital development at Bromley, in which use of private sector finance may be cost effective. Approval has therefore been given for the authority to proceed to the first stage of a competitive tendering exercise to establish the relative costs of this approach before final approval can be given.

Speech Therapy

37. **Mr Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received representations about the level of speech therapy provision in the North-East London regional health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received no such representations recently.

Student Nurses

39. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial support he intends to make available for student nurses' living costs.

Mr. Freeman: Levels of student nurse salaries and bursaries were announced respectively by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 16 February at columns *302-3*, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 16 June at column *556*.

Community Nursing

40. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what future community nursing services have in light of plans for community services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Community nursing staff will have a crucial role to play in our proposed new arrangements for community care. Community nursing services will continue to be planned and provided by health authorites.

NHS Costs

41. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the average family of four now contributes on a weekly basis towards the cost of the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: It is not possible to provide the information as requested. The major part of NHS funding comes from the consolidated fund and it is not possible to distinguish between the proportion contributed by private taxpayers and taxation raised from other sources. However, NHS expenditure in 1989-90 per average family of four persons is estimated at £35 per week.

43. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the variations in cost of treatment between different health districts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Health Service indicators published by the Department every year show a wide degree of variation in costs of treatment between different authorities. The indicators of treatment expenditure per consultant episode for 1987-88 published in July varied by a factor of three. There may be good reasons for variations and district and regional management will wish to examine them carefully to see whether there is any scope for improvements. The proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" will also help to reduce unjustifiable cost variations.

Indicative Drug Budgets

45. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how patient care will be affected by the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" for indicative drug budgets.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that my hon. and learned Friend the then Minister for Health gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir Michael McNair-Wilson) on 23 May at column *479*.

Wathwood Hospital, Rotherham

46. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will direct the Rotherham health authority to retain the Wathwood hospital and the present number of beds for the elderly infirm which are currently provided at this hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The provision of local health services is a matter for the district health authority concerned, in this case Rotherham health authority.

Patients (Statistics)

52. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of National Health Service patients being treated each year; and what was the number treated in 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table.

Cases treated, NHS hospitals, England, 1979 and 1987-88

	1979	*1987-88*	*Change*	*Percentage change*
In-patients	5,400,120	6,619,354	1,219,234	22·6
Day cases	592,061	880,852	288,791	48·8
New out-patients	7,713,465	8,529,759	816,294	10·6

Source: 1979 SH3 returns, 1987-88 SH3a, KH09 & 18 returns.

Hearing Aid Service

53. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress officials in his Department have made in drawing up a programme of action to improve the hearing aid service.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), on 27 July at columns 918-19. We have set up a working group consisting of officials from this Department and Mersey regional health authority, a consultant otolaryngologist, a community physician, an audiological scientists, an audiological technician, a representative of the private sector hearing aid industry and a representative of RNID, together with an observer from the Department of Trade and Industry, to work up a programme of action, including proposals for direct referral pilot schemes, some of which we expect to start early in the next financial year. The first meeting of the working group has been arranged for 20 November.

Opting Out

Mr. Jack Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the additional financial resources being made available to each regional health authority to assist the proposals for opting out;

(2) what additional resources have been made available to the Northern regional health authority to assist their proposals for hospitals and the Northumbria ambulance service to opt out.

Mr. Freeman: More than £82 million has been made available this year for the implementation of the White Paper. Of this, £32 million has been allocated to the regions to enable them to develop the finance and personnel functions, to strengthen the public health function and to prepare for the introduction of capital charges and medical audit. Northern region has been allocated £2·04 million. While no additional resources have been made available specifically for the preparation of NHS trusts, all authorities including those with units considering this option will benefit from the overall strengthening of key management functions.

Hospitals, Mersey Region

56. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about proposals for the future of National Health Service hospitals in the Mersey region; and what his response has been.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received various representations from hon. Members and members of the public. These have been considered in the light of local circumstances and answered accordingly.

Old Persons' Homes

61. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that normal National Health Service ancillary health care shall be available to residents in private old persons' homes without a charge being made.

Mr. Freeman: Responsibility for providing community health services, including services to people in private and voluntary residential care homes, rest with district health authorities. There is no power to charge for such services.

Authorities have to plan and provide their services within the resources available in accordance with guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Their performance is monitored through the annual accountability and review process.

Resources (South Bedfordshire)

64. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether discussions between the North-West Thames regional health authority and South Bedfordshire district health authority in the summer have resulted in an increase in the allocation of resources to south Bedfordshire.

Mr. Freeman: Allocations to district health authorities are the responsibility of the regional health authority. My hon. Friend may wish to direct his question to the chairman of the North West Thames regional health authority.

Waiting Lists

65. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of people on the waiting list for hospitals in the Bradford health authority; and if he will make statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There were 6,386 people on the in-patient waiting list for Bradford district health authority at 31 March 1989. Bradford is one of 22 districts with long waiting lists that was chosen this year for investigation by an independent management team. This has led to additional funding of £206,000 for 1,000 additional patients to be treated from the waiting list in the district.

69. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the figures for those on hospital waiting lists at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There were 704,700 people on in-patient waiting lists at 31 March 1989, the latest date for which figures are available centrally.

77. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many additional patients have been treated over the last 12 months for which figures are available as a result of the waiting list initiative.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1988-89 the £30 million waiting list fund enabled more than 117,000 additional in-patients and day cases and more than 93,000 additional out-patients to be treated from the waiting lists. This year health authorities are using £25 million from the £31 million fund to treat a further 100,000 in-patients and day cases and 90,000 out-patients; £6 million of the fund is being directed towards treating additional patients in those districts with the most serious waiting problems.

81. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his plans to reduce waiting lists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the three years to March 1990, the Government have made available a total of £86 million through the special waiting list fund to tackle particular waiting problems. This special funding has enabled over 200,000 extra in-patients and day cases to be treated from the waiting lists in the first two years, as well as more than 130,000 out-patients. This year health authorities are using the fund to treat an additional 100,000 in-patients/day cases and 90,000 out-patients. We intend to allocate further funds for tackling long waiting times in 1990-91, and I will be making a statement about this soon.

Earlier this year my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) sent a management team, led by John Yates of Inter Authority Comparisons and Consultancy, into the 22 districts with the longest waiting times in the country, to find out why the lists there are so long, and to suggest how they can be shortened. As a result of this work, backed up by money from the waiting list fund, the number of patients waiting over a year in the 43 specialties studied has already reduced by a quarter. I intend this valuable and effective work to continue next year.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list district health authorities in England in rank order of size of waiting list as at September 1989, stating also their position as at March 1989, September 1988, and March 1988, the size of waiting list at each date and the amount in total and per head of population expended under the waiting list initiative for 1988-89.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The information requested is given in the table and the ranking is based on waiting list data for 31 March 1989 which are the latest figures available centrally. The amount of waiting list money per head of population cannot be accurately calculated by district as projects funded can involve cross-boundary flow.

In-patient waiting list[1]*, 31 March 1988-31 March 1989, by District Health Authority*

District health authority	*March 1988* *Number*	*Rank*	*September 1988* *Number*	*Rank*	*March 1989* *Number*	*Rank*	*Waiting list fund allocation 1988-89*
Hartlepool	1,116	175	1,205	172	1,167	175	76,484
North Tees	1,251	170	1,219	171	1,507	163	44,184
South Tees	5,153	37	5,268	36	4,797	48	437,600
East Cumbria	3,524	78	3,577	74	3,422	88	139,046
South Cumbria	1,105	176	1,266	170	1,206	173	8,150
West Cumbria	1,406	164	1,391	164	1,334	171	0
Darlington	2,172	137	2,332	125	2,163	134	185,700
Durham	1,384	166	1,357	167	1,425	166	38,811
North West Durham	845	183	830	184	763	186	0
South West Durham	1,086	177	980	178	1,048	181	19,000
Northumberland	1,636	157	1,628	151	1,671	157	82,898
Gateshead	1,275	169	1,341	168	1,109	178	54,100
Newcastle	8,032	9	7,813	9	8,669	7	297,679
North Tyneside	1,189	173	1,018	177	1,057	179	59,472
South Tyneside	797	185	815	186	886	182	23,835
Sunderland	4,073	65	3,889	64	4,609	53	529,532
Hull	8,559	6	7,357	14	6,867	18	480,600
East Yorkshire	1,768	153	1,841	145	1,580	159	22,000
Grimsby	1,149	174	1,032	176	1,746	154	0
Scunthorpe	2,843	108	2,875	103	2,881	107	133,500
Northallerton	677	188	703	187	700	187	0
York	2,549	117	2,784	109	2,557	121	178,000
Scarborough	2,043	139	2,103	134	2,081	138	0
Harrogate	1,761	154	1,549	155	2,074	139	11,550
Bradford	6,978	19	6,388	23	6,836	19	238,160
Airedale	2,351	126	2,223	130	2,502	124	171,200
Calderdale	1,044	180	1,086	175	1,053	180	16,000
Huddersfield	2,099	138	1,793	147	2,215	131	39,828
Dewsbury	763	187	574	189	782	184	0
Leeds Western	5,663	30	5,756	28	6,201	23	63,475
Leeds Eastern	6,993	18	6,906	21	6,529	21	264,590
Wakefield	2,037	140	2,313	127	2,101	136	56,463
Pontefract	2,002	145	1,701	150	2,056	140	324,000
North Derbyshire	2,354	125	2,800	108	2,152	135	250,900

District health authority	*March 1988*		*September 1988*		*March 1989*		*Waiting list fund allocation 1988-89*
	Number	*Rank*	*Number*	*Rank*	*Number*	*Rank*	
Southern Derbyshire	4,986	40	4,554	48	5,182	39	228,400
Leicestershire	8,413	7	8,700	4	8,495	9	304,320
North Lincolnshire	3,014	97	2,999	96	2,851	111	60,000
South Lincolnshire	3,157	89	3,484	78	3,237	93	308,000
Bassetlaw	1,247	171	1,381	165	1,136	176	274,000
Central Nottinghamshire	4,061	66	4,149	57	4,745	49	200,000
Nottingham	7,299	16	6,311	26	8,360	11	254,000
Barnsley	2,279	128	2,398	124	2,529	123	80,000
Doncaster	4,222	62	4,536	50	3,991	68	434,100
Rotherham	3,113	94	3,141	90	3,420	89	82,500
Sheffield	10,931	2	10,441	2	10,820	3	430,700
Cambridge	4,305	59	4,166	56	4,431	59	91,119
Peterborough	4,608	48	4,841	42	4,675	51	161,490
West Suffolk	3,147	91	2,685	112	3,610	74	17,700
East Suffolk	3,774	74	3,488	77	4,154	65	99,300
Norwich	9,995	3	9,041	3	11,507	2	359,800
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	3,713	76	3,535	75	4,031	67	186,140
West Norfolk and Wisbech	2,408	122	2,230	129	2,461	125	87,500
Huntingdon	1,467	163	1,132	173	1,620	158	0
North Bedfordshire	1,818	151	1,702	149	1,743	155	30,000
South Bedfordshire	2,952	100	3,061	94	2,950	104	58,100
North Hertfordshire	2,979	98	2,883	102	3,107	97	218,900
East Hertfordshire	1,309	168	1,510	158	1,537	162	175,000
North West Hertfordshire	1,057	179	969	179	1,185	174	136,500
South West Hertfordshire	1,694	155	1,378	166	1,565	161	50,650
Barnet	2,970	99	2,941	98	3,021	101	26,250
Harrow	1,405	165	1,481	160	1,814	150	20,000
Hillingdon	7,773	11	7,579	11	6,993	17	346,500
Hounslow and Spelthorne	6,221	25	6,369	24	5,834	27	370,000
Ealing	1,961	148	1,799	146	1,423	167	100,270
Riverside	5,897	28	6,254	27	5,913	25	0
Parkside	6,734	21	6,359	25	5,885	26	244,300
Basildon and Thurrock	5,734	29	5,428	34	5,568	30	456,000
Mid Essex	5,097	38	5,291	35	5,348	36	71,404
North East Essex	3,212	87	2,914	100	3,514	80	220,413
West Essex	5,589	31	5,433	33	5,557	31	55,241
Southend	4,465	53	4,138	58	3,456	82	77,182
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	9,782	4	8,137	7	9,447	4	390,000
Hampstead	4,386	57	3,793	67	3,413	90	17,800
Bloomsbury	14,287	1	13,991	1	13,680	1	381,221
Islington	2,263	130	3,322	85	2,240	130	0
City and Hackney	5,408	33	5,493	32	5,470	33	83,013
Newham	1,003	181	969	180	1,122	177	25,639
Tower Hamlets	5,272	35	5,652	30	5,385	34	156,000
Enfield	3,345	81	3,446	80	3,604	75	170,300
Haringey	2,010	143	1,101	174	2,659	118	0
Redbridge	1,975	146	2,198	131	1,972	144	120,085
Waltham Forest	5,556	32	4,895	40	5,628	28	47,544
Brighton	4,432	55	4,387	52	4,358	61	159,550
Eastbourne	3,829	72	3,609	72	3,676	71	167,000
Hastings	2,864	105	2,754	110	2,768	114	90,000
South East Kent	2,849	106	2,588	119	3,043	100	0
Canterbury and Thanet	4,732	46	5,266	37	4,722	50	98,750
Dartford and Gravesham	3,972	69	3,911	63	4,219	64	90,000
Maidstone	3,812	73	3,441	81	3,382	91	211,408
Medway	2,743	111	2,597	118	3,549	78	151,000
Tunbridge Wells	4,501	50	4,553	49	4,374	60	102,800
Bexley	1,515	160	1,605	152	1,977	143	209,750
Greenwich	2,391	123	2,864	104	2,575	120	70,400
Bromley	2,269	129	2,084	135	1,771	152	181,200
West Lambeth	5,944	27	7,332	16	4,802	47	253,200
Camberwell	2,426	121	1,987	139	2,327	129	0
Lewisham and North Southwark	7,340	14	7,247	18	6,429	22	471,200
North West Surrey	2,836	109	3,239	87	2,962	102	165,000
West Surrey and North East Hants	4,779	45	4,569	47	4,586	54	520,000
South West Surrey	3,273	84	2,682	113	2,871	109	95,000
Mid Surrey	2,931	102	1,940	141	2,188	132	170,000
East Surrey	3,148	90	2,629	115	3,449	83	120,000
Chichester	2,200	134	1,861	144	2,551	122	175,000
Mid Downs	4,651	47	3,528	76	4,902	42	0

District health authority	*March 1988*		*September 1988*		*March 1989*		*Waiting list fund allocation 1988-89*
	Number	*Rank*	*Number*	*Rank*	*Number*	*Rank*	
Worthing	4,249	61	3,935	62	4,479	55	408,000
Croydon	2,190	135	2,066	136	2,358	128	0
Kingston and Esher	2,460	120	2,138	133	3,432	85	340,000
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	2,730	112	2,626	116	2,816	113	0
Wandsworth	2,543	118	2,165	132	3,444	84	0
Merton and Sutton	3,015	96	3,205	89	3,089	98	0
East Dorset	4,832	42	5,165	38	4,875	44	190,776
West Dorset	2,227	132	2,025	137	2,092	137	6,000
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	6,779	20	7,404	13	5,612	29	300,000
Southampton and South West Hampshire	6,520	23	7,051	19	8,542	8	222,000
Winchester	3,132	93	2,809	106	2,723	116	110,000
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	2,382	124	3,300	86	2,638	119	137,000
Salisbury	6,349	24	6,547	22	6,046	24	128,500
Swindon	2,623	116	2,922	99	3,069	99	147,000
Bath	5,291	34	4,982	39	5,506	32	150,000
Isle of Wight	1,472	162	1,521	157	1,475	164	58,000
East Berkshire	7,317	15	7,562	12	8,056	13	80,000
West Berkshire	4,816	44	4,743	45	5,260	38	50,000
Aylesbury Vale	2,906	104	3,367	83	3,185	96	100,000
Wycombe	804	184	930	181	806	183	13,000
Milton Keynes	2,031	141	1,991	138	1,722	156	300,000
Kettering	4,268	60	4,193	55	5,014	40	80,000
Northampton	3,606	77	3,688	69	3,458	81	50,000
Oxfordshire	7,248	17	6,964	20	7,857	15	490,000
Bristol and Weston	7,461	13	8,035	8	8,056	14	209,920
Frenchay	2,950	101	2,980	97	2,166	133	236,500
Southmead	1,774	152	1,506	159	1,939	145	33,507
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	5,180	36	3,942	61	5,372	35	130,596
Exeter	4,060	67	3,627	71	4,613	52	100,500
North Devon	2,018	142	1,906	143	2,016	141	58,430
Plymouth	6,180	26	5,634	31	6,754	20	392,255
Torbay	2,654	114	2,716	111	2,767	115	297,000
Cheltenham	2,321	127	2,635	114	2,951	103	131,400
Gloucester	3,911	70	4,030	60	4,854	46	111,998
Somerset	4,902	41	4,818	44	5,310	37	194,352
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1,580	159	1,320	169	1,860	149	0
Herefordshire	3,430	79	3,108	92	3,648	72	0
Kidderminster and District	1,315	167	1,438	162	1,408	168	0
Worcester and District	3,236	86	3,333	84	3,211	95	0
Shropshire	7,639	12	7,614	10	8,360	12	210,000
Mid Staffordshire	1,868	150	1,775	148	1,274	172	0
North Staffordshire	8,588	5	8,466	5	8,431	10	328,000
South East Staffordshire	3,144	92	2,911	101	3,431	86	0
Rugby	784	186	919	182	769	185	0
North Warwickshire	3,099	95	3,026	95	2,688	117	0
South Warwickshire	2,844	107	2,481	122	2,914	106	20,000
Central Birmingham	4,832	43	4,865	41	4,452	58	0
East Birmingham	2,178	136	2,488	121	1,886	147	392,000
North Birmingham	1,681	156	1,434	163	1,908	146	0
South Birmingham	4,592	49	5,743	29	3,640	73	616,100
West Birmingham	3,346	80	3,605	73	2,879	108	90,000
Coventry	4,212	63	4,655	46	4,462	57	886,000
Dudley	4,491	52	3,845	65	4,864	45	146,000
Sandwell	2,009	144	1,953	140	2,013	142	119,900
Solihull	1,202	172	1,573	154	1,383	170	150,000
Walsall	2,523	119	2,585	120	2,405	127	0
Wolverhampton	3,868	71	3,662	70	3,745	70	24,000
Chester	3,182	88	3,094	93	3,536	79	65,000
Crewe	4,459	54	4,232	54	3,567	77	239,400
Halton	203	190	107	190	156	190	245,000
Macclesfield	1,065	178	834	183	1,402	169	75,000
Warrington	2,231	131	1,925	142	1,870	148	210,000
Liverpool	8,311	8	8,218	6	8,804	6	202,025
St. Helens and Knowsley	3,760	75	3,775	68	3,586	76	195,500
Southport and Formby	1,630	158	1,549	156	1,753	153	83,000
South Sefton	3,242	85	3,453	79	3,232	94	266,610
Wirral	4,038	68	3,844	66	4,133	66	0
Lancaster	2,677	113	2,312	128	2,826	112	84,300
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	3,304	83	3,399	82	3,431	87	57,400

District health authority	March 1988 Number	Rank	September 1988 Number	Rank	March 1989 Number	Rank	Waiting list fund allocation 1988-89
Preston	5,080	39	4,828	43	4,897	43	148,600
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	3,339	82	3,225	88	3,761	69	250,000
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	1,971	147	2,329	126	1,807	151	151,800
West Lancashire	2,210	133	2,401	123	2,852	110	91,600
Chorley and South Ribble	582	189	666	188	636	188	66,900
Bolton	2,922	103	2,607	117	2,936	105	101,100
Bury	903	182	825	185	373	189	45,800
North Manchester	2,806	110	3,135	91	2,457	126	77,400
Central Manchester	7,865	10	7,353	15	9,441	5	272,600
South Manchester	6,670	22	7,265	17	7,483	16	100,000
Oldham	4,494	51	4,249	53	4,903	41	317,900
Rochdale	2,654	115	2,821	105	3,280	92	201,800
Salford	4,196	64	2,803	107	4,477	56	202,500
Stockport	4,384	58	4,446	51	4,324	62	69,100
Tameside and Glossop	1,899	149	1,604	153	1,566	160	92,400
Trafford	1,480	161	1,470	161	1,469	165	98,800
Wigan	4,402	56	4,080	59	4,310	63	106,000

[1] Total less self deferred.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current waiting list for operations in *(a)* the west midlands and *(b)* the Walsall borough (i) in total and (ii) of those waiting for over 12 months; and if he will list the operations needing to be performed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* Waiting list information is available centrally only by the specialty of treatment and not by operation. The available information is given in the table:

Gross demand in-patient waiting list, surgical[1] acute specialties 31 March 1989

	Total	Number waiting 12 months or more
West Midlands RHA	73,003	19,753
Walsall DHA	2,577	412

[1] Including gynaecology.

Ear, Nose and Throat Services

68. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the present waiting lists for ear, nose and throat patients in Sheffield *(a)* to see an ear, nose and throat specialist and *(b)* for hearing aid appointments; and what plans there are to shorten the lists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not collect information on out-patient waiting times centrally. On our plans to reduce waiting times generally I refer the hon. Member to my reply today to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell).

87. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any recommendations for the number of sessions for ear, nose and throat surgeons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number and type of sessions worked by any consultant, including ENT surgeons, is a matter for agreement between the consultant and his/her employing authority.

GPs

70. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about trends in the average general practitioner's list size since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Over the last 10 years the average list size of family doctors in England has continued to fall from 2,286 in 1979 to 1,999 in 1988, a decrease of more than 12 per cent.

Haemophiliacs (HIV)

71. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest number of haemophiliacs who have been infected with the AIDS virus following a National Health Service blood transfusion; and how many have died.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has readily available figures as to how many haemophiliacs have been diagnosed as HIV positive over any convenient period in the last five years; and if he will make a statement on policy towards help for such patients.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is shown in the tables. The Government provided £10 million to set up the Macfarlane trust to meet the special needs of people in the United Kingdom with haemophilia and HIV infection, and their dependants.

1. Numbers of haemophiliacs reported as HIV-antibody positive to the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre (Colindale) and the Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Cumulative Total
England, Wales and Northern Ireland	495	371	76	44	34	[1]1,020
Scotland[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	76
United Kingdom Total						1,096

[1] The actual number of known HIV-1 infected haemophiliacs may be greater as some may have been included in the undetermined exposure category.

[2] Yearly figures not available centrally.

2. Cumulative number of haemophiliacs with AIDS known to have died in the United Kingdom by 30 September 1989

	Number
	102

Prescriptions

74. **Mr. Andrew McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service prescriptions are being dispensed per year; and what was the figure for 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of prescriptions dispensed in England during 1988, the latest year for which information is available, was 371 million. In 1979, 321 million prescriptions were dispensed.

Poland (Medical Aid)

78. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has had concerning the provisions of medical aid for Poland.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have not received any representations on this subject but my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs received one inquiry about medical equipment in September this year. I visited Poland at the invitation of the Polish Minister of Health and Social Welfare in April this year for discussions and as a result we are now looking at various proposals for co-operation on medical training, health service reforms and a broadening of the scope of the United Kingdom-Poland health co-operation agreement.

BMA

80. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received any statements from the British Medical Association recently; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 3 November at column *385*.

Patients (York)

84. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patients were treated in the York health authority area in 1978 and 1988, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: During the financial year 1987-88, 34,062 in-patient cases were treated by York district health authority, an increase of 26·2 per cent. over the 1978 figure of 26,997.

Royal National Institute for the Deaf

86. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to meet the Royal National Institute for the Deaf to discuss current legislation.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled and I met representatives from the Royal National Institute for the Deaf on 24 October 1989 to discuss its proposals for improving hearing aid services in the light of my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on 27 July at columns *918-19*.

General Practitioners

88. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has that patients are susceptible to changing their general practitioners according to the differing perceived levels of service available; and to what extent the patient is able to measure that perception.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is the Government's view, clearly set out in our White Paper "Promoting Better Health", that patients should have adequate information on which to base their choice of general practitioner. A number of measures are being implemented to achieve this objective, including, for those who choose to do so, a simplified procedure for changing doctor.

Ambulance Service

89. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will tabulate the percentage of the trained and qualified personnel of the London ambulance accident and emergency service who have resigned or taken early retirement during each of the years 1985 to 1988.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for the South West Thames regional health authority, which manages the London ambulance service. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of the authority, Mrs. Julia Cumberlege.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that ambulancemen receive payment for the additional man hours involved in participating in riot and public disorder training; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* Special incident collaborative training, including public order aspects, has for some years been available to ambulance service staff. Attendance at the training attracts normal rates of pay.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the staff employed by the London ambulance service on accident and emergency work between 1 September and 31 October per 24-hour period *(a)* by day and *(b)* by night.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The information requested is available only in the format shown as follows:

	Early shift	*Late shift*	*Night shift*
Friday 1 September 1989	235	253	152
Saturday 2 September 1989	254	243	138
Sunday 3 September 1989	225	216	148
Monday 4 September 1989	294	271	156

	Early shift	Late shift	Night shift
Tuesday 5 September 1989	290	282	180
Wednesday 6 September 1989	299	230	180
Thursday 7 September 1989	297	274	158
Friday 8 September 1989	292	270	151
Saturday 9 September 1989	252	241	139
Sunday 10 September 1989	235	219	158
Monday 11 September 1989	296	288	159
Tuesday 12 September 1989	288	282	155
Wednesday 13 September 1989	287	276	132
Thursday 14 September 1989	236	248	124
Friday 15 September 1989	246	241	118
Saturday 16 September 1989	206	216	104
Sunday 17 September 1989	172	198	104
Monday 18 September 1989	257	248	138
Tuesday 19 September 1989	259	243	139
Wednesday 20 September 1989	256	241	142
Thursday 21 September 1989	248	239	138
Friday 22 September 1989	244	239	120
Saturday 23 September 1989	211	195	110
Sunday 24 September 1989	190	172	114
Monday 25 September 1989	250	248	146
Tuesday 26 September 1989	288	244	130
Wednesday 27 September 1989	250	248	144
Thursday 28 September 1989	244	244	140
Friday 29 September 1989	264	231	125
Saturday 30 September 1989	208	190	115
Sunday 1 October 1989	187	177	129
Monday 2 October 1989	269	245	126
Tuesday 3 October 1989	270	240	134
Wednesday 4 October 1989	256	247	133
Thursday 5 October 1989	270	232	135
Friday 6 October 1989	256	231	120
Saturday 7 October 1989	224	206	110
Sunday 8 October 1989	183	196	130
Monday 9 October 1989	254	246	161
Tuesday 10 October 1989	254	254	153
Wednesday 11 October 1989	262	248	169
Thursday 12 October 1989	269	236	166
Friday 13 October 1989	252	237	152
Saturday 14 October 1989	234	219	143
Sunday 15 October 1989	192	189	144
Monday 16 October 1989	254	247	159
Tuesday 17 October 1989	268	247	156
Wednesday 18 October 1989	258	246	152
Thursday 19 October 1989	244	248	155
Friday 20 October 1989	249	244	137
Saturday 21 October 1989	216	214	112
Sunday 22 October 1989	199	186	127
Monday 23 October 1989	Dispute day/figures unavailable		
Tuesday 24 October 1989	Dispute day/figures unavailable		
Wednesday 25 October 1989	272	247	140
Thursday 26 October 1989	257	236	142
Friday 27 October 1989	257	233	115
Saturday 28 October 1989	235	208	109
Sunday 29 October 1989	214	204	118
Monday 30 October 1989	264	250	144
Tuesday 31 October 1989	282	256	137

Bassetlaw Hospital

91. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his visit to Bassetlaw hospital, Worksop, on 23 October.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I had a useful and enjoyable visit to Bassetlaw district general hospital during which I saw some of the facilities at the hospital, had meetings with the district chairman and her management team and with the community health council and gave interviews to the local media. I also attended an informal lunch at which I met a number of the hospital's consultants and other senior professional staff.

Nurses (Leicestershire Health Authority)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many Black and Asian nurses are employed by Leicestershire health authority; and how many of those are *(a)* state registered nurses and *(b)* state enrolled nurses;

(2) how many nurses are currently employed by Leicestershire health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At 30 September 1988 there were 6,570 whole-time equivalent nursing and midwifery staff in post in Leicestershire district health authority. We do not hold centrally information on the numbers of black and Asian nurses. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Leicestershire health authority for this information.

Organ Transplants

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the anti rejection drug FK-506 is being used in clinical trials with organ transplant patients anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Before clinical trials can take place in the United Kingdom, a clinical trial certificate or exemption must be held. Details of applications under the Medicines Act 1968 are confidential to the licensing authority, and it is not the practice to say whether specific applications have been made.

Workplace Nurseries

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide an estimate of the number of workplace nursery places available in the United Kingdom by number and by percentage of potential population.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

FK 506

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what consideration his Department has given to the question of against whom liability for use of the drug FK 506 will rest;

(2) what discussions have taken place with the Japanese Government about allowing a supply of the anti-rejection drug FK 506 to be used in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Officials asked the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare to facilitate transmission of FK 506 by Fujisawa Pharmaceuticals from Japan for Dr. Roger Williams of Kings College hospital, London to use in treating his patient Mrs. Aisling Barnett following a liver transplant. I am glad to have this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Japanese Ministry for their prompt and effective response, and to all the others concerned, notably the British Embassy in Tokyo, British Airways, and the Metropolitan police.

Responsibility for choice of medicinal product in patient care lies with the practitioner concerned. Where, as in this case, a product has not been granted a product licence under provisions of the Medicines Act 1968, the practitioner concerned may nevertheless choose to use the product for a particular named patient under the licensing exemptions provided in section 9 of the Act. Questions of liability arising from that choice are a matter for the practitioner subject to relevant legal provisions in respect of product liability etc.

Kidney Patients

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list region by region the number of kidney patients receiving haemodialysis or CAPD treatment and the numbers who have received transplants; and whether any regional health authorities impose age limits either for dialysis or for transplantation.

Mr. Freeman: According to information provided by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, the number of patients alive on different forms of therapy on 31 December 1988, by English region, was as follows:

Region	*Hospital haemodialysis*	*Home haemodialysis*	*Intermittent peritoneal dialysis*	*Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis*	*Functioning graft*
Northern	208	19	25	168	514
Yorkshire	209	94	1	182	381
Trent	215	223	2	319	584
East Anglia	114	60	—	63	419
North West Thames	161	77	12	151	469
North East Thames	191	90	5	333	821
South East Thames	181	97	4	306	1,160
South West Thames	11	44	0	97	165
Wessex	86	32	0	135	334
Oxford	99	115	0	96	418
South Western	99	156	4	202	460
West Midlands	198	122	1	489	[1]94
Mersey	141	49	0	67	386
North Western	157	144	18	265	726

[1] Complete data not available.

Patients are registered by the units treating them and are therefore recorded according to the health region in which the units are located, not according to the region in which patients live. Some patients cross regional boundaries to receive treatment, notably from South West Thames to South East Thames and from Wessex to South Western.

There are no age limits for treatment of end-stage renal failure. The treatment of an individual patient is a matter for the responsible consultant, whose decisions will take account of the patient's clinical condition.

Imported Medicines

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish figures for the annual consumption in the United Kingdom of parallel imported medicines for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Suicide

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures he has for the number of officially recorded *(a)* suicides and *(b)* attempted suicides in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) Scotland for (1) all persons of 18 years and over, (2) all persons aged 45 to 65 years, (3) all persons of 18 years and over who were unemployed at the date of suicide or the attempt and (4) all persons aged 45 to 65 years who were unemployed at the date of suicide or the attempt, in each case showing men and women separately.

Mr. Freeman: The figures for suicides in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) Scotland for (1) all persons aged 18 years or over and (2) all persons aged 45 to 64 years are shown in the table. Information on the number of attempted suicides, and whether those people committing suicide were unemployed at time of death, is not available.

Number of deaths by suicide[1] *United Kingdom and Scotland, 1988*

	Age 18+		*Age 45 to 64*	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
United Kingdom	3,548	1,346	956	415
Scotland	418	167	122	45

[1] International classification of diseases, 9th revision, codes E950 to E959.

Skoal Bandits

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to ban the sale of Skoal Bandits in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have proposed a total ban on the supply of all oral snuff products, including Skoal Bandits. On 7 August this proposal was notified to the European Commission and the GATT secretariat in accordance with our international obligations. EC member states have until 9 November to let us have any views on the proposal, but this deadline can be extended if there are objections or if the Commission wishes to bring forward its own proposals for the Community as a whole. The Government will reach a final decision on whether to proceed to a ban as quickly as possible once this procedure has been completed.

Immunisation and Screening

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is his intention to support general practitioners' efforts to meet immunisation and screening targets by conducting a public information and education campaign.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The Department is preparing, with the Health Education Authority, an information and education campaign on immunisation. We hope that this will be launched in 1990 and will be aimed both at professionals and the public.

The improvements which we have asked health authorities to make to their cervical cancer screening programmes will lead to a more systematic approach to screening and increased coverage of the population. The routine invitations generated by the call and recall programme will inform women of the need for regular screening. In addition, the Health Education Authority has produced a leaflet, "The Cervical Smear Test: Why You Need It", which health authorities and family practitioner committees can enclose with invitation letters to women, and has issued guidelines on the points which should be covered in the invitation letter. We take every opportunity to encourage representatives of women's organisations to inform their members about the value of both the cervical and breast screening programmes.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers (Absenteeism)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the latest figures for absenteeism among teachers by local education authority and sector.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The employment and deployment of teachers is a matter for LEAs. This information is not collected by the Department.

Physical Education Curriculum Group

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will immediately reconvene the physical education curriculum group.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State announced in January 1989 that arrangements for considering the content of guidelines for physical education in the national curriculum would be set up by June 1990. I hope to be able to announce shortly the form these arrangements will take and the associated timetable.

School Playing Fields

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to rescind rule 909 and halt the sale of school playing fields.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The law places upon education authorities a duty to provide school playing fields in accordance with standards prescribed by the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981, Statutory Instrument No. 909. Local education authorities are free to dispose of any surplus if they wish, and this is not a matter in which my hon. Friend can intervene.

Earthquakes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what research is being carried out into earthquakes occurring in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will list by location and date the number of earthquakes that have been recorded during the last 10 years; what damage was recorded; on what seismographic scale; and what research is being carried out by his Department into earthquakes.

Mr. Jackson: Research into earthquakes in the United Kingdom is carried out by the British Geological Survey, which is funded from the Department's grant to the Natural Environment Research Council. Specialist scientists, based at over 80 sites in the country, monitor current seismic activity. They also research historical records to identify the recurrence rate of the larger earthquakes.

The following list sets out the information requested for all earthquakes recorded in the United Kingdom over the last 10 years, having a magnitude of 2·5 or more on the Richter scale.

United Kingdom earthquakes
1979 to August 1989
(Richter magnitudes 2·5 and over)

Date	*HrMnSecs*	*Latitude*	*Longitude*	*Depth (km)*	*Richter magnitude*	*Locality*	*Effects*
19 February 1979	113932·7	56·25	−3·73	6·0	3·2	Ochil Hills	Minor damage, plaster cracks.
7 October 1979	0526	53·05	−1·24	—	2·5	Mansfield	Felt, no damage.
7 October 1979	0812	53·05	−1·24	—	3·1	Mansfield	Moderate shaking, no damage.
9 October 1979	1010	53·05	−1·24	—	3·0	Mansfield	Moderate shaking, no damage.
26 December 1979	035707·3	55·05	−2·86	5·0	4·8	Longtown	Damage to chimneys, roof tiles.
30 December 1979	205301·4	57·08	−5·23	—	2·9	Kintail	—
1 January 1980	050547·0	55·01	−2·83	9·0	4·1	Longtown	Minor damage, plaster cracks.
1 January 1980	110503·0	56·25	−3·73	2·0	3·0	Ochil Hills	—
12 January 1980	084954·4	51·67	−3·00	0·0	3·0	Cwmbran	Felt, no damage.
25 January 1980	150129·9	55·06	−2·84	4·0	2·7	Longtown	Moderate shaking, no damage.
28 January 1980	132230·0	55·11	−2·90	2·0	2·6	Longtown	—
7 May 1980	151203·3	55·02	−2·84	7·0	3·2	Longtown	Moderate shaking, no damage.
11 June 1980	072227·3	58·78	0·95	26·0	3·2	North Sea	—
7 July 1980	235719·1	53·1	−2·2	—	2·7	Talke area	Felt, no damage.
8 July 1980	000248·4	53·1	−2·2	—	3·1	Talke area	Felt, no damage.
17 July 1980	0904	53·1	−2·2	—	2·5	Stoke area	—
19 July 1980	0533	53·1	−2·2	—	2·7	Stoke area	—
30 July 1980	153344·0	55·07	−2·84	1·0	2·5	Longtown	—
7 August 1980	0022	53·1	−2·2	—	3·0	Stoke Coalfield	

Date	*HrMnSecs*	*Latitude*	*Longitude*	*Depth (km)*	*Richter magnitude*	*Locality*	*Effects*
14 August 1980	2051	53·1	−2·2	—	2·6	Stoke Coalfield	
9 November 1980	001101·5	53·10	−2·28	—	3·2	Talke area	Felt, no damage.
9 November 1980	112833·0	53·06	−2·28	5·0	2·5	Talke area	Felt, no damage.
1 December 1980	142051·9	56·25	−3·74	5·0	2·6	Ochil Hills	
13 December 1980	103101·4	55·02	−2·86	6·0	3·5	Longtown	Minor damage, plaster cracks.
1 January 1981	212126·2	57·47	−0·18	15·0	3·2	North Sea	
25 February 1981	203256·8	50·11	−5·17	5·0	3·5	Constantine	
6 April 1981	1752	53·08	−2·26	3·0	2·5	Talke area	
24 May 1981	0004	53·03	−2·19	0·0	3·1	Stoke Coalfield	
2 June 1981	1102	53·03	−1·14	—	2·7	Nottingham	Felt, no damage.
9 June 1981	184411·3	57·12	−5·50	—	2·6	Kintail	
12 June 1981	073642·7	50·38	−4·33	8·0	2·5	Liskeard	
5 August 1981	203409·6	53·08	−2·27	4·0	2·8	Talke area	
18 October 1981	160839·2	54·69	−1·66	—	2·5	Bishop Aukland	
27 October 1981	051344·1	54·15	0·30	23·7	3·7	Flamborough Head	Felt, no damage.
9 November 1981	0310	51·65	−2·98	—	2·7	Cwmbran	Felt, no damage.
27 December 1981	153624·7	59·21	−2·36	12·0	2·5	Off Cape Wrath	
4 April 1982	214346·3	51·99	−3·47	5·0	2·6	Pont-Faen, Powys	
9 April 1982	143604·3	53·06	−2·22	0·0	2·7	Stoke-on-Trent	Felt, no damage.
19 July 1982	133352·2	51·15	−1·06	1·4	3·0	Near Basingstoke, Hants	Moderate shaking, no damage.
9 August 1982	112505·8	53·00	−3·94	8·4	2·6	Nr Ffestiniog, Gwynedd	Felt, no damage.
27 October 1982	235733·6	57·23	−5·46	2·5	3·0	Ratagan forest	Moderate shaking, no damage.
28 November 1983	024613·4	53·55	−2·65	6·9	2·6	Wigan, Manchester	—
16 February 1984	101546·4	55·10	−3·59	3·0	2·6	Dumfries, Dumfries and Galloway	Moderate shaking, no damage.
22 March 1984	120956·5	53·30	−0·95	25·8	3·2	East Retford, Notts	Felt, no damage.
3 April 1984	142713·2	50·61	−2·47	12·9	3·1	Nr Weymouth, Dorset	—
15 April 1984	210534·9	52·41	−3·25	12·7	3·3	Felindre, Powys	Minor damage, plaster cracks.
30 May 1984	025358·7	52·94	−1·13	15·0	3·1	Nottingham	Minor damage, plaster cracks.
4 June 1984	141659·5	53·79	−0·90	10·4	3·0	Selby, N Yorks	—
19 July 1984	065613·6	52·98	−4·43	18·0	5·4	Lleyn peninsula NW Wales	Damage to chimneys, roof tiles.
19 July 1984	094208·4	52·97	−4·16	20·0	2·9	Lleyn peninsula NW Wales	Moderate shaking, no damage.
19 July 1984	205318·8	52·96	−4·22	20·0	2·5	Lleyn peninsula NW Wales	Moderate shaking, no damage.
20 July 1984	152613·1	52·97	−4·23	20·0	2·5	Lleyn peninsula NW Wales	Moderate shaking, no damage.
23 July 1984	082927·4	52·99	−4·42	15·4	2·8	Lleyn peninsula NW Wales	Moderate shaking, no damage.
29 July 1984	201757·3	52·98	−4·44	21·2	4·0	Lleyn peninsula NW Wales	Moderate shaking, no damage.
29 July 1984	204522·1	52·96	−4·38	20·2	2·5	Lleyn peninsula NW Wales	Moderate shaking, no damage.
30 July 1984	151552·1	52·97	−4·38	20·0	2·8	Lleyn peninsula NW Wales	Felt, no damage.
2 August 1984	011150·3	59·76	1·79	5·4	2·8	North Sea	—
4 August 1984	034411·8	52·97	−4·40	24·1	2·7	Lleyn Peninsula, North West Wales	Moderate shaking, no damage.
6 August 1984	072220·7	52·95	−4·33	24·7	3·6	Lleyn Peninsula, North West Wales	Moderate shaking, no damage.
18 August 1984	113727·7	52·96	−4·38	21·0	4·3	Lleyn Peninsula, North West Wales	Moderate shaking, no damage.
13 October 1984	132719·5	53·74	−2·38	14·0	3·2	Accrington, Lancashire	Moderate shaking, no damage.
15 April 1985	190209·5	51·43	1·56	1·5	3·0	Offshore Ramsgate	—
1 June 1985	224745·2	53·59	−0·39	8·7	2·6	Near Scunthorpe	—
21 August 1985	032409·3	51·94	−3·23	15·4	2·5	Black mountains, Powys	—
16 September 1985	205014·3	56·04	−4·91	6·1	3·5	Ardentinny, Strathclyde	Minor damage, plaster cracks.
16 November 1985	191115·6	53·82	−2·07	18·7	2·6	Hebden bridge, West Yorkshire	Moderate shaking, no damage.
18 November 1985	134246·8	52·02	−0·97	11·1	2·5	Buckingham, Buckinghamshire	—
1 December 1985	171851·9	57·03	−5·77	4·2	3·7	Near Mallaig, Highland	Moderate shaking, no damage.
2 December 1985	174032·7	51·28	−0·82	4·4	2·7	Fleet, Hampshire	—
4 January 1986	003430·2	57·76	−5·56	4·2	2·5	Poolewe, Highland	Moderate shaking, no damage.
30 January 1986	103256·8	57·00	−5·46	11·8	3·0	Loch Nevis, Highland	Felt, no damage.

Date	HrMnSecs	Latitude	Longitude	Depth (km)	Richter magnitude	Locality	Effects
15 April 1986	163448·0	52·95	−4·41	23·0	2·7	Lleyn	Aftershock Felt, no damage.
21 August 1986	112710·1	55·85	−3·13	0·1	2·5	Rosewell, Lothian	Moderate shaking, no damage.
2 September 1986	144759·5	50·11	−5·17	6·2	2·9	Constantine, Cornwall	Minor damage, plaster cracks.
29 September 1986	013336·1	56·46	−5·50	22·4	4·2	Oban, Strathclyde	Minor damage, plaster cracks
9 October 1986	125527·3	55·85	−3·13	0·2	2·8	Rosewell, Lothian	Moderate shaking, no damage
26 December 1986	205008·0	51·90	−1·34	23·5	2·9	Oxford	
23 February 1987	020837·7	52·94	−2·43	10·5	2·6	Market Drayton, Shropshire	
12 March 1987	092859·0	52·48	−2·44	14·0	2·5	Bridgnorth, Shropshire	
20 April 1987	051852·0	59·57	1·78	10·6	2·5	North Sea	
1 May 1987	060952·1	52·74	−0·82	10·5	2·7	Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire	Moderate shaking, no damage
3 May 1987	224820·8	56·68	−6·24	11·3	2·5	Mull, Highland	
4 October 1987	022504·0	58·37	1·49	2·4	2·9	North Sea	
4 October 1987	125828·3	57·98	−5·20	0·4	3·0	Ullapool, Highland	Moderate shaking, no damage.
4 October 1987	172816·4	57·97	−5·19	0·5	3·0	Ullapool, Highland	Moderate shaking, no damage.
17 October 1987	074438·8	57·93	−5·14	2·0	2·9	Ullapool, Highland	Felt, no damage.
17 October 1987	095407·6	57·96	−5·19	4·8	2·5	Ullapool, Highland	Felt, no damage.
31 October 1987	032934·9	57·94	−5·12	0·6	2·5	Ullapool, Highland	
20 November 1987	030739·3	56·71	−5·71	0·5	2·6	Ardnamurchan, Highland	Felt, no damage.
5 December 1987	102258·5	53·49	−1·98	8·8	2·6	Manchester	Moderate shaking, no damage.
21 January 1988	152807·8	58·41	1·49	0·6	3·0	North Sea	
23 May 1988	061334·5	56·63	−4·45	8·8	2·6	Rannoch Moor, Tayside	
3 August 1988	1·4824·1	52·95	1·78	5·0	2·9	Southern North Sea	
8 August 1988	195931·9	63·68	2·44	20·0	5·6	Northern North Sea	Felt on Shetland and Norway
12 September 1988	142310·6	54·41	−2·98	15·0	3·2	Ambleside, Cumbria	Minor damage, plaster cracks.
12 September 1988	142329·3	54·40	−3·01	7·6	3·0	Ambleside, Cumbria	Minor damage, plaster cracks.
23 October 1988	030155·1	51·24	−3·17	17·1	2·8	Bridgwater, Somerset	
13 November 1988	232050·9	59·80	−0·46	29·2	2·9	East of Shetland	Felt, no damage.
10 December 1988	100918·8	56·09	−5·19	4·2	2·7	Loch Fyne, Strathclyde	

1989: None exceeding 2·5 Richter to date

Qualified Teacher Status (Applications)

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications for the award of qualified teacher status had been received by the Department of Education and Science under form P6 (5) at 30 September from European Community nationals; how many applications have been approved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: At 30 September, 88 applications for the award of qualified teacher status from European Community nationals had been received. All were approved.

Lecturers

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many lecturers in maintained further education are female hourly paid part-time employees.

Mr. Jackson: Information held centrally provides only the full-time equivalent of part-time further education lecturers (not their number), nor are there separate figures for men and women. However, the total full-time equivalents of hourly paid part-time lecturers employed by local education authorities in England in January 1989 was 20,243.

PCFC Budget

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the publicly funded PCFC recurrent budget for 1989-90 is allocated at institutional level to the gross salaries, subsidised housing and fringe benefits of the chief executives of each higher education corporation, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: As I told the hon. Member in reply to his question of 22 May at column 369, the Department collects information on the gross salaries of individual directors and principals of PCFC sector institutions for the purposes of the teachers' superannuation scheme, but the release of this information would be incompatible with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1984. Information on subsidised housing and other fringe benefits for the directors and principals is not collected centrally.

Principals (Salaries)

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the gross salaries of the principals of each of the public sector higher education institutions to incorporation on 1 April.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 22 May 1989 at column 369.

Teachers

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications for the award of licensed teachers under form P6(1) had been received by the Department of Education and Science at 30 September; from whom the applications had been received; and how many have been granted.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Seven applications for licences had been received at 30 September. All were from Hertfordshire local education authority and all were granted.

Lower Attaining Pupils Programme

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what account he has taken of Her Majesty's inspector's observations about the effective use of his Department's expenditure as recorded in paragraph 71 of Her Majesty's inspector's report "The Lower Attaining Pupils Programme 1982-88"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend welcomes Her Majesty's inspectorate's report on the lower attaining pupils programme (LAPP). He attaches great importance to the monitoring and evaluation of the programmes within his Department's remit, and has noted carefully the observations made by the inspectorate about the monitoring of the LAPP. The lessons learnt from that programme are reflected in the procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of his current specific grant programmes, education support grants and the LEA training grants scheme.

Book Provision

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding further education book provision; and if he will make a statement on provision for the next academic year.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend is aware of representations made by the Publishers Association specifically about book provision in further education. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced proposals for the distribution of local authority total standard spending for 1990-91 on 6 November. The education share of that total allows for increased spending on books and equipment in further education relative to that assumed in the comparable total for 1989-90. The actual deployment of education funding is, however, for individual LEAs and colleges to determine. The introduction of local management of colleges under the Education Reform Act will give colleges greater discretion to deploy available resources in line with their own priorities, and so to increase spending on books where they judge that appropriate.

Schools (Capital Allocations)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* tables showing *(a)* the total amount bid for schools' capital expenditure by local education authorities, *(b)* the total amount allocated by his Department, and *(c)* the percentage of *(b)* over *(a)*, broken down by (i) county and voluntary controlled schools, (ii) voluntary aided schools and (iii) all maintained schools, for each financial year from 1974-75, and in constant and current prices, and showing the percentage of each year's allocation represented by (1) basic needs and (2) reorganisations;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* tables showing the capital allocation for each local education authority in England made by his Department for capital expenditure for *(a)* county and voluntary controlled schools, *(b)* voluntary aided schools and *(c)* all maintained schools, the amount of the bid in respect of each such allocation, and the percentage which each allocation bears to its respective bid, in current prices and in constant prices for each year from 1984-85 to 1989-90.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* Not all the information is available in the form requested. Each year my Department announces the level of allocations to LEAs for capital expenditure on schools and colleges. Allocations for county and voluntary controlled schools are unhypothecated which means that specific amounts for basic need or school reorganisations are not indicated. It is therefore for each LEA to decide how its allocation should be used and LEAs can also look to receipts and to other flexibility available under the capital control system when determining their level of expenditure on education. For the years before 1984-85 the Department does not hold separate figures in respect of allocations for schools, but only combined figures for schools and further and higher education. Table A therefore shows LEA plans for expenditure on schools and colleges, the allocations given and the percentage which each allocation bears to the respective plans for the years 1981-82 to 1989-90. Prior to 1981-82, local education authorities did not receive block allocations, but were notified annually in the context of a rolling programme, of a limit on the value of building starts in the following year. The Department provides grant-aid for capital projects undertaken by the governors of voluntary aided schools, and table B shows LEA plans for such expenditure and the allocation given. Since the allocations include sums for committed expenditure on projects from earlier years, in addition to projects which figure in LEAs' and governors' plans, a percentage comparison of the two is misleading.

Following are the tables:

Table A

Local authority capital plans and allocations

Education capital allocation and plans at current and constant prices 1981-82 to 1989-90

1981-82

Local education authority	*Capital plans*		*Capital allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Avon	—	—	2,712	3,654
Barking	—	—	2,661	3,585
Barnet	—	—	5,102	6,874
Barnsley	—	—	640	862
Bedfordshire	—	—	5,011	6,751
Berkshire	—	—	4,091	5,512
Bexley	—	—	932	1,256
Birmingham	—	—	7,453	10,041
Bolton	—	—	3,095	4,170
Bradford	—	—	5,349	7,207
Brent	—	—	1,176	1,584
Bromley	—	—	1,570	2,115
Buckinghamshire	—	—	7,889	10,629
Bury	—	—	1,707	2,300
Calderdale	—	—	1,341	1,807
Cambridgeshire	—	—	6,527	8,794
Cheshire	—	—	8,084	10,892
Cleveland	—	—	9,458	12,743
Cornwall	—	—	5,472	7,372
Coventry	—	—	3,755	5,059
Croydon	—	—	581	783
Cumbria	—	—	2,100	2,829
Derbyshire	—	—	8,751	11,790
Devon	—	—	9,287	12,512
Doncaster	—	—	1,761	2,373
Dorset	—	—	5,673	7,643
Dudley	—	—	2,567	3,459
Durham	—	—	2,527	3,405
Ealing	—	—	1,465	1,974
East Sussex	—	—	5,170	6,966
Enfield	—	—	1,077	1,451
Essex	—	—	10,492	14,136
Gateshead	—	—	682	919
Gloucestershire	—	—	3,187	4,294
Hampshire	—	—	9,430	12,705
Haringey	—	—	2,403	3,238
Harrow	—	—	543	732
Havering	—	—	373	503
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	3,319	4,472
Hertfordshire	—	—	4,527	6,099

Local education authority	*Capital plans*		*Capital allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Hillingdon	—	—	1,719	2,316
Hounslow	—	—	1,983	2,672
Humberside	—	—	5,980	8,057
ILEA	—	—	13,561	18,271
Isle of Wight	—	—	853	1,149
Isles of Scilly	—	—	0	0
Kent	—	—	8,816	11,878
Kingston-upon-Thames	—	—	1,315	1,772
Kirklees	—	—	5,639	7,597
Knowsley	—	—	653	880
Lancashire	—	—	11,246	15,152
Leeds	—	—	7,354	9,908
Leicestershire	—	—	9,180	12,368
Lincolnshire	—	—	2,895	3,900
Liverpool	—	—	5,967	8,039
Manchester	—	—	4,822	6,497
Merton	—	—	712	959
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	—	—	1,998	2,692
Newham	—	—	3,163	4,262
Norfolk	—	—	3,876	5,222
North Tyneside	—	—	555	748
North Yorkshire	—	—	3,229	4,350
Northamptonshire	—	—	7,028	9,469
Northumberland	—	—	3,779	5,091
Nottinghamshire	—	—	6,756	9,102
Oldham	—	—	1,289	1,737
Oxfordshire	—	—	3,185	4,291
Redbridge	—	—	545	734
Richmond	—	—	1,320	1,778
Rochdale	—	—	1,851	2,494
Rotherham	—	—	1,021	1,376
Salford	—	—	1,651	2,224
Sandwell	—	—	1,621	2,184
Sefton	—	—	1,250	1,684
Sheffield	—	—	3,245	4,372
Shropshire	—	—	3,573	4,814
Solihull	—	—	199	268
Somerset	—	—	2,981	4,016
South Tyneside	—	—	1,870	2,519
St. Helens	—	—	3,652	4,920
Staffordshire	—	—	11,912	16,049
Stockport	—	—	1,580	2,129
Suffolk	—	—	5,646	7,607
Sunderland	—	—	2,568	3,460
Surrey	—	—	3,227	4,348
Sutton	—	—	196	264
Tameside	—	—	2,118	2,854
Trafford	—	—	586	790
Wakefield	—	—	4,311	5,808
Walsall	—	—	4,620	6,225
Waltham Forest	—	—	1,710	2,304
Warwickshire	—	—	1,366	1,840
West Sussex	—	—	2,315	3,119
Wigan	—	—	3,505	4,722
Wiltshire	—	—	2,152	2,899
Wirral	—	—	1,541	2,076
Wolverhampton	—	—	3,123	4,208

1982—83

	Capital plans		*Capital allocations*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Avon	—	—	4,296	5,405
Barking	—	—	2,391	3,008
Barnet	2	—	2,214	2,786
Barnsley	—	—	402	506
Bedfordshire	—	—	4,142	5,212
Berkshire	—	—	4,875	6,134
Bexley	—	—	679	854
Birmingham	—	—	5,976	7,519
Bolton	—	—	2,867	3,607
Bradford	—	—	4,447	5,595
Brent	—	—	836	1,052
Bromley	—	—	947	1,192

	Capital plans		*Capital allocations*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Buckinghamshire	—	—	7,104	8,938
Bury	—	—	638	803
Calderdale	—	—	999	1,257
Cambridgeshire	—	—	5,462	6,872
Cheshire	—	—	6,185	7,782
Cleveland	—	—	5,669	7,133
Cornwall	—	—	5,124	6,447
Coventry	—	—	3,222	4,054
Croydon	—	—	358	450
Cumbria	—	—	1,374	1,729
Derbyshire	—	—	8,490	10,682
Devon	—	—	7,757	9,760
Doncaster	—	—	1,512	1,902
Dorset	—	—	5,578	7,018
Dudley	—	—	2,361	2,971
Durham	—	—	2,037	2,563
Ealing	—	—	1,817	2,286
East Sussex	—	—	4,965	6,247
Enfield	—	—	457	575
Essex	—	—	7,237	9,105
Gateshead	—	—	501	630
Gloucerstershire	—	—	2,582	3,249
Hampshire	—	—	9,617	12,100
Haringey	—	—	2,071	2,606
Harrow	—	—	337	424
Havering	—	—	390	491
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	2,346	2,952
Hertfordshire	—	—	3,232	4,067
Hillingdon	—	—	1,685	2,120
Hounslow	—	—	1,987	2,500
Humberside	—	—	6,761	8,507
ILEA	—	—	12,444	15,657
Isle of Wight	—	—	475	598
Isles of Scilly	—	—	0	0
Kent	—	—	5,751	7,236
Kingston-upon-Thames	—	—	1,982	2,494
Kirklees	—	—	4,0146	5,091
Knowsley	—	—	420	528
Lancashire	—	—	8,308	10,453
Leeds	—	—	4,826	6,072
Leicestershire	—	—	6,430	8,090
Lincolnshire	—	—	3,799	4,780
Liverpool	—	—	3,462	4,356
Manchester	—	—	3,867	4,866
Merton	—	—	386	486
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	—	—	2,092	2,632
Newham	—	—	2,501	3,147
Norfolk	—	—	5,196	6,538
North Tyneside	—	—	868	1,092
North Yorkshire	—	—	2,524	3,176
Northamptonshire	—	—	5,085	6,398
Northumberland	—	—	2,291	2,883
Nottinghamshire	—	—	4,903	6,169
Oldham	—	—	852	1,072
Oxfordshire	—	—	4,273	5,376
Redbridge	—	—	912	1,148
Richmond	—	—	373	469
Rochdale	—	—	1,853	2,331
Rotherham	—	—	406	511
Salford	—	—	1,369	1,723
Sandwell	—	—	1,651	2,077
Sefton	—	—	379	477
Sheffield	—	—	2,667	3,356
Shropshire	—	—	3,132	3,941
Solihul	—	—	371	467
Somerset	—	—	1,517	1,909
South Tyneside	—	—	1,668	2,099
St. Helens	—	—	3,360	4,228
Staffordshire	—	—	8,428	10,604
Stockport	—	—	1,384	1,741
Suffolk	—	—	3,607	4,538
Sunderland	—	—	2,780	3,498
Surrey	—	—	3,884	4,887
Sutton	—	—	157	198
Tameside	—	—	1,526	1,920
Trafford	—	—	404	508

	Capital plans		*Capital allocations*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Wakefield	—	—	2,711	3,411
Walsall	—	—	3,019	3,799
Waltham Forest	—	—	1,694	2,131
Warwickshire	—	—	1,367	1,720
West Sussex	—	—	2,306	2,901
Wigan	—	—	2,624	3,302
Wiltshire	—	—	2,978	3,747
Wirral	—	—	656	825
Wolverhampton	—	—	2,471	3,109

1983-84

Local education authority	*Capital plans*		*Capital allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Avon	—	—	5,853	7,038
Barking	—	—	2,928	3,521
Barnet	[1]—	—	1,538	1,849
Barnsley	—	—	384	462
Bedfordshire	—	—	2,437	2,931
Berkshire	—	—	8,826	10,613
Bexley	—	—	1,633	1,964
Birmingham	—	—	5,220	6,277
Bolton	—	—	2,047	2,462
Bradford	—	—	6,969	8,380
Brent	—	—	1,180	1,419
Bromley	—	—	841	1,011
Buckinghamshire	—	—	6,605	7,943
Bury	—	—	982	1,181
Calderdale	—	—	1,293	1,555
Cambridgeshire	—	—	6,370	7,660
Cheshire	—	—	8,213	9,876
Cleveland	—	—	4,009	4,821
Cornwall	—	—	5,548	6,672
Coventry	—	—	3,478	4,182
Croydon	—	—	800	962
Cumbria	—	—	2,618	3,148
Derbyshire	—	—	6,849	8,236
Devon	—	—	4,817	5,793
Doncaster	—	—	1,386	1,667
Dorset	—	—	4,736	5,695
Dudley	—	—	3,950	4,750
Durham	—	—	1,711	2,058
Ealing	—	—	693	833
East Sussex	—	—	5,567	6,694
Enfield	—	—	311	374
Essex	—	—	7,357	8,847
Gateshead	—	—	1,003	1,206
Gloucestershire	—	—	2,974	3,576
Hampshire	—	—	10,638	12,792
Haringey	—	—	1,597	1,920
Harrow	—	—	305	367
Havering	—	—	299	360
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	1,504	1,809
Hertfordshire	—	—	5,473	6,581
Hillingdon	—	—	896	1,077
Hounslow	—	—	2,611	3,140
Humberside	—	—	7,133	8,578
ILEA	—	—	9,683	11,644
Isle of Wight	—	—	541	651
Isles of Scilly	—	—	0	0
Kent	—	—	4,821	5,797
Kingston-upon-Thames	—	—	2,270	2,730
Kirklees	—	—	4,102	4,933
Knowsley	—	—	665	800
Lancashire	—	—	11,069	13,311
Leeds	—	—	3,381	4,066
Leicestershire	—	—	5,234	6,294
Lincolnshire	—	—	3,442	4,139
Liverpool	—	—	3,768	4,531
Manchester	—	—	4,349	5,230
Merton	—	—	408	491
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	—	—	3,134	3,769
Newham	—	—	2,084	2,506
Norfolk	—	—	5,736	6,898

Local education authority	*Capital plans* *Current prices*	*Capital plans* *Constant prices*	*Capital allocation* *Current prices*	*Capital allocation* *Constant prices*
North Tyneside	—	—	606	729
North Yorkshire	—	—	2,703	3,250
Northamptonshire	—	—	3,916	4,709
Northumberland	—	—	1,481	1,781
Nottinghamshire	—	—	2,493	2,998
Oldham	—	—	780	938
Oxfordshire	—	—	4,014	4,827
Redbridge	—	—	872	1,049
Richmond	—	—	557	670
Rochdale	—	—	1,174	1,412
Rotherham	—	—	515	619
Salford	—	—	1,038	1,248
Sandwell	—	—	1,436	1,727
Sefton	—	—	578	695
Sheffield	—	—	3,439	4,135
Shropshire	—	—	2,727	3,279
Solihull	—	—	356	428
Somerset	—	—	3,127	3,760
South Tyneside	—	—	1,181	1,420
St. Helens	—	—	2,384	2,867
Staffordshire	—	—	7,676	9,231
Stockport	—	—	1,067	1,283
Suffolk	—	—	3,752	4,512
Sunderland	—	—	2,927	3,520
Surrey	—	—	3,733	4,489
Sutton	—	—	266	320
Tameside	—	—	1,871	2,250
Trafford	—	—	693	833
Wakefield	—	—	2,044	2,458
Walsall	—	—	1,340	1,611
Waltham Forest	—	—	1,624	1,953
Warwickshire	—	—	1,991	2,394
West Sussex	—	—	3,705	4,455
Wigan	—	—	2,518	3,028
Wiltshire	—	—	3,136	3,771
Wirral	—	—	2,403	2,890
Wolverhampton	—	—	2,269	2,729

1984-85

	Capital plans *(current prices)*	*Capital plans* *(constant prices)*	*Capital allocation* *(current prices)*	*Capital allocation* *(constant prices)*	*Inital Allocation as a per cent. of plans*
Avon	11,121	12,744	5,270	6,039	47
Barking	695	796	1,442	1,652	207
Barnet	2,939	3,368	2,453	2,811	83
Barnsley	864	990	401	460	46
Bedfordshire	4,534	5,195	2,439	2,795	54
Berkshire	10,238	11,732	8,227	9,427	80
Bexley	1,399	1,603	845	968	60
Birmingham	9,533	10,924	6,484	7,430	68
Bolton	2,229	2,554	1,536	1,760	69
Bradford	18,220	20,878	6,707	7,686	37
Brent	2,576	2,952	1,678	1,923	65
Bromley	3,777	4,328	492	564	13
Buckinghamshire	18,602	21,316	6,854	7,854	37
Bury	1,824	2,090	1,030	1,180	56
Calderdale	3,408	3,905	1,090	1,249	32
Cambridgeshire	6,655	7,626	5,039	5,774	76
Cheshire	10,594	12,140	7,366	8,441	70
Cleveland	7,463	8,552	3,626	4,155	49
Cornwall	6,943	7,956	4,377	5,016	63
Coventry	5,188	5,945	2,919	3,345	56
Croydon	1,749	2,004	1,227	1,406	70
Cumbria	8,026	9,197	3,982	4,563	50
Derbyshire	9,885	11,327	6,546	7,501	66
Devon	9,087	10,413	7,832	8,975	86
Doncaster	1,778	2,037	1,226	1,405	69
Dorset	8,744	10,020	5,385	6,171	62
Dudley	5,460	6,257	3,516	4,029	64
Durham	4,271	4,894	2,054	2,354	48
Ealing	2,721	3,118	1,347	1,544	50
East Sussex	10,389	11,905	4,601	5,272	44
Enfield	901	1,032	576	660	64
Essex	17,675	20,254	6,604	7,567	37

	Capital plans		Capital allocation		Inital
	(current prices)	(constant prices)	(current prices)	(constant prices)	Allocation as a per cent. of plans
Gateshead	3,934	4,508	572	655	15
Gloucestershire	6,416	7,352	2,772	3,176	43
Hampshire	20,652	23,665	9,666	11,076	47
Haringey	2,640	3,025	1,090	1,249	41
Harrow	2,785	3,191	523	599	19
Havering	894	1,024	216	248	24
Hereford and Worcester	3,378	3,871	1,669	1,912	49
Hertfordshire	5,912	6,775	5,479	6,278	93
Hillingdon	4,362	4,998	1,068	1,224	24
Hounslow	4,987	5,715	3,063	3,510	61
Humberside	11,677	13,381	6,883	7,887	59
ILEA	22,045	25,261	9,703	11,119	44
Isle of Wight	1,445	1,656	948	1,086	66
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	8,716	9,988	4,347	4,981	50
Kingston-upon-Thames	2,673	3,063	1,330	1,524	50
Kirklees	6,746	7,730	3,753	4,301	56
Knowsley	1,174	1,345	895	1,026	76
Lancashire	13,646	15,637	11,055	12,668	81
Leeds	5,184	5,940	2,899	3,322	56
Leicestershire	8,229	9,430	7,074	8,106	86
Lincolnshire	9,022	10,338	4,455	5,105	49
Liverpool	6,973	7,990	4,243	4,862	61
Manchester	11,180	12,811	6,997	8,018	63
Merton	2,098	2,404	993	1,138	47
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	3,600	4,125	2,265	2,595	63
Newham	4,232	4,849	2,039	2,336	48
Norfolk	7,771	8905	4,261	4,883	55
North Tyneside	3,673	4,209	721	826	20
North Yorkshire	11,725	13,436	5,675	6,503	48
Northamptonshire	7,059	8,089	4,179	4,789	59
Northumberland	2,580	2,956	1,002	1,148	39
Nottinghamshire	4,376	5,014	2,666	3,055	61
Oldham	1,778	2,037	968	1,109	54
Oxfordshire	4,194	4,806	3,245	3,718	77
Redbridge	1,971	2,259	1,006	1,153	51
Richmond	2,106	2,413	735	842	35
Rochdale	3,805	4,360	1,452	1,664	38
Rotherham	1,182	1,354	471	540	40
Salford	2,230	2,555	822	942	37
Sandwell	3,453	3,957	1,705	1,954	49
Sefton	2,334	2,675	824	944	35
Sheffield	5,035	5,770	3,007	3,446	60
Shropshire	4,359	4,995	2,072	2,374	48
Solihull	708	811	723	828	102
Somerset	3,367	3,858	2,559	2,932	76
South Tyneside	3,765	4,314	1,280	1,467	34
St. Helens	3,031	3,473	2,111	2,419	70
Staffordshire	15,277	17,506	10,691	12,251	70
Stockport	1,540	1,765	1,770	2,028	115
Suffolk	5,554	6,364	4,348	4,982	78
Sunderland	4,354	4,989	2,862	3,280	66
Surrey	8,416	9,644	4,340	4,973	52
Sutton	1,011	1,159	451	517	45
Tameside	3,116	3,571	1,690	1,937	54
Trafford	1,631	1,869	1,027	1,177	63
Wakefield	3,993	4,576	1,596	1,829	40
Walsall	4,116	4,717	1,026	1,176	25
Waltham Forest	2,613	2,994	889	1,019	34
Warwickshire	2,781	3,187	1,428	1,636	51
West Sussex	6,544	7,499	5,027	5,760	77
Wigan	3,041	3,485	2,004	2,296	66
Wiltshire	6,771	7,759	3,810	4,366	56
Wirral	4,114	4,714	2,117	2,426	51
Wolverhampton	3,890	4,458	2,375	2,722	61

1985-86

	Capital plans		*Capital allocation*		
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*	*Initial allocation as a percentage of plans*
Avon	10,965	11,910	3,951	4,292	36
Barking	1,579	1,715	947	1,029	60
Barnet	5,825	6,327	2,612	2,837	45
Barnsley	1,226	1,332	1,090	1,184	89
Bedfordshire	5,427	5,895	1,625	1,765	30
Berkshire	11,584	12,582	7,490	8,136	65
Bexley	1,396	1,516	504	547	36
Birmingham	6,569	7,135	3,695	4,013	56
Bolton	1,317	1,431	570	619	43
Bradford	13,383	14,536	8,269	8,982	62
Brent	4,619	5,017	891	968	19
Bromley	4,518	4,907	628	682	14
Buckinghamshire	12,649	13,739	5,978	6,493	47
Bury	1,507	1,637	803	872	53
Calderdale	2,305	2,504	830	902	36
Cambridgeshire	6,506	7,067	4,387	4,765	67
Cheshire	9,518	10,338	5,005	5,436	53
Cleveland	7,482	8,127	4,493	4,880	60
Cornwall	4,523	4,913	3,319	3,605	73
Coventry	7,419	8,058	3,094	3,361	42
Croydon	3,626	3,939	2,170	2,357	60
Cumbria	5,254	5,707	3,803	4,131	72
Derbyshire	10,794	11,724	7,239	7,863	67
Devon	11,046	11,998	6,405	6,957	58
Doncaster	1,353	1,470	424	461	31
Dorset	8,666	9,413	5,265	5,719	61
Dudley	7,016	7,621	2,671	2,901	38
Durham	6,415	6,968	2,995	3,253	47
Ealing	3,352	3,641	2,451	2,662	73
East Sussex	7,993	8,682	4,870	5,290	61
Enfield	1,375	1,494	966	1,049	70
Essex	28,705	31,179	11,679	12,686	41
Gateshead	3,714	4,034	1,122	1,219	30
Gloucestershire	7,261	7,887	4,652	5,053	64
Hampshire	23,877	25,935	11,844	12,865	50
Haringey	3,644	3,958	895	972	25
Harrow	3,007	3,266	299	325	10
Havering	1,013	1,100	334	363	33
Hereford and Worcester	2,688	2,920	1,480	1,608	55
Hertfordshire	8,417	9,142	5,960	6,474	71
Hillingdon	2,368	2,572	521	566	22
Hounslow	4,638	5,038	1,566	1,701	34
Humberside	7,400	8,038	4,138	4,495	56
ILEA	27,686	30,072	15,080	16,380	54
Isle of Wight	2,125	2,308	1,230	1,336	58
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	9,481	10,298	5,209	5,658	55
Kingston-upon-Thames	4,070	4,421	2,131	2,315	52
Kirklees	6,955	7,554	3,304	3,589	48
Knowsley	1,986	2,157	973	1,057	49
Lancashire	20,050	21,778	15,156	16,462	76
Leeds	9,301	10,103	3,325	3,612	36
Leicestershire	12,299	13,359	6,718	7,297	55
Lincolnshire	8,834	9,595	3,532	3,836	40
Liverpool	8,461	9,190	4,870	5,290	58
Manchester	17,545	19.057	7,450	8,092	42
Merton	4,226	4,590	2,277	2,473	54
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	3,948	4,288	1,716	1,864	43
Newham	7,672	8,333	2,558	2,778	33
Norfolk	6,698	7,275	3,070	3,335	46
North Tyneside	4,300	4,671	2,235	2,428	52
North Yorkshire	6,625	7,196	3,798	4,125	57
Northamptonshire	6,268	6,808	4,492	4,879	72
Northumberland	2,322	2,522	1,254	1,362	54
Nottinghamshire	4,810	5,225	3,421	3,716	71
Oldham	2,650	2,878	1,014	1,101	38
Oxfordshire	9,134	9,921	3,650	3,965	40
Redbridge	1,738	1,888	1,330	1,445	77
Richmond	752	817	379	412	50
Rochdale	2,885	3,134	1,802	1,957	62
Rotherham	1,751	1,902	481	522	27
Salford	2,891	3,140	1551	1,685	54
Sandwell	4,429	4,811	1,914	2,079	43

	Capital plans *Current prices*	*Constant prices*	*Capital allocation* *Current prices*	*Constant prices*	*Initial allocation as a percentage of plans*
Sefton	2,060	2,238	1,671	1,815	81
Sheffield	8,044	8,737	3,497	3,798	43
Shropshire	5,680	6,170	3,924	4,262	69
Solihull	1,297	1,409	642	697	49
Somerset	2,941	3,194	1,243	1,350	42
South Tyneside	2,851	3,097	1,339	1,454	47
St. Helens	3,190	3,465	1,827	1,984	57
Staffordshire	13,621	14,795	9,717	10,554	71
Stockport	2,691	2,923	1,411	1,533	52
Suffolk	6,505	7,066	3,871	4,205	60
Sunderland	4,679	5,082	3,047	3,310	65
Surrey	9,717	10,554	4,365	4,741	45
Sutton	966	1,049	474	515	49
Tameside	1,360	1,477	532	578	39
Trafford	3,208	3,484	1,594	1,731	50
Wakefield	3,307	3,592	1,438	1,562	43
Walsall	3,222	3,500	1,329	1,444	41
Waltham Forest	2,334	2,535	985	1,070	42
Warwickshire	3,105	3,373	1,703	1,850	55
West Sussex	5,641	6,127	3,429	3,725	61
Wigan	3,990	4,334	1,464	1,590	37
Wiltshire	6,314	6,858	3,478	3,778	55
Wirral	2,585	2,808	766	832	30
Wolverhampton	3,793	4,120	2,047	2,223	54

1986-87

	Capital plans *Current prices*	*Constant prices*	*Capital allocation* *Current prices*	*Constant prices*	*Initial allocation as a percentage of plans*
Avon	10,821	11,388	4,070	4,283	38
Barking	3,717	3,912	1,135	1,195	31
Barnet	7,399	7,787	1,621	1,706	22
Barnsley	1,054	1,109	577	607	55
Bedfordshire	6,282	6,611	1,934	2,035	31
Berkshire	10,696	11,257	5,399	5,682	50
Bexley	2,096	2,206	715	752	34
Birmingham	9,015	9,488	5,016	5,279	56
Bolton	1,692	1,781	576	606	34
Bradford	10,116	10,646	7,061	7,431	70
Brent	4,797	5,049	1,589	1,672	33
Bromley	3,357	3,533	1,747	1,839	52
Buckinghamshire	15,970	16,807	5,582	5,875	35
Bury	995	1,047	882	928	89
Calderdale	1,708	1,798	1,203	1,266	70
Cambridgeshire	4,910	5,167	2,591	2,727	53
Cheshire	11,327	11,921	3,837	4,038	34
Cleveland	12,605	13,266	4,933	5,192	39
Cornwall	7,583	7,981	3,592	3,780	47
Coventry	15,286	16,087	5,396	5,679	35
Croydon	3,519	3,704	2,784	2,930	79
Cumbria	5,640	5,936	2,254	2,372	40
Derbyshire	13,942	14,673	7,202	7,580	52
Devon	16,957	17,846	8,418	8,859	50
Doncaster	771	811	338	356	44
Dorset	8,255	8,688	3,377	3,554	41
Dudley	6,703	7,054	2,012	2,117	30
Durham	6,264	6,592	2,231	2,348	36
Ealing	5,702	6,001	2,154	2,267	38
East Sussex	10,176	10,710	3,786	3,985	37
Enfield	1,698	1,787	706	743	42
Essex	31,384	33,030	11,417	12,016	36
Gateshead	4,968	5,228	1,451	1,527	29
Gloucestershire	10,306	10,846	6,561	6,905	64
Hampshire	29,354	30,893	12,905	13,582	44
Haringey	4,455	4,689	797	839	18
Harrow	5,315	5,594	4,078	4,292	77
Havering	1,074	1,130	395	416	37
Hereford and Worcester	3,911	4,116	1,929	2,030	49
Hertfordshire	10,968	11,543	4,677	4,922	43
Hillingdon	1,806	1,901	306	322	17
Hounslow	4,783	5,034	668	703	14

	Capital plans		*Capital allocation*		*Initial allocation as a percentage of plans*
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*	
Humberside	10,802	11,368	7,524	7,918	70
ILEA	29,331	30,869	12,575	13,234	43
Isle of Wight	2,270	2,389	1,139	1,199	50
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	9,801	10,315	6,405	6,741	65
Kingston-upon-Thames	6,445	6,783	1,806	1,901	28
Kirklees	7,548	7,944	1,956	2,059	26
Knowsley	2,750	2,894	1,483	1,561	54
Lancashire	21,743	22,883	12,538	13,195	58
Leeds	8,557	9,006	2,634	2,772	31
Leicestershire	12,311	12,956	7,061	7,431	57
Lincolnshire	6,044	6,361	3,908	4,113	65
Liverpool	7,878	8,291	2,904	3,056	37
Manchester	21,998	23,151	6,501	6,842	30
Merton	3,959	4,167	1,203	1,266	30
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	8,641	9,094	2,586	2,722	30
Newham	6,825	7,183	1,271	1,338	19
Norfolk	7,004	7,371	4,394	4,624	63
North Tyneside	3,210	3,378	1,536	1,617	48
North Yorkshire	5,576	5,868	2,504	2,635	45
Northamptonshire	7,536	7,931	4,339	4,567	58
Northumberland	2,687	2,828	1,003	1,056	37
Nottinghamshire	5,847	6,154	3,043	3,203	52
Oldham	2,910	3,063	1,428	1,503	49
Oxfordshire	13,423	14,127	2,055	2,163	15
Redbridge	2,167	2,281	1,149	1,209	53
Richmond	1,050	1,105	249	262	24
Rochdale	4,545	4,783	2,163	2,276	48
Rotherham	1,651	1,738	578	608	35
Salford	3,382	3,559	1,625	1,710	48
Sandwell	4,091	4,306	1,203	1,266	29
Sefton	3,983	4,192	2,667	2,807	67
Sheffield	7,890	8,304	2,330	2,452	30
Shropshire	5,277	5,554	2,602	2,738	49
Solihull	2,666	2,806	1,295	1,363	49
Somerset	6,832	7,190	2,014	2,120	29
South Tyneside	2,911	3,064	732	770	25
St. Helens	2,325	2,447	772	812	33
Staffordshire	17,517	18,435	9,313	9,801	53
Stockport	3,702	3,896	1,453	1,529	39
Suffolk	8,619	9,071	5,866	6,174	68
Sunderland	7,188	7,565	1,928	2,029	27
Surrey	11,030	11,608	3,610	3,799	33
Sutton	1,318	1,387	329	346	25
Tameside	1,685	1,773	306	322	18
Trafford	2,702	2,844	1,276	1,343	47
Wakefield	3,284	3,456	1,990	2,094	61
Walsall	3,711	3,906	1,119	1,178	30
Waltham Forest	3,962	4,170	2,184	2,299	55
Warwickshire	2,993	3,150	1,236	1,301	41
West Sussex	6,116	6,437	2,157	2,270	35
Wigan	3,243	3,413	2,339	2,462	72
Wiltshire	4,556	4,795	1,983	2,087	44
Wirral	2,824	2,972	1,402	1,476	50
Wolverhampton	6,664	7,013	1,418	1,492	21

1987-88

	Capital plans		*Capital allocation*		*Initial allocation as a percentage of plans*
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*	
Avon	10,865	10,865	4,386	4,386	40
Barking	2,126	2,126	806	806	38
Barnet	11,234	11,234	1,744	1,744	16
Barnsley	1,073	1,073	530	530	49
Bedfordshire	4,814	4,814	1,248	1,284	26
Berkshire	8,281	8,281	3,597	3,597	43
Bexley	2,692	2,692	1,641	1,641	61
Birmingham	11,141	11,141	3,860	3,860	35
Bolton	1,934	1,934	645	645	33
Bradford	24,853	24,853	6,303	6,303	25
Brent	8,249	8,249	2,514	2,514	30

	Capital plans		*Capital allocation*		
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*	*Initial allocation as a percentage of plans*
Bromley	3,283	3,283	1,618	1,618	49
Buckinghamshire	10,384	10,384	6,004	6,004	58
Bury	996	996	320	320	32
Calderdale	3,381	3,381	1,883	1,883	56
Cambridgeshire	10,016	10,016	3,399	3,399	34
Cheshire	9,420	9,420	5,043	5,043	54
Cleveland	8,539	8,539	4,351	4,351	51
Cornwall	8,061	8,061	5,645	5,645	70
Coventry	12,364	12,364	5,709	5,709	46
Croydon	5,305	5,305	2,428	2,428	46
Cumbria	6,224	6,224	2,852	2,852	46
Derbyshire	20,028	20,028	9,036	9,036	45
Devon	11,291	11,291	4,734	4,734	42
Doncaster	403	403	365	365	91
Dorset	9,577	9,577	4,349	4,349	45
Dudley	5,067	5,067	1,329	1,329	26
Durham	6,263	6,263	1,371	1,371	22
Ealing	7,624	7,624	2,147	2,147	28
East Sussex	15,038	15,038	4,884	4,884	32
Enfield	2,980	2,980	1,222	1,222	41
Essex	34,169	34,169	11,600	11,600	34
Gateshead	4,073	4,073	1,112	1,112	27
Gloucestershire	10,302	10,302	7,167	7,167	70
Hampshire	28,643	28,643	10,918	10,918	38
Haringey	8,427	8,427	1,121	1,121	13
Harrow	5,525	5,525	2,925	2,952	53
Havering	1,093	1,093	393	393	36
Hereford and Worcester	5,633	5,633	2,585	2,585	46
Hertfordshire	14,293	14,293	4,100	4,100	29
Hillingdon	3,782	3,782	1,059	1,059	28
Hounslow	5,259	5,259	1,255	1,255	24
Humberside	14,865	14,865	10,753	10,753	72
ILEA	44,342	44,342	14,957	14,957	34
Isle of Wight	3,192	3,192	1,375	1,375	43
Isles of Scilly	60	60	30	30	50
Kent	13,345	13,345	7,514	7,514	56
Kingston-upon-Thames	9,674	9,674	1,683	1,683	17
Kirklees	8,782	8,782	1,664	1,664	19
Knowsley	5,510	5,510	1,108	1,108	20
Lancashire	18,800	18,800	5,994	5,994	32
Leeds	12,502	12,502	2,802	2,802	22
Leicestershire	13,336	13,336	5,526	5,26	41
Lincolnshire	7,745	7,745	4,625	4,625	60
Liverpool	10,072	10,072	1,885	1,885	19
Manchester	32,669	32,669	8,968	8,968	27
Merton	2,390	2,390	1,054	1,054	44
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	9,479	9,479	3,369	3,369	36
Newham	5,000	5,000	1,165	1,165	23
Norfolk	7,864	7,864	5,019	5,019	64
North Tyneside	4,498	4,498	1,935	1,935	43
North Yorkshire	5,150	5,150	2,035	2,035	40
Northamptonshire	5,132	5,132	1,726	1,726	34
Northumberland	2,060	2,060	655	655	32
Nottinghamshire	5,512	5,512	2,379	2,379	43
Oldham	4,809	4,809	2,799	2,799	58
Oxfordshire	11,326	11,326	1,942	1,942	17
Redbridge	2,935	2,935	1,761	1,761	60
Richmond	1,275	1,275	115	115	9
Rochdale	5,493	5,493	2,220	2,220	40
Rotherham	2,336	2,336	287	287	12
Salford	3,016	3,016	1,882	1,882	62
Sandwell	2,955	2,955	576	576	19
Sefton	4,616	4,616	1,790	1,790	39
Sheffield	10,762	10,762	3,179	3,179	30
Shropshire	8,486	8,486	5,257	5,257	62
Solihull	1,778	1,778	500	500	28
Somerset	6,220	6,220	2,626	2,626	42
South Tyneside	5,12	5,121	1,932	1,932	38
St. Helens	4,953	4,953	855	855	17
Staffordshire	18,219	18,219	7,591	7,591	42
Stockport	4,004	4,004	1,243	1,243	31
Suffolk	8,830	8,830	6,683	6,683	76
Sunderland	13,391	13,391	2,305	2,305	17
Surrey	9,339	9,339	3,828	3,828	41

	Capital plans		*Capital allocation*		
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*	*Initial allocation as a percentage of plans*
Sutton	1,966	1,966	247	247	13
Tameside	1,884	1,884	389	389	21
Trafford	2,947	2,947	1,064	1,064	36
Wakefield	5,210	5,210	2,074	2,074	40
Walsall	2,483	2,483	824	824	33
Waltham Forest	5,276	5,276	2,585	2,585	49
Warwickshire	3,473	3,473	1,101	1,101	32
West Sussex	7,420	7,420	1,739	1,739	23
Wigan	4,550	4,550	2,717	2,717	60
Wiltshire	7,021	7,021	3,177	3,177	45
Wirral	4,826	4,826	1,316	1,316	27
Wolverhampton	7,088	7,088	1,932	1,932	27

1988-89

	Capital plans		*Capital allocation*		
	current prices	*constant prices*	*current prices*	*constant prices*	*Initial allocation as a percentage of plans*
Avon	10,993	10,245	4,277	3,986	39
Barking	10,457	9,746	1,639	1,528	16
Barnet	11,192	10,431	2,000	1,864	18
Barnsley	1,198	1,117	342	319	29
Bedfordshire	5,660	5,275	1,630	1,519	29
Berkshire	12,603	11,746	5,567	5,188	44
Bexley	1,748	1,638	1,234	1,150	70
Birmingham	11,472	10,692	4,407	4,107	38
Bolton	3,866	3,603	1,212	1,130	31
Bradford	33,604	31,318	10,457	9,746	31
Brent	6,758	6,298	2,532	2,360	37
Bromley	6,098	5,683	403	376	7
Buckinghamshire	9,013	8,400	6,152	5,734	68
Bury	1,282	1,195	467	435	36
Calderdale	5,486	5,113	3,619	3,373	66
Cambridgeshire	13,719	12,786	4,314	4,021	31
Cheshire	10,812	10,077	4,829	4,501	45
Cleveland	7,104	6,621	3,673	3,423	52
Cornwall	9,744	9081	6,413	5,977	66
Coventry	17,980	16,757	6,155	5,736	34
Croydon	7,149	6,663	1,595	1,487	22
Cumbria	6,530	6,086	4,858	4,528	74
Derbyshire	15,025	14,003	10,777	10,044	72
Devon	10,732	10,002	6,262	5,836	58
Doncaster	644	600	421	392	65
Dorset	8,459	7,884	4,052	3,776	48
Dudley	7,773	7,244	1,555	1,449	20
Durham	5,451	4,080	1,415	1,319	26
Ealing	9,053	8,437	1,174	1,094	13
East Sussex	25,962	24,196	9,815	9,147	38
Enfield	9,504	8,858	1,318	1,228	14
Essex	37,264	34,729	20,317	18,935	55
Gateshead	5,420	5,051	1,933	1,802	36
Gloucestershire	9,864	9,193	5,302	4,941	54
Hampshire	38,619	35,992	16,550	15,424	43
Haringey	11,042	10,291	2,330	2,172	21
Harrow	3,862	3,599	1,643	1,531	43
Havering	1,962	1,829	692	645	35
Hereford and Worcester	9,032	8,418	2,892	2,695	32
Hertfordshire	18,887	17,602	5,525	5,149	29
Hillingdon	6,307	5,878	918	856	15
Hounslow	4,860	4,529	1,242	1,158	26
Humberside	13,333	12,426	7,077	6,596	53
ILEA	54,545	50,835	17,767	16,559	33
Isle of Wight	4,377	4,079	1,663	1,550	38
Isles of Scilly	405	377	39	36	10
Kent	15,217	14,182	7,134	6,649	47
Kingston-upon-Thames	11,731	10,933	1,695	1,580	14
Kirklees	9,078	8,461	1,486	1,385	16
Knowsley	4,815	4,488	1,136	1,059	24
Lancashire	25,419	23,690	12,809	11,938	50
Leeds	14,280	13,309	4,626	4,311	32
Leicestershire	15,643	14,579	7,419	6,914	47
Lincolnshire	8,891	8,286	3,897	3,632	44

	Capital plans		*Capital allocation*		*Initial*
	current prices	*constant prices*	*current prices*	*constant prices*	*allocation as a percentage of plans*
Liverpool	7,692	7,169	2,323	2,165	30
Manchester	34,860	32,489	9,269	8,639	27
Merton	6,965	6,491	1,023	953	15
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	12,946	12,065	3,917	3,651	30
Newham	6,316	5,886	3,061	2,853	48
Norfolk	7,938	7,398	4,021	3,748	51
North Tyneside	4,587	4,275	2,129	1,984	46
North Yorkshire	7,297	6,801	3,937	3,669	54
Northamptonshire	8,571	7,988	3,190	2,973	37
Northumberland	3,554	3,312	955	890	27
Nottinghamshire	4,709	4,389	2,461	2,294	52
Oldham	5,793	5,399	2,822	2,630	49
Oxfordshire	18,701	17,429	4,673	4,355	25
Redbridge	5,418	5,049	3,719	3,466	69
Richmond	2,210	2,060	277	258	13
Rochdale	5,654	5,269	1,440	1,342	25
Rotherham	2,184	2,035	699	651	32
Salford	5,740	5,350	3,430	3,197	60
Sandwell	3,710	3,458	767	715	21
Sefton	2,778	2,589	1,450	1,351	52
Sheffield	17,815	16,603	7,189	6,700	40
Shropshire	8,474	7,898	4,465	4,161	53
Solihull	4,890	4,557	700	652	14
Somerset	6,501	6,059	2,764	2,576	43
South Tyneside	5,939	5,535	2,527	2,355	43
St. Helens	5,685	5,298	1,211	1,129	21
Staffordshire	15,494	14,440	7,469	6,961	48
Stockport	3,891	3,626	2,878	2,682	74
Suffolk	9,448	8,805	7,014	6,537	74
Sunderland	10,951	10,206	4,583	4,271	42
Surrey	15,468	14,416	4,859	4,529	31
Sutton	6,063	5,651	627	584	10
Tameside	2,781	2,592	716	667	26
Trafford	2,637	2,458	471	439	18
Wakefield	6,397	5,962	3,573	3,330	56
Walsall	2,210	2,060	907	845	41
Waltham Forest	7,120	6,636	5,498	5,124	77
Warwickshire	4,069	3,792	1,375	1,281	34
West Sussex	10,851	10,113	3,053	2,845	28
Wigan	5,308	4,947	3,508	3,269	66
Wiltshire	6,867	6,400	3,215	2,996	47
Wirral	6,391	5,956	2,330	2,172	36
Wolverhampton	7,823	7,291	1,849	1,723	24

1989-90

	Capital Plans		*Capital Allocation*		*Initial*
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*	*Allocation as a percentage of plans*
Avon	12,427	10,978	3,877	3,425	31
Barking	1,429	1,262	245	216	17
Barnet	5,954	5,260	996	880	17
Barnsley	1,665	1,471	270	239	16
Bedfordshire	6,120	5,406	2,022	1,786	33
Berkshire	13,676	12,081	5,876	5,191	43
Bexley	3,336	2,947	864	763	26
Birmingham	13,2[illegible]	11,666	5,218	4,610	40
Bolton	4,208	3,717	1,286	1,136	31
Bradford	27,879	24,628	8,334	7,362	30
Brent	4,939	4,363	463	409	9
Bromley	6,338	5,599	663	586	10
Buckinghamshire	12,370	10,928	7,780	6,873	63
Bury	1,055	932	605	534	57
Calderdale	4,135	3,653	2,607	2,303	63
Cambridgeshire	21,003	18,554	5,801	5,125	28
Cheshire	12,507	11,049	3,487	3,080	28
Cleveland	7,450	6,581	5,324	4,703	71
Cornwall	11,803	10,427	6,129	5,414	52
Coventry	15,815	13,971	2,670	2,359	17
Croydon	6,487	5,731	1,008	890	16
Cumbria	10,156	8,972	6,753	5,966	66
Derbyshire	22,530	19,903	11,669	10,308	52
Devon	23,329	20,609	14,177	12,524	61

	Capital Plans		*Capital Allocation*		*Initial Allocation as a percentage of plans*
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*	
Doncaster	1,059	936	684	604	65
Dorset	11,083	9,791	2,970	2,624	27
Dudley	5,621	4,966	2,531	2,236	45
Durham	14,756	13,035	2,133	1,884	14
Ealing	10,487	9,264	540	477	5
East Sussex	25,515	22,540	9,171	8,102	36
Enfield	6,847	6,049	1,153	1,019	17
Essex	54,816	48,424	17,002	15,020	31
Gateshead	5,263	4,649	1,052	929	20
Gloucestershire	14,180	12,527	5,934	5,242	42
Hampshire	28,586	25,253	7,940	7,014	28
Haringey	6,237	5,510	2,275	2,010	36
Harrow	7,423	6,557	650	574	9
Havering	4,912	4,339	1,341	1,185	27
Hereford and Worcester	9,134	8,069	2,534	2,239	28
Hertfordshire	16,561	14,630	4,832	4,269	29
Hillingdon	5,132	4,534	644	569	13
Hounslow	8,173	7,220	529	467	6
Humberside	13,240	11,696	7,288	6,438	55
ILEA	38,931	34,392	11,957	10,563	31
Isle of Wight	6,678	5,899	1,628	1,438	24
Isles of Scilly	149	132	149	132	100
Kent	24,492	21,636	8,610	7,606	35
Kingston-upon-Thames	9,756	8,618	316	279	3
Kirklees	5,406	4,776	808	714	15
Knowsley	6,413	5,665	2,116	1,869	33
Lancashire	34,170	30,186	13,664	12,071	40
Leeds	17,367	15,342	3,464	3,060	20
Leicestershire	12,785	11,294	6,769	5,980	53
Lincolnshire	8,599	7,596	3,010	1,659	35
Liverpool	6,121	5,407	607	536	10
Manchester	26,053	23,015	5,271	4,656	20
Merton	11,393	10,065	5,243	4,632	46
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	9,148	8,081	1,566	1,383	17
Newham	7,944	7,018	3,590	3,171	45
Norfolk	10,892	9,622	3,788	3,346	35
North Tyneside	5,853	5,171	1,577	1,393	27
North Yorkshire	6,899	6,095	2,209	1,951	32
Northamptonshire	9,049	7,994	4,046	3,574	45
Northumberland	5,234	4,624	889	785	17
Nottinghamshire	7,408	6,544	3,215	2,840	43
Oldham	6,654	5,878	2,272	2,007	34
Oxfordshire	15,971	14,109	3,758	3,320	24
Redbridge	5,241	4,630	2,028	1,792	39
Richmond	2,826	2,496	540	477	19
Rochdale	7,094	6,267	2,175	1,921	31
Rotherham	2,647	2,338	840	742	32
Salford	5,717	5,050	3,806	3,362	67
Sandwell	4,462	3,942	2,080	1,837	47
Sefton	4,728	4,177	1,724	1,523	36
Sheffield	9,204	8,131	5,211	4,603	57
Shropshire	8,010	7,076	4,943	4,367	62
Solihull	4,084	3,608	744	657	18
Somerset	15,865	14,015	3,088	2,728	19
South Tyneside	9,846	8,698	3,372	2,979	34
St. Helens	4,597	4,061	1,851	1,635	40
Staffordshire	11,544	10,198	4,927	4,353	43
Stockport	3,822	3,376	1,519	1,342	40
Suffolk	13,315	11,762	6,086	5,376	46
Sunderland	10,269	9,072	3,859	3,409	38
Surrey	12,460	11,007	5,735	5,066	46
Sutton	11,995	10,596	649	573	5
Tameside	2,863	2,529	746	659	26
Trafford	20,581	18,181	2,671	2,360	13
Wakefield	5,296	4,678	3,212	2,837	61
Walsall	3,190	2,818	921	814	29
Waltham Forest	13,259	11,713	8,013	7,079	60
Warwickshire	6,275	5,543	1,729	1,527	28
West Sussex	12,953	11,443	1,966	1,737	15
Wigan	7,057	6,234	1,364	1,205	19
Wiltshire	10,455	9,236	2,866	2,532	27
Wirral	6,817	6,022	2,469	2,181	36
Wolverhampton	3,810	3,366	528	466	14

Notes:

1. All figures are in £ thousands.
2. Cash plans were not requested in 1981-84.
3. The allocations made are in a few exceptional cases greater that the planned expenditure shown in the table. The information provided on plans was sometimes incomplete and adjustments were made to allocations.
4. Current prices = cash plans.
5. Constant prices are calculated at 1987-88 prices using the GDP deflator.
6. Allocations for 1989-90 exclude PCFC institutions.
7. The allocations shown are those announced before the start of the financial year in question and do not include subsequent revisions.

Table B
Voluntary aided capital plans and allocations
1981-82 to 1989-90

	1981-82 Plans and allocations		*1982-83 Plans*		*1982-83 Allocation*	
Local education authority	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Avon	—	—	424	533	165	208
Barking	—	—	0	0	0	0
Barnet	—	—	494	622	260	327
Barnsley	—	—	90	113	106	133
Bedfordshire	—	—	156	196	172	216
Berkshire	—	—	170	214	200	252
Bexley	—	—	88	111	82	103
Birmingham	—	—	480	604	576	725
Bolton	—	—	227	286	65	82
Bradford	—	—	762	959	779	980
Brent	—	—	402	506	342	430
Bromley	—	—	100	126	118	148
Buckinghamshire	—	—	229	288	268	337
Bury	—	—	41	52	47	59
Calderdale	—	—	140	176	29	36
Cambridgeshire	—	—	502	632	194	244
Cheshire	—	—	1,059	1,332	1,035	1,302
Cleveland	—	—	537	676	556	700
Cornwall	—	—	512	644	229	288
Coventry	—	—	23	29	27	34
Croydon	—	—	22	28	24	30
Cumbria	—	—	320	403	345	434
Derbyshire	—	—	693	872	576	725
Devon	—	—	42	53	49	62
Doncaster	—	—	140	176	152	191
Dorset	—	—	79	99	93	117
Dudley	—	—	845	1,063	402	506
Durham	—	—	387	487	219	276
Ealing	—	—	341	429	185	233
East Sussex	—	—	35	44	35	44
Enfield	—	—	95	120	81	102
Essex	—	—	808	1,017	514	647
Gateshead	—	—	60	75	66	83
Gloucestershire	—	—	194	244	223	281
Hampshire	—	—	450	566	388	488
Haringey	—	—	195	245	147	185
Harrow	—	—	16	20	21	26
Havering	—	—	54	68	24	30
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	683	859	285	359
Hertfordshire	—	—	550	692	406	511
Hillingdon	—	—	330	415	94	118
Hounslow	—	—	129	162	24	30
Humberside	—	—	143	180	145	182
ILEA	—	—	2,369	2,981	3,181	4,002
Isle of Wight	—	—	45	57	18	23
Isles of Scilly	—	—	0	0	0	0
Kent	—	—	1,620	2,038	1,404	1,767
Kingston	—	—	107	135	8	10
Kirklees	—	—	162	204	96	121
Knowsley	—	—	158	199	159	200
Lancashire	—	—	n/a	nil	706	888
Leeds	—	—	127	160	146	184
Leicestershire	—	—	1,007	1,267	794	999
Lincolnshire	—	—	529	666	301	379
Liverpool	—	—	590	742	643	809
Manchester	—	—	350	440	294	370
Merton	—	—	310	390	347	437
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	—	—	106	133	108	136
Newham	—	—	0	0	0	0
Norfolk	—	—	891	1,121	843	1,061
Northamptonshire	—	—	35	44	41	52

Local education authority	*1981-82 Plans and allocations*		*1982-83 Plans*		*1982-83 Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
North Tyneside	—	—	27	34	24	30
Northumberland	—	—	163	205	175	220
North Yorkshire	—	—	80	101	94	118
Nottinghamshire	—	—	310	390	259	326
Oldham	—	—	149	187	172	216
Oxfordshire	—	—	60	75	47	59
Redbridge	—	—	180	226	212	267
Richmond	—	—	104	131	48	60
Rochdale	—	—	529	666	622	783
Rotherham	—	—	480	604	559	703
Salford	—	—	214	269	122	154
Sandwell	—	—	32	40	31	39
Sefton	—	—	418	526	369	464
Sheffield	—	—	100	126	24	30
Shropshire	—	—	200	252	114	143
Solihull	—	—	240	302	94	118
Somerset	—	—	755	950	888	1,117
South Tyneside	—	—	0	0	0	0
Staffordshire	—	—	700	881	588	740
St. Helens	—	—	135	170	147	185
Stockport	—	—	148	186	156	196
Suffolk	—	—	194	244	136	171
Sunderland	—	—	40	50	47	59
Surrey	—	—	545	686	640	805
Sutton	—	—	127	160	76	96
Tameside	—	—	363	457	181	228
Trafford	—	—	150	189	223	281
Wakefield	—	—	10	13	8	10
Walsall	—	—	700	881	287	361
Waltham	—	—	87	109	0	0
Warwick	—	—	605	761	259	326
West Sussex	—	—	240	302	129	162
Wigan	—	—	869	1,093	766	964
Wiltshire	—	—	452	569	526	662
Wirral	—	—	995	1,252	1,141	1,436
Wolverhampton	—	—	625	786	147	185

	1983-84			
	Plans		*Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Avon	316	380	352	423
Barking	15	18	0	0
Barnet	380	457	192	231
Barnsley	0	0	36	43
Bedfordshire	43	52	41	49
Berkshire	95	114	86	103
Bexley	15	18	47	57
Birmingham	1,626	1,955	622	748
Bolton	200	241	194	233
Bradford	898	1,080	835	1,004
Brent	338	406	298	358
Bromley	1,100	1,323	80	96
Buckinghamshire	389	468	603	725
Bury	62	75	44	53
Calderdale	185	222	145	174
Cambridgeshire	821	987	196	236
Cheshire	366	440	568	683
Cleveland	1,409	1,694	116	139
Cornwall	154	185	360	433
Coventry	22	26	23	28
Croydon	25	30	29	35
Cumbria	112	135	156	188
Derbyshire	215	259	310	373
Devon	946	1,138	573	689
Doncaster	0	0	28	34
Dorset	308	370	84	101
Dudley	890	1,070	603	725
Durham	223	268	181	218
Ealing	640	770	350	421
East Sussex	50	60	43	52
Enfield	320	385	314	378
Essex	335	403	184	221

	Plans		*Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Gateshead	172	207	118	142
Gloucestershire	340	409	406	488
Hampshire	34	41	48	58
Haringey	171	206	58	70
Harrow	36	43	22	26
Havering	100	120	43	52
Hereford & Worcester	937	1,127	115	138
Hertfordshire	500	601	244	293
Hillingdon	243	292	131	158
Hounslow	220	265	76	91
Humberside	45	54	28	34
ILEA	2,777	3,339	2,416	2,905
Isle of Wight	73	88	20	24
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0
Kent	454	546	713	857
Kingston	132	159	168	202
Kirklees	46	55	121	146
Knowsley	75	90	105	126
Lancashire	1,004	1,207	928	1,116
Leeds	160	192	36	43
Leicestershire	345	415	274	329
Lincolnshire	104	125	195	234
Liverpool	889	1,069	1,440	1,732
Manchester	944	1,135	704	847
Merton	124	149	119	143
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	203	244	96	115
Newham	12	14	10	12
Norfolk	280	337	479	576
Northamptonshire	184	221	245	295
North Tyneside	240	289	109	131
Northumberland	54	65	107	129
North Yorkshire	230	277	183	220
Nottinghamshire	540	649	619	744
Oldham	26	31	99	119
Oxfordshire	455	547	56	67
Redbridge	460	553	454	546
Richmond	21	25	19	23
Rochdale	0	0	57	69
Rotherham	805	968	70	84
Salford	167	201	203	244
Sandwell	47	57	26	31
Sefton	443	533	452	544
Sheffield	100	120	56	67
Shropshire	236	284	45	54
Solihull	435	523	108	130
Somerset	8	10	8	10
South Tyneside	78	94	29	35
Staffordshire	410	493	431	518
St. Helens	170	204	30	36
Stockport	400	481	323	388
Suffolk	240	289	83	100
Sunderland	220	265	31	37
Surrey	320	385	315	379
Sutton	285	343	188	226
Tameside	266	320	394	474
Trafford	48	58	42	51
Wakefield	65	78	52	63
Walsall	400	481	533	641
Waltham	91	109	48	58
Warwick	268	322	346	416
West Sussex	283	340	288	346
Wigan	775	932	718	863
Wiltshire	16	19	40	48
Wirral	290	349	155	186
Wolverhampton	260	313	78	94

1984-85

	Plans		*Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Avon	477	547	144	165
Barking	7	8	7	8
Barnet	2,380	2,727	1,091	1,250

	Plans		*Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Barnsley	0	0	0	0
Bedfordshire	50	57	15	17
Berkshire	287	329	145	166
Bexley	389	446	5	6
Birmingham	995	1,140	182	209
Bolton	722	827	106	121
Bradford	290	332	60	69
Brent	566	649	340	390
Bromley	325	372	32	37
Buckinghamshire	475	544	175	201
Bury	206	236	47	54
Calderdale	234	268	230	264
Cambridgeshire	672	770	395	453
Cheshire	1,688	1,934	652	747
Cleveland	738	846	213	244
Cornwall	110	126	35	40
Coventry	302	346	28	32
Croydon	85	97	45	52
Cumbria	578	662	300	344
Derbyshire	475	544	225	258
Devon	2,900	3,323	1,410	1,616
Doncaster	50	57	40	46
Dorset	1,339	1,534	610	699
Dudley	2,567	2,942	417	478
Durham	668	765	258	296
Ealing	720	825	340	390
East Sussex	230	264	35	40
Enfield	538	616	375	430
Essex	320	367	215	246
Gateshead	260	298	233	267
Gloucestershire	670	768	285	327
Hampshire	147	168	40	46
Haringey	400	458	60	69
Harrow	163	187	10	11
Havering	100	115	20	23
Hereford and Worcester	1,135	1,301	650	745
Hertfordshire	640	733	295	338
Hillingdon	570	653	175	201
Hounslow	628	720	190	218
Humberside	114	131	35	40
ILEA	4,978	5,704	1,590	1,822
Isle of Wight	80	92	10	11
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0
Kent	1,630	1,868	935	1,071
Kingston	360	413	190	218
Kirklees	334	383	254	291
Knowsley	390	447	110	126
Lancashire	2,161	2,476	1,500	1,719
Leeds	20	23	15	17
Leicestershire	1,257	1,440	705	808
Lincolnshire	337	386	177	203
Liverpool	2,400	2,750	1,275	1,461
Manchester	2,741	3,141	1,145	1,312
Merton	78	89	20	23
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	418	479	65	74
Newham	233	267	15	17
Norfolk	511	586	180	206
Northamptonshire	n/a	nil	90	103
North Tyneside	514	589	285	327
Northumberland	119	136	35	40
North Yorkshire	1,614	1,849	580	665
Nottinghamshire	372	426	190	218
Oldham	123	141	40	46
Oxfordshire	155	178	15	17
Redbridge	756	866	555	636
Richmond	211	242	100	115
Rochdale	283	324	75	86
Rotherham	112	128	61	70
Salford	616	706	80	92
Sandwell	54	62	10	11
Sefton	144	165	45	52
Sheffield	278	319	33	38
Shropshire	562	644	75	86
Solihull	108	124	86	99
Somerset	28	32	30	34

	Plans		*Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
South Tyneside	210	241	65	74
Staffordshire	784	898	435	498
St. Helens	302	346	32	37
Stockport	652	747	40	46
Suffolk	355	407	200	229
Sunderland	66	76	15	17
Surrey	170	195	50	57
Sutton	388	445	360	413
Tameside	683	783	530	607
Trafford	691	792	60	69
Wakefield	293	336	155	178
Walsall	100	115	50	57
Waltham	1,275	1,461	1,005	1,152
Warwick	395	453	110	126
West Sussex	959	1,099	263	301
Wigan	988	1,132	475	544
Wiltshire	40	46	12	14
Wirral	897	1,028	470	539
Wolverhampton	320	367	185	212

1985-86

	Plans		*Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Avon	965	1,048	391	425
Barking	112	122	20	22
Barnet	3,021	3,281	1,662	1,805
Barnsley	0	0	0	0
Bedfordshire	335	364	40	43
Berkshire	1,150	1,249	62	67
Bexley	421	457	42	46
Birmingham	1,816	1,973	1,070	1,162
Bolton	578	628	578	628
Bradford	631	685	350	380
Brent	485	527	46	50
Bromley	311	338	211	229
Buckinghamshire	1,437	1,561	11	12
Bury	227	247	40	43
Calderdale	361	392	151	164
Cambridgeshire	577	627	87	94
Cheshire	1,615	1,754	867	942
Cleveland	1,119	1,215	200	217
Cornwall	299	325	176	191
Coventry	358	389	70	76
Croydon	145	157	45	49
Cumbria	825	896	528	574
Derbyshire	455	494	375	407
Devon	3,084	3,350	1,472	1,599
Doncaster	95	103	95	103
Dorset	643	698	135	147
Dudley	2,227	2,419	666	723
Durham	863	937	448	487
Ealing	773	840	341	370
East Sussex	722	784	640	695
Enfield	858	932	620	673
Essex	813	883	467	507
Gateshead	832	904	318	345
Gloucestershire	712	773	366	398
Hampshire	432	469	60	65
Haringey	898	975	425	462
Harrow	208	226	20	22
Havering	61	66	13	14
Hereford & Worcester	1,102	1,197	793	861
Hertfordshire	465	505	209	227
Hillingdon	4,205	4,567	67	73
Hounslow	545	592	324	352
Humberside	20	22	20	22
ILEA	8,362	9,083	3,477	3,777
Isle of Wight	84	91	23	25
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0
Kent	1,438	1,562	307	333
Kingston	221	240	71	77
Kirklees	330	358	180	196

	Plans		Allocation	
	Current prices	Constant prices	Current prices	Constant prices
Knowsley	378	411	190	206
Lancashire	2,533	2,751	2,244	2,437
Leeds	139	151	30	33
Leicestershire	1,022	1,110	928	1,008
Lincolnshire	320	348	160	174
Liverpool	2,962	3,217	2,080	2,259
Manchester	2,666	2,896	1,602	1,740
Merton	213	231	118	128
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	627	681	218	237
Newham	160	174	25	27
Norfolk	177	192	177	192
Northamptonshire	539	585	44	48
North Tyneside	627	681	429	466
Northumberland	103	112	40	43
North Yorkshire	2,260	2,455	1,890	2,053
Nottinghamshire	207	225	22	24
Oldham	355	386	73	79
Oxfordshire	1,215	1,320	113	123
Redbridge	808	878	695	755
Richmond	173	188	0	0
Rochdale	225	244	125	136
Rotherham	86	93	46	50
Salford	758	823	129	140
Sandwell	53	58	25	27
Sefton	52	56	52	56
Sheffield	365	396	115	125
Shropshire	565	614	284	308
Solihull	189	205	75	81
Somerset	102	111	30	33
South Tyneside	185	201	185	201
Staffordshire	671	729	239	260
St. Helens	198	215	63	68
Stockport	1,243	1,350	269	292
Suffolk	279	303	164	178
Sunderland	92	100	77	84
Surrey	1,579	1,715	68	74
Sutton	310	337	185	201
Tameside	234	254	73	79
Trafford	668	726	40	43
Wakefield	215	234	125	136
Walsall	338	367	25	27
Waltham	996	1,082	1,375	1,494
Warwick	445	483	245	266
West Sussex	813	883	270	293
Wigan	1,070	1,162	630	684
Wiltshire	68	74	62	67
Wirral	895	972	615	668
Wolverhampton	174	189	30	33

1986-87

	Plans		Allocation	
	Current prices	Constant prices	Current prices	Constant prices
Avon	696	732	193	203
Barking	118	124	0	0
Barnet	1,844	1,941	400	421
Barnsley	103	108	0	0
Bedfordshire	457	481	0	0
Berkshire	794	836	265	279
Bexley	188	198	3	3
Birmingham	1,380	1,452	615	647
Bolton	1,023	1,077	575	605
Bradford	866	911	320	337
Brent	299	315	12	13
Bromley	30	32	0	0
Buckinghamshire	831	875	423	445
Bury	241	254	3	3
Calderdale	231	243	3	3
Cambridgeshire	1,137	1,197	127	134
Cheshire	2,192	2,307	836	880
Cleveland	1,471	1,548	135	142
Cornwall	814	857	252	265
Coventry	127	134	22	23

	Plans		*Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Croydon	158	166	48	51
Cumbria	514	541	401	422
Derbyshire	665	700	190	200
Devon	2,176	2,290	132	139
Doncaster	66	69	50	53
Dorset	2,133	2,245	216	227
Dudley	1,858	1,955	724	762
Durham	1,339	1,409	425	447
Ealing	1,108	1,166	331	348
East Sussex	960	1,010	380	400
Enfield	1,579	1,662	197	207
Essex	333	350	150	158
Gateshead	200	210	163	172
Gloucestershire	1,313	1,382	252	265
Hampshire	467	491	70	74
Haringey	779	820	323	340
Harrow	235	247	1	1
Havering	180	189	0	0
Hereford & Worcester	1,563	1,645	1,399	1,472
Hertfordshire	2,261	2,380	46	48
Hillingdon	672	707	40	42
Hounslow	833	877	169	178
Humberside	2,053	2,161	1,818	1,913
ILEA	4,171	4,390	1,686	1,774
Isle of Wight	72	76	2	2
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0
Kent	1,285	1,352	496	522
Kingston	295	310	44	46
Kirklees	166	175	16	17
Knowsley	670	705	600	631
Lancashire	1,471	1,548	1,302	1,370
Leeds	220	232	90	95
Leicestershire	1,594	1,678	1,241	1,306
Lincolnshire	310	326	3	3
Liverpool	2,557	2,691	2,360	2,484
Manchester	3,060	3,220	2,250	2,368
Merton	220	232	170	179
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	351	369	191	201
Newham	101	106	47	49
Norfolk	568	598	89	94
Northamptonshire	590	621	505	531
North Tyneside	325	342	20	21
Northumberland	98	103	0	0
North Yorkshire	1,009	1,062	273	287
Nottinghamshire	341	359	66	69
Oldham	502	528	16	17
Oxfordshire	2,068	2,176	470	495
Redbridge	138	145	28	29
Richmond	118	124	0	0
Rochdale	558	587	0	0
Rotherham	144	152	69	73
Salford	1,037	1,091	610	642
Sandwell	88	93	0	0
Sefton	446	469	2	2
Sheffield	480	505	300	316
Shropshire	242	255	112	118
Solihull	231	243	0	0
Somerset	28	29	22	23
South Tyneside	290	305	185	195
Staffordshire	627	660	181	190
St. Helens	344	362	6	6
Stockport	982	1,033	447	470
Suffolk	281	296	163	172
Sunderland	421	443	0	0
Surrey	2,190	2,305	10	11
Sutton	219	230	35	37
Tameside	226	238	35	37
Trafford	509	536	0	0
Wakefield	380	400	120	126
Walsall	264	278	26	27
Waltham	380	400	245	258
Warwick	268	282	19	20
West Sussex	609	641	334	352
Wigan	1,231	1,296	781	822
Wiltshire	148	156	29	31

	Plans		*Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Wirral	811	854	416	438
Wolverhampton	593	624	6	6

1987-88

	Plans		*Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Avon	1,366	1,366	885	885
Barking	140	140	0	0
Barnet	1,501	1,501	880	880
Barnsley	244	244	5	5
Bedfordshire	279	279	4	4
Berkshire	890	890	593	593
Bexley	201	201	126	126
Birmingham	838	838	985	985
Bolton	122	122	734	734
Bradford	586	586	270	270
Brent	243	243	613	613
Bromley	30	30	20	20
Buckinghamshire	1,008	1,008	1,701	1,701
Bury	505	505	120	120
Calderdale	243	243	25	25
Cambridgeshire	1,095	1,095	465	465
Cheshire	1,655	1,655	393	393
Cleveland	962	962	130	130
Cornwall	378	378	116	116
Coventry	647	647	340	340
Croydon	470	470	503	503
Cumbria	193	193	596	596
Derbyshire	270	270	685	685
Devon	985	985	372	372
Doncaster	42	42	0	0
Dorset	1,778	1,778	1,267	1,267
Dudley	2,329	2,329	858	858
Durham	651	651	449	449
Ealing	940	940	762	762
East Sussex	575	575	1,630	1,630
Enfield	1,260	1,260	93	93
Essex	285	285	120	120
Gateshead	134	134	895	895
Gloucestershire	1,029	1,029	442	442
Hampshire	943	943	130	130
Haringey	781	781	75	75
Harrow	218	218	25	25
Havering	170	170	0	0
Hereford and Worcester	433	433	654	654
Hertfordshire	1,038	1,038	457	457
Hillingdon	1,076	1,076	230	230
Hounslow	640	640	153	153
Humberside	507	507	2,684	2,684
ILEA	8,077	8,077	862	862
Isle of Wight	95	95	70	70
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0
Kent	1,132	1,132	534	534
Kingston	214	214	0	0
Kirklees	84	84	14	14
Knowsley	295	295	570	570
Lancashire	504	504	793	793
Leeds	80	80	20	20
Leicestershire	762	762	592	592
Lincolnshire	380	380	65	65
Liverpool	3,080	3,080	2,239	2,239
Manchester	1,056	1,056	2,831	2,831
Merton	69	69	65	65
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	556	556	338	338
Newham	40	40	60	60
Norfolk	639	639	41	41
Northamptonshire	125	125	205	205
North Tyneside	221	221	275	275
Northumberland	467	467	110	110
North Yorkshire	897	897	45	45
Nottinghamshire	316	316	322	322
Oldham	713	713	274	274

	Plans		Allocation	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Oxfordshire	1,122	1,122	273	273
Redbridge	50	50	5	5
Richmond	332	332	12	12
Rochdale	660	660	335	335
Rotherham	45	45	69	69
Salford	460	460	750	750
Sandwell	180	180	15	15
Sefton	1,320	1,320	50	50
Sheffield	670	670	130	130
Shropshire	422	422	45	45
Solihull	539	539	166	166
Somerset	449	449	50	50
South Tyneside	146	146	251	251
Staffordshire	377	377	489	489
St. Helens	1,536	1,536	888	888
Stockport	225	225	122	122
Suffolk	249	249	68	68
Sunderland	299	299	375	375
Surrey	929	929	1,079	1,079
Sutton	224	224	0	0
Tameside	240	240	35	35
Trafford	387	387	30	30
Wakefield	150	150	47	47
Walsall	324	324	50	50
Waltham	120	120	50	50
Warwick	715	715	80	80
West Sussex	593	593	420	420
Wigan	1,016	1,016	1,045	1,045
Wiltshire	187	187	35	35
Wirral	1,425	1,425	322	322
Wolverhampton	48	48	8	8

1988-89

	Plans		Allocation	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Avon	441	411	436	406
Barking	162	151	15	14
Barnet	1,674	1,560	1,109	1,034
Barnsley	12	11	12	11
Bedfordshire	278	259	0	0
Berkshire	1,820	1,696	492	459
Bexley	856	798	617	575
Birmingham	751	700	1,847	1,721
Bolton	413	385	3,432	3,199
Bradford	211	197	86	80
Brent	226	211	467	435
Bromley	625	582	30	28
Buckinghamshire	850	792	1,932	1,801
Bury	336	313	1,052	980
Calderdale	326	304	0	0
Cambridgeshire	916	854	345	322
Cheshire	1,567	1,460	515	480
Cleveland	886	826	170	158
Cornwall	1,180	1,100	145	135
Coventry	473	441	53	49
Croydon	1,215	1,132	40	37
Cumbria	363	338	429	400
Derbyshire	525	489	1,155	1,076
Devon	816	760	619	577
Doncaster	50	47	50	47
Dorset	3,124	2,912	1,421	1,324
Dudley	2,919	2,720	535	499
Durham	538	501	150	140
Ealing	495	461	971	905
East Sussex	800	746	2,091	1,949
Enfield	1,844	1,719	383	357
Essex	732	682	831	774
Gateshead	144	134	884	824
Gloucestershire	1,559	1,453	536	500
Hampshire	2,714	2,529	288	268
Haringey	564	526	50	47
Harrow	781	728	25	23

	Plans		Allocation	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Havering	170	158	70	65
Hereford and Worcester	598	557	61	57
Hartfordshire	1,723	1,606	467	435
Hillingdon	889	829	350	326
Hounslow	620	578	26	24
Humberside	1,283	1,196	1,315	1,226
ILEA	12,680	11,818	1,641	1,529
Isle of Wight	68	63	839	782
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0
Kent	3,224	3,005	386	360
Kingston	279	260	0	0
Kirklees	65	61	45	42
Knowsley	490	457	720	671
Lancashire	1,027	957	3,298	3,074
Leeds	635	592	0	0
Leicestershire	1,099	1,024	1,036	966
Lincolnshire	642	598	125	116
Liverpool	6,193	5,772	652	608
Manchester	1,671	1,557	2,585	2,409
Merton	387	361	0	0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	667	622	105	98
Newham	0	0	4	4
Norfolk	503	469	253	236
Northamptonshire	243	226	132	123
North Tyneside	479	446	329	307
Northumberland	361	336	178	166
North Yorkshire	746	695	100	93
Nottinghamshire	827	771	203	189
Oldham	974	908	2,218	2,067
Oxfordshire	2,195	2,046	682	636
Redbridge	128	119	60	56
Richmond	1,041	970	0	0
Rochdale	1,261	1,175	1,762	1,642
Rotherham	20	19	48	45
Salford	823	767	745	694
Sandwell	70	65	5	5
Sefton	534	498	293	273
Sheffield	1,138	1,061	518	483
Shropshire	832	775	265	247
Solihull	433	404	638	595
Somerset	739	689	559	521
South Tyneside	151	141	106	99
Staffordshire	716	667	955	890
St. Helens	835	778	2,823	2,631
Stockport	599	558	50	47
Suffolk	952	887	246	229
Sunderland	159	148	224	209
Surrey	618	576	1,660	1,547
Sutton	709	661	0	0
Tameside	386	360	90	84
Trafford	1,174	1,094	5	5
Wakefield	292	272	70	65
Walsall	283	264	36	34
Waltham	50	47	11	10
Warwick	617	575	715	666
West Sussex	438	408	1,644	1,532
Wigan	950	885	385	359
Wiltshire	229	213	35	33
Wirral	518	483	290	270
Wolverhampton	170	158	27	25

1989-90

	Plans		Allocation	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Avon	1,012	894	710	627
Barking	1,580	1,396	0	0
Barnet	506	447	1,392	1,230
Barnsley	0	0	0	0
Bedfordshire	285	252	0	0
Berkshire	1,097	969	1,124	993
Bexley	964	852	223	197
Birmingham	866	765	1,992	1,760

	Plans		*Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Bolton	206	182	250	221
Bradford	700	618	473	418
Brent	301	266	519	458
Bromley	597	527	5	4
Buckinghamshire	854	754	17	15
Bury	232	205	1,221	1,079
Calderdale	397	351	275	243
Cambridgeshire	1,415	1,250	249	220
Cheshire	816	721	1,589	1,404
Cleveland	986	871	203	179
Cornwall	1,904	1,682	1,087	960
Coventry	683	603	572	505
Croydon	500	442	0	0
Cumbria	235	208	559	494
Derbyshire	805	711	401	354
Devon	939	830	226	200
Doncaster	0	0	8	7
Dorset	2,898	2,560	1,197	1,057
Dudley	985	870	1,176	1,039
Durham	415	367	46	41
Ealing	186	164	12	11
East Sussex	3,201	2,828	917	810
Enfield	1,108	979	825	729
Essex	2,655	2,345	229	202
Gateshead	258	228	789	697
Gloucestershire	3,111	2,748	1,218	1,076
Hampshire	4,114	3,634	927	819
Haringey	1,169	1,033	331	292
Harrow	230	203	50	44
Havering	118	104	858	758
Hereford and Worcester	1,281	1,132	570	504
Hertfordshire	1,972	1,742	673	595
Hillingdon	331	292	306	270
Hounslow	309	273	0	0
Humberside	483	427	352	311
ILEA	12,909	11,404	2,367	2,091
Isle of Wight	75	66	300	265
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0
Kent	7,087	6,261	934	825
Kingston	366	323	21	19
Kirklees	45	40	5	4
Knowsley	658	581	152	134
Lancashire	1,652	1,459	4,734	4,182
Leeds	2,336	2,064	4,875	4,307
Leicestershire	1,149	1,015	476	420
Lincolnshire	153	135	16	14
Liverpool	3,538	3,125	2,060	1,820
Manchester	1,055	932	1,339	1,183
Merton	575	508	300	265
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	478	422	583	515
Newham	50	44	15	13
Norfolk	839	741	389	344
Northamptonshire	95	84	20	18
North Tyneside	425	375	774	684
Northumberland	193	170	394	348
North Yorkshire	979	865	109	96
Nottinghamshire	869	768	237	209
Oldham	692	611	1,816	1,604
Oxfordshire	1,717	1,517	64	57
Redbridge	80	71	575	508
Richmond	747	660	358	316
Rochdale	875	773	1,189	1,050
Rotherham	69	61	0	0
Salford	389	344	290	256
Sandwell	43	38	58	51
Sefton	812	717	676	597
Sheffield	620	548	153	135
Shropshire	386	341	120	106
Solihull	122	108	425	375
Somerset	839	741	1,506	1,330
South Tyneside	56	49	200	177
Staffordshire	735	649	822	726
St. Helens	80	71	3,564	3,148
Stockport	161	142	45	40
Suffolk	220	194	232	205

	Plans		*Allocation*	
	Current prices	*Constant prices*	*Current prices*	*Constant prices*
Sunderland	132	117	99	87
Surrey	1,152	1,018	2,411	2,130
Sutton	718	634	168	148
Tameside	251	222	30	27
Trafford	712	629	240	212
Wakefield	340	300	153	135
Walsall	119	105	62	55
Waltham	70	62	17	15
Warwick	692	611	631	557
West Sussex	1,308	1,155	839	741
Wigan	765	676	515	455
Wiltshire	813	718	71	63
Wirral	95	84	2,173	1,920
Wolverhampton	235	208	0	0

Notes:

1. All figures are in £ thousands.
2. Allocations for 1981-82 were made on a different basis from those for later years and have therefore been omitted.
3. The allocations made may be greater than the planned expenditure shown in the table. The information provided on plans was sometimes incomplete and compensatory adjustments were made to allocations.
4. Current prices—cash plans.
5. Constant prices are calculated at 1987-88 prices using the GDP deflator.
6. The planned expenditure relates to new work only, but the allocations included allowances for on-going projects.
7. The allocations shown are those announced before the start of the financial year in question and do not include subsequent revisions.
8. 1989-90 figures exclude Design List projects.
9. Figures are in 100 per cent. terms on which the Department pays grant at 85 per cent.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 8 November 1989

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Sector Employees

Mr. Flynn To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to undertake a separate case study prior to any changes that would remove employment rights from public sector employees as part of any plan to privatise public sector jobs.

Mr. Lilley: No. In all privatisations the Government observe the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (TUPE), which provide that, where there is a transfer of an undertaking, all the employees' rights and liabilities must automatically be transferred to the new employer. Pension rights fall outside the scope of TUPE and are negotiated separately in each case.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the number of people investing in premium bonds since the change to a minimum investment of £100.

Mr. Ryder: In the three months since the change to a minimum purchase of £100 on 1 July, premium bond purchases have averaged 60,000 per month to a value of £23·7 million. In the three months prior to the change premium bond purchases averaged 175,000 per month to a value of £24 million.

Government Statistics

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out those Government statistics on which he now answers parliamentary questions, in the light of the changes in the arrangements of the Central Statistical Office.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* I am placing in the Library a copy of the paper prepared by the Central Statistical Office "Note for the Table Office of the House of Commons and for the House of Lords following the reorganisation of the responsibility for economic statistics: The establishment of the 'new' Central Statistical Office", which sets out the new arrangements.

Child Care Facilities

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will remove the provision of subsidy of child care facilities by employers from the list of items regarded for tax purposes as a benefit in kind; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* There is no list of items regarded for tax purposes as benefits in kind. Such benefits are generally liable to taxation. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no plans to exempt beneficiaries of subsidies for child care from taxation.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the Legal Action Group's report on financial eligibility for legal aid.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) on 6 November 1989 at column *440*.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Attorney-General what was the value of eligibility limits for legal aid in 1979; and what are, in real terms, the value of those limits today.

The Attorney-General: The eligibility limits for civil legal aid between April and November 1979 were £3,600 disposable income and £2,500 disposable capital. The retail prices index increased by 103·69 per cent. between 1979 and 1989. Increasing the 1979 civil legal aid limits by the same amount produces £7,332·85 disposable income and £5,092·25 disposable capital. However, the RPI includes increases in the cost of housing—which have been greater than the increase in prices generally—while housing costs are disregarded in assessing legal aid eligibility.

Regina v. Barnard

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Attorney-General if he will send for the papers in Regina *v.* Barnard heard at Oxford Crown court before His Honour Judge Leo Clark, Queen's counsel on 21 October to consider whether the sentence imposed is such that it is a suitable case to refer to the Court of Appeal for review.

The Attorney-General: Yes.

THE ARTS

Crown Immunity

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether any national galleries or museums are being prosecuted for responsibilities which were formerly covered by Crown immunity.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The science museum has been charged under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 following an inspection of its water cooling plant.

Civil Service Dispersal

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has any plans to relocate his offices to the north-west of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have no such plans.

CIVIL SERVICE

HEO Direct Entry

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will provide an estimate of the administrative cost per successful candidate in the recent direct entry higher executive officer competition.

Mr. Luce: The information will not be available for some time. The Civil Service Commission began interviewing candidates for the scheme on 6 November 1989 and the entire exercise will not be completed until early next summer.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sri Lanka

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present amount of aid now being given to Sri Lanka; and if he will list each project on which aid is being spent.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1988-89 expenditure on Britain's bilateral aid programme to Sri Lanka totalled £19·8 million, though disbursements in the present financial year are expected to be lower. Britain also contributes to programmes administered by the European Community and other international aid organisations. Current bilateral aid projects are as follows:

Colombo Roads Rehabilitation
Power Distribution, Colombo
Supply of Agricultural Tractors to Trincomalee area
Supply of Miscellaneous Vehicles
Land Use and Conservation Project
Mahaweli Catchment Area Project
Sandskipper Project (Artisanal Fisheries)
Coconut processing
Wood burning stoves
Victoria Dam Maintenance
Supply of school furniture
Archaeological assistance in Cultural Triangle
Health and welfare projects (Anti-Malaria, Health Education, Cleft Lip and Palate)
Support for Non-Governmental Organisations (Oxfam, Save the Children Fund and Sarvoydaya)
English Language Training
University link projects
Heads of Mission Gift and Small Projects Schemes
Books Presentation Programme
Training awards in the United Kingdom
Commonwealth Scholars and Fellowship Plan
Joint Funding Schemes
Associate Professional Officers Scheme
Samanalawewa Hydroelectric Power Project
Bus bodies for Colombo
Water supply schemes in Southern Sri Lanka

Oxfam

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place between his Department and Oxfam with regard to the Government contributing towards some of the costs of Oxfam's aid programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My officials and I are in regular contact with Oxfam both about support under our joint funding scheme and about emergency relief measures. Indeed, I have recently decided to increase our grant to Oxfam under the joint funding scheme to £3·5 million next year. We will of course also consider sympathetically requests for assistance for disaster and emergency relief measures if the need arises.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reasons of public policy the immigration portfolio has been moved from Minister of State to a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 6 November 1989 at column *417*.

Wrongful Imprisonment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* by year, *(b)* amount paid and *(c)* cases, the number of occasions ex-gratia payments of compensation to persons wrongfully imprisoned have been made.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested, based on the date on which the final payment of compensation was made from 1980, is as follows:

Year	*Number awarded compensation*	*Total amount paid (£)*
1980	18	92,631
1981	13	88,805
1982	10	114,157
1983	6	45,853
1984	12	14,450
1985	17	216,163
1986	13	154,890
1987	14	153,806
1988	8	56,925

Computer Codes

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the Government are taking to ensure that computer codes involved in the decision-making process involving public safety are *(a)* reliable and *(b)* open to scrutiny by (i) the public and (ii) the scientific community.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to a question from him by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on 6 November 1989 at columns *401-2*. The Home Office is one of the Departments represented on the interdepartmental working committee on software engineering.

Equal Opportunities (Insurance)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received a copy of "Unisex Pricing in Long Term Insurance" by the Equal Opportunities Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We received the report in July and are considering it in the context of the Equal Opportunities Commission's proposals for amending the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Traffic Offences

Mr. Tebbit: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there is any limit placed upon the maximum time after an alleged traffic offence in the Metropolitan police area after which no prosecution will be initiated.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Proceedings for most road traffic offences are subject to the normal limitation that, for summary offences, the information must be laid within six months of the offence.

Arrests

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide figures on the number of arrests made in the Metropolitan police district under section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 in the years 1987 and 1988.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* Information is not held centrally on the number of arrests made under section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986. However in 1987 in the Metropolitan police district (including City of London) there were 2,600 prosecutions under section 5 of this Act of which 2,000 were found guilty. In 1988 the figures were 6,500 and 4,900 respectively.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Nursery Teachers

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the number of nursery teachers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In recent years the allocations of intake numbers to initial teacher training courses for early years (3-8) have been increased and institutions have been encouraged to increase the provision made for early years training within their allocation for primary places. The numbers recruited to such courses have nearly doubled since 1986.

Publicity literature on teacher recruitment, including that aimed at mature entrants and re-entrants, has highlighted the opportunities for early-years specialists.

Under the LEA training grants scheme, in-service training in the teaching of children in primary classes who are younger than "rising five" is a national priority area.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State is chairing a committee of inquiry on the quality of educational provision for three and four-year-olds which will be taking into account the nature of training for teachers and other professional staff involved.

Student Loans

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received to date about student loans.

Mr. Jackson: Since the publication of the White Paper on top-up loans for students, we have received about 4,100 letters, including 49 petitions.

Pupils

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will provide guidance to local education authorities in relation to the provision they make for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department is today issuing a circular that provides guidance about the nature of educational provision that LEAs should make to meet the special educational needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in special schools. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

Disabled Students

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many disabled students were included in his survey of students income and expenditure commissioned by his Department when drawing up proposals for the White Paper on top up loans for students.

Mr. Jackson: The surveys were designed to give a representative sample of the student population as a whole. We have no evidence that the proportion of disabled students included in the surveys was unrepresentative.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Civil Service Dispersal

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any plans to relocate the Privy Council offices to the north-west of England; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no such plans. The Privy Council Office accommodates the Leaders of both Houses, the departments of the Clerk of the Privy Council and of the Judicial Committee of the Council. It would be impossible for those concerned to discharge their responsibilities to the sovereign and to Parliament if the office were to be located outside central London.

Members' Salaries (Attachment)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Lord President of the Council who is authorised to attach the parliamentary salary of right hon. or hon. Members who refuse to pay the community charge or so-called poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe *[holding answer 30 October 1989]:* Normally, the charging authority would serve an attachment of earnings order (AEO) on a debtor's employer, having first obtained a liability order from a magistrates' court. Since hon. Members do not have an employer, unless they authorise the attachment of their earnings, the charging authority would have to enforce recovery of the outstanding sum by other means.

TRANSPORT

Chemicals

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve safety precautions for toxic and inflammable chemicals when being transported by road.

Mr. Atkins: The rules for safely transporting these goods are reviewed regularly.

Radioactive Material

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the *(a)* airports and *(b)* seaports that are used to transport (i) plutonium and (ii) other radioactive material to Europe and Japan.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are over half a million movements of radioactive material per annum. The Department does not collect information on a routine basis on the ports and airports used to export such material to Europe and Japan. In the particular case of plutoniums, I am advised that during the last year the only exports, in greater than gramme quantities, have been to Europe and have been made via Carlisle airport.

Worthing Bypass

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that detailed design work will be prepared for both his Department's preferred route for the A27 in the Worthing area and a real bypass in advance of the public inquiry.

Mr. Atkins: In the special circumstances of the A27 Worthing-Lancing scheme, we have undertaken to carry out full traffic, economic and environmental assessments of the alternative "blue" bypass routes that have been put forward as well as of our preferred "green" route announced in July. This will ensure an adequate basis for all the issues to be thoroughly debated at a public inquiry.

We could not justify carrying out detailed design work on routes other than the one to be published in draft orders unless, following an inquiry, we were persuaded that such an alternative route should be adopted.

Railways

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Burnley, (Mr. Pike), *Official Report*, 30 October, column *84*, he will indicate which railway issues were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I cannot add to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on 30 October at column *84*.

Drink Driving

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what success the Government have had in reducing the incidence of drinking and driving.

Mr. Atkins: I am pleased to report that statistics published today by the Home Office show a further reduction in the proportion of breath tests which are positive. Results published by the transport and road research laboratory of the blood alcohol levels of driver fatalities also show a similar downward trend. This demonstrates our continuing success in changing public attitudes towards drinking and driving. This could not have been achieved by the Government action alone. Much of the credit must go to the police and to the brewers, publicans, and soft drink producers for their support in promoting low-alcohol and alcohol-free drinks and in helping us to bring home to people the awful consequences of drinking and driving.

There is, however, still a long way to go and we must not let up. We shall be launching our Christmas campaign against drinking and driving early in December, with the continuing support of private industry.

Waterloo and City Line

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are being taken to improve services on the Waterloo and City line.

Mr. Portillo: Network SouthEast is well aware of the shortcomings of the Waterloo and City line. It plans a major overhaul of the line over the next few years and a programme of improvements is in hand. Resignalling should be completed by 1992. I am pleased to say that Network SouthEast has today announced that it is to order 20 new coaches to replace the existing fleet. These will be of the most modern design, similar to those on order by London Underground for the Central line. I welcome the British Railways Board's decision to approve this important piece of investment. I expect deliveries to begin in 1992.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Antarctic

82. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part his Department played at the recent Paris conference on the Antarctic.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 31 October, at column *143*.

Cambodia

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the exclusion of Cambodia from international agencies and agreements, including the World Health Organisation's international telecommunications treaties, airline agreements and trade agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Cambodia's participation in international agencies and agreements is a matter for the agencies and authorities concerned. The Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea currently occupies Democratic Kampuchea's United Nations seat. We have not opposed acceptance of the credentials of Democratic Kampuchea, but have made clear our abhorrence of Pol Pot and his associates.

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement about the Government's policy towards Cambodia.

Mr. Hurd: The British Government's objective is a sovereign and independent Cambodia whose people are free to decide their own future. We do not have diplomatic relations with the unelected regime put into power by the Vietnamese. We have consistently made plain our repugnance for the Khmer Rouge. We have never given, and will never give, support of any kind to the Khmer Rouge.

These objectives remain unchanged but we have reviewed their implementation in the light of recent events. Vietnam has withdrawn its combat units from Cambodia. The international conference at Paris failed to reach agreement on a political settlement. Fighting continues within Cambodia itself and the need for humanitarian aid has grown. In these circumstances we have decided:

(i) to build up our humanitarian aid programme. We shall continue to provide substantial help to the many thousands of Cambodians living in camps along the Thai-Cambodia border who have been made homeless by the years of fighting. We stipulate that none of our aid should reach the Khmer Rouge. We shall now increase the humanitarian aid which we give inside Cambodia itself while continuing to channel this aid through the non-governmental organisations and organisations such as UNICEF and not direct to the Phnom Penh regime. As part of this policy, I propose to offer now a further contribution of £250,000 to UNICEF for humanitarian projects inside Cambodia. Arrangements will be made for a member of the British embassy in Bangkok to visit Phnom Penh soon to report on the situation at first hand. I am asking the heads of the NGOs to meet me to discuss details;

(ii) to adapt our stance at the UN. The report of the UN credentials committee again recommended acceptance of credentials of Democratic Kampuchea for the Cambodian seat and was approved without a vote. That question has thus already been settled for the present session. Our long-standing position on this legal and technical matter in no way implies readiness to deal with the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea as a government, much less support for the Khmer Rouge. We have decided with our friends and partners to modify the draft resolution which we, with 74 other UN member states, are co-sponsoring at the United Nations General Assembly in the debate on 15 November. These changes are intended to make clear that the situation in Cambodia has changed and that we do not support the Khmer Rouge in any way.

We wish to see peace and stability restored to Cambodia through a comprehensive political settlement which will create the conditions in which the Cambodian people can elect a government of their choice, free from the fear of Khmer Rouge atrocities, foreign occupation or civil war. In consultation with our friends and allies, notably the ASEAN group of countries, we shall continue to work to this end.

Hong Kong

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he proposes to take any action in response to the recent Chinese sacking of two members of the Basic Law Drafting Committee in Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: Members of the Basic Law drafting committee are appointed by the standing committee of the Chinese National People's Congress. The suspension of two members is a matter for the Chinese authorities and the members themselves. We hope that the Chinese Government will take full account of opinion in Hong Kong in their drafting of the Basic Law.

Gibraltar

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why Gibraltar does not have elected representation in the European Parliament.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the observations made on this matter by my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary on 20 June 1984.

Amnesty International

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to ascertain the reasons for the refusal of the Indian Government to grant entry visas to representatives of Amnesty International in January, March and December 1985, November 1986, November 1987 and March 1989.

Mr. Maude: The Indian Government have made their views on Amnesty International clear in public statements. Equally, we have made known to them that we regard Amnesty International as a serious and responsible organisation. The issuing of visas is a matter for the Indian Government.

WALES

Labour Statistics

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the changes in the totals and percentages of unemployed in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* the area covered by the valleys initiative since (i) July 1986, (ii) July 1987 and (iii) July 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is shown in the table. The figures used are not adjusted for seasonality and are affected by the change in benefit regulations for under 18-year-olds introduced in September 1988.

	Change in number of unemployed	*[1]Change in unemployment rate (Percentage points)*
July 1986-September 1989		
Valleys area	−19,964	−9·1
Wales	−84,592	−8·1
July 1987-September 1989		
Valleys area	−13,728	−6·3

	Change in number of unemployed	[1]*Change in unemployment rate (Percentage points)*
Wales	−61,535	−6·0
July 1988-September 1989		
Valleys area	−7,630	−3·5
Wales	−35,478	−3·3

[1] The rates used for Wales are on the "narrow base" (ie the denominator consisting of employees in employment and unemployed claimants) which provides the closest basis on which a comparison can be made with my estimates for the valleys programme area.

Since the launch of the valleys programme in June 1988, the unemployment rate in the valleys area has fallen by 3·9 percentage points compared to a fall in Wales of 3·4 percentage points.

Health Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will break down the distribution of the sum of money allocated for the implementation of the White Paper, "Working for Patients", by authority and by the sub-divisions as in his answer to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside of 31 October; and what uses he expects to be made of the cash sum for health authorities' discretionary use.

Mr. Grist: The distribution of the £1·62 million allocated for the discretionary use of health authorities in meeting the costs of implementing the White Paper "Working for Patients" during the current financial year is shown in the table:

	£ million
Clwyd	0·19
East Dyfed	0·13
Gwent	0·23
Gwynedd	0·13
Mid Glamorgan	0·26
Pembrokeshire	0·07
Powys	0·08
South Glamorgan	0·29
West Glamorgan	0·20
Welsh Health Common Services Authority	0·04
	1·62

The funding provided recognises the need for health authorities to strengthen their systems and staffing particularly in the fields of finance and personnel in order to meet the operational requirements of the White Paper reforms. While information is not available on the precise deployment of these additional funds—since this is a matter for each health authority to decide in the light of its own local circumstances—all authorities have confirmed that they have borne in mind the following considerations:

(i) the information technology and staffing consequences of the need to introduce and maintain capital asset registers and to generate capital charges in respect of all registered assets;

(ii) the staffing consequences associated with the introduction of new contractual arrangements for service provision particularly in the contract negotiation, billing, paymaster and accounting function;

(iii) the staffing consequences associated with the need for the introduction of comprehensive (computerised) manpower management systems;

(iv) the need for district co-ordinators and supporting staff etc. (as necessary) to establish medical audit as district level.

The balance of the additional £5 million which the Department has provided toward the cost of implementing the White Paper proposals in the current financial year has been reserved centrally for the various purposes outlined in the table, but it is not possible to say at the present time how much of this funding will be allocated in due course to individual health authorities.

(a) £2·34 million has been earmarked in respect of authorities' information technology and resource management initiative plans under the revised Information and Information Technology Strategy for the NHS in Wales which is to be published shortly. The distribution of these funds between health authorities will be subject of detailed discussions between health authorities and my officials;

(b) £0·11 million has been reserved for medical audit purposes including support for some specific projects and the appointment of a clinical adviser to head a Clinical Resource User Group and to liaise with the Welsh Advisory Group on Medical Audit;

(c) £0·18 million is required for the cost this year of the Value for Money Unit which has been established to lead the drive for cost improvements and income generation, to promote opportunities for marketing NHS expertise and to advise authorities on the commercial exploitation of innovation;

(d) £0·14 million has been set aside for the cost of additional training at the all Wales level of health authority personnel and finance staff and for strengthening the functions undertaken by the Manpower Consultancy Service;

(e) £0·11 million has been reserved for preparatory work to enable the implementation of the White Paper proposals relating to family practitioner services. Of this sum, £0·08 million has been allocated to the family practitioner committees in Wales and £0·3 million is being used centrally to help meet the cost of appointing general managers to FPCs in Wales;

(f) £0·50 million is to be used in establishing treatment centres at Bridgend, Bangor and Cardiff but it is not possible at this stage to give an accurate assessment of the distribution of this funding between the managing authorities.

Untreated Sewage

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) by what date he plans to end the discharge of untreated sewage from Wales into the sea, whether by long or short outfalls;

(2) what assessment he has made of the cost of ending the discharge of untreated sewage from Wales into the sea;

(3) whether he will make it his policy to end the discharge of untreated sewage from Wales into the sea and into estuaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Government remain to be convinced that prior treatment is always necessary or desirable where properly designed and sited long sea outfalls are available. However, a study has been commissioned, to be undertaken by Consultants in Environmental Sciences Ltd., to investigate the likely costs and benefits, both environmental and financial, of applying various treatment standards to all major discharges.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the outfalls into the sea and estuaries carrying untreated sewage from Wales which are currently being extended or for which extensions are being planned, with the cost of each project and its projected date of completion.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig. Information is held centrally only in respect of investment on outfalls in connection with the United Kingdom's programme to achieve compliance with its obligations under the EC's bathing water directive. This was placed in the Library by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 20 October.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the outfalls which currently convey untreated sewage from Wales into the sea and into estuaries.

Mr. Grist: This information is available on National Rivers Authority registers and is not held centrally.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

European Single Market

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms have approached his Department for information concerning the single market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The DTI has recorded over 260,000 inquiries for information on the single market since our 'Europe Open for Business' campaign was launched in March 1988, including more than 150,000 calls to our 1992 telephone hotline. The large majority of these requests have been from individual firms or business organisations. In addition, DTI Ministers and officials have spoken at more than 1,250 single market conferences and seminars since the campaign began, mainly to business audiences.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many single European market measures were agreed in principle, adopted or had common positions under the Spanish presidency of the European Commission; and whether this total exceeds those under previous presidencies.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* A record 68 measures aimed at removing barriers to trade within the Community were finally adopted, agreed in principle, or had common positions agreed for submission to the European Parliament, under the Spanish presidency of the Council of Ministers in the first half of this year. Of these 23 came from the single market White Paper. The comparable figures for earlier presidencies were:

Presidency and Date	*All measures*	*White Paper*
Luxembourg		
July-December 1985	32	22
Netherlands		
January-June 1986	13	4
United Kingdom		
July-December 1986	48	24
Belgium		
January-June 1987	23	15
Denmark		
July-December 1987	31	8
Federal Republic of Germany		
January-June 1988	56	23
Greece		
July-December 1988	54	18
Spain		
January-June 1989	68	23

Note: The figures in the White Paper column are for adoptions, except for the Spanish Presidency, which includes three common positions awaiting final adoption.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the total expenditure per year associated with his Department's single market unit.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* Expenditure to date on the Department of Trade and Industry's "Europe Open for Business" campaign, which is the responsibility of my Department's single market unit, is around £13 million. Of this, around £8·9 million is represented by national advertising. The remaining £4·1 million has provided a detailed and comprehensive range of literature; a national telephone inquiry service and mailing operation; the Spearhead computer database; video materials; research into business preparations; and a major series of business conferences in 1988.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make it his policy to hold six-monthly national conferences bringing together business men and women, trades unions and professional bodies to discuss the implications of the European single market of 1992.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* I have no plans at present to hold regular conferences of this type. Department of Trade and Industry Ministers and officials have already spoken at over 1,250 single market conferences and seminars, and are further committed to participating in over 100 more. In addition, my Department's extensive day-to-day contact with business and representational bodies provides ample opportunity to discuss single market issues.

Woven Spun Cotton

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy towards placing restrictions on the importation of woven spun cotton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are various restraints on imports into the United Kingdom of woven spun cotton fabrics from low-cost supplying countries under the European Community's agreements under the multi-fibre arrangement and other restraint arrangements. If it can be clearly demonstrated that unrestricted imports from a particular country subject to these arrangements are causing or threatening disruption of the United Kingdom market, my Department will consider whether it is in the United Kingdom interest to request restraint action in Brussels.

Messrs. Gary Gilbert and Sankey

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will investigate whether Messrs. Gary Gilbert and Sankey or any of its employees and employees of related companies were knowingly connected with companies in whose shares they traded during the period 1982 to 1988.

Mr. Redwood: The concept of being knowingly connected with a company is one contained in the Company Securities (Insider Dealing) Act 1985. Investigations into possible contraventions of that Act are not normally announced. If the hon. Member has information suggesting that there may have been such a contravention he should draw it to my right hon. Friend's attention.

British Steel (Flotation)

Mr. Boldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total cost of the flotation of British Steel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The total cost to the Government of the sale of British Steel is estimated to be as follows.

	£ million
Underwriting	21·3
Selling and broking commission	1·7
Receiving banks	4·3
Marketing	11·6
Advisers' fees	5·6
Other costs (excluding stamp duty)	0·2
Overseas costs	2·8
	47·5

This represents less than 2 per cent. of the gross proceeds of the sale.

Telecommunications (Liberalisation)

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any decisions have been made as a result of the recommendations from the Director General of Telecommunications about the further liberalisation of telecommunication services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley *[pursuant to the reply, 15 June 1989, c. 481-82]:* I can now inform the House that I have signed the new branch systems general licence under the Telecommunications Act 1984. The licence enters into force today.

The new licence provides for significant further liberalisation in a number of areas. In particular, it allows "simple resale" whereby companies and others can sell on to third parties any spare capacity they have on the private lines they lease from British Telecom and Mercury. The licence thus gives operators of private networks complete freedom in their use within the United Kingdom.

The licence also contains a condition designed to limit the intrusion caused by unsolicited telephone and fax sales calls. Under it, users will be able to request that a particular company ceases such calls and if the company continues to make them, it will be in breach of the licence.

Since the licence will govern the operation of the overwhelming majority of private networks and branch systems in the country, as well as the provision of telecommunications services, we have been particularly careful to produce a document which will put into practice the measures announced by my hon. Friend in the simplest and most effective way.

We have also taken the opportunity to simplify further some of the conditions, particularly those relating to the provision of international data services.

We have also added a requirement that specially adapted telephones for the hard of hearing located in lifts to which the public have access should be clearly signposted. We hope these further changes will bring additional benefits to the users of telecommunications in the United Kingdom.

In preparing the new licence, my Department has received detailed advice from the Office of Telecommunications. I am grateful to the Director General of Telecommunications for this advice and for his recommendations, which have formed the basis for the further liberalisations that are contained in the licence.

Copies of the new licence will be generally available at a cost of £5 from the Office of Telecommunications, and I will ensure that they are placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

ENERGY

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the post-1980 NATO exercises in which the NATO Wartime Oil Organisation's United Kingdom headquarters and the United Kingdom National Oil Board have been exercised.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The United Kingdom National Oil Board and the eastern branch of the NATO Wartime Oil Organisation have participated in a number of post-1980 NATO exercises.

Plutonium (Transportation)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements for airport facilities British Nuclear Fuels plc. has made to transport plutonium from Sellafield to Dounreay and Europe in the light of the forthcoming closure of Carlisle airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As this is an operational matter for BNFL, I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements have been made in the event of a nuclear accident occurring in the United Kingdom larger than the so-called reference accident.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the Prime Minister's statement on 12 December 1988. She said that extensive consultations with the emergency services and local authorities have

> "confirmed the availability of contingency plans which would permit an effective response to be made to any nuclear accident, including those with more widespread effects than the specific site and off-site plans are designed to cater for".—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. *388*.]

Off-site emergency exercises are regularly based on an assumed radioactive release going significantly beyond that which could arise from the reference accident to ensure this wider capability is tested.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the increase in electricity prices in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Annual percentage changes in electricity prices in current terms, that is, with no adjustment for inflation, are given in the table. Separate figures are given for domestic and industrial consumers.

Change in prices over previous year per cent.

Year	*Domestic*	*Industrial*
1979	8·5	11·1
1980	27·3	23·3
1981	20·2	15·8

Year	*Domestic*	*Industrial*
1982	9·8	9·5
1983	3·7	0·4
1984	1·4	−0·2
1985	3·2	3·9
1986	2·2	0·9
1987	−0·5	−2·9
1988	5·4	5·5

Source: Fuel price indices, Energy Trends.

Gas Prices

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the increase in gas prices in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Annual percentage changes in gas prices in current terms, that is, with no adjustment for inflation, are given in the table. Separate figures are given for domestic and industrial consumers.

Change in prices over previous year (Percentage)

Year	*Domestic*	*Industrial*
1979	3·7	14·1
1980	16·6	36·0
1981	26·0	21·2
1982	24·7	6·3
1983	12·0	1·7
1984	3·7	3·3
1985	4·1	6·8
1986	1·8	−12·8
1987	−1·0	−5·8
1988	0·8	−4·8

Source: Fuel price indices, Energy Trends.

Coal Mining Subsidies

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by when the Government intend to comply with EEC directives on eliminating subsidies to the British coal mining industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There are no EC directives on eliminating subsidies to the British coal mining industry. The Government already comply with the EC directive on coal state aids under which member states can provide specified financial support to their coal industries subject to either the approval of, or prior notification to, the Commission.

Energy Efficiency

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how the Government intend to improve energy efficiency in the United Kingdom during 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Energy efficiency is primarily a matter for individual consumers. The Energy Efficiency Office will continue to provide help and guidance to consumers, to improve their energy management and to encourage the energy efficiency industry. For Government Departments, where the Government have direct responsibility for energy use, we announced a framework for securing energy savings rising to £45 million per year, equivalent to 15 per cent. of their energy bills, over five years.

Power Stations

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if provision will be made to make available to independent electricity generators the portfolio of redundant power stations currently held by National Power and PowerGen.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Electricity Act 1989 includes, in schedule 3, a provision which could enable one electricity licence holder to make a compulsory purchase order covering surplus land held by another.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many YTS starts and how many leavers were recorded by each payment type, by male and female, and by one or two-year training entitlement by standard training agency in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, for each of the last three months.

Mr. Nicholls: As the information is contained in several tables I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy in the Library.

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, (1) pursuant to the answer of the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) of 31 October, *Official Report,* column *160,* what are the criteria for the 1990 target number of factory inspectors;

(2) what was the target number of factory inspectors for 1 April 1988 and April 1989; and what it is for 1 April 1990.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government have made financial provision for the Health and Safety Executive to allow recruitment as follows:

	Total factory inspectors in HSE[1]	*Inspectors in HM Factory Inspectorate*
1 April 1988	634	574
1 April 1989	[2]649	588
1 April 1990	640	590

[1] Includes inspectors on non-inspection duties eg those contributing to policy or technical standards.

[2] Following an unexpectedly high rate of resignations during 1987-88, this "target" was reduced in October 1988 by HSE to 638.

The criteria for HSE's 1990 target for factory inspectors were set out in the Health and Safety Commission's plan of work for 1989-90 and beyond.

Labour and Social Affairs Council

Mr. Wood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Labour and Social Affairs Council meeting held in Brussels on 30 October.

Mr. Eggar: The Council agreed some important items in the field of health and safety at work. They reached common positions on a directive to improve the minimum health and safety requirements for workers handling heavy loads, and on a directive covering health and safety requirements for workers working with visual display units.

The Council continued its discussion of a revised draft of the charter of social rights. The presidency conclusions on the draft charter will now go forward with a view to a decision on adoption, to the European Council in December.

A report on a comparative study on working conditions in member states, drawn up by the Commission, was also discussed and welcomed. The Commission was invited to continue the work in consultation with member states.

Disabled People (Quotas)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the various grants for which employers may apply in order to facilitate the employment of disabled people; and if he will indicate in each case *(a)* the amounts allocated by his Department and *(b)* the amounts taken up by employers, in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 6 November 1989]*: My Department provides a variety of help to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities, including six special schemes to help overcome specific barriers to work. Two of these offer grants to employers:

(a) the Job Introduction Scheme—grants towards an individual's wages during a trial period.

(b) the Adaptations to Premises and Equipment Scheme—grants to employers to adapt their premises or equipment to enable a specific disabled employee to work more effectively and productively.

The other four offer help directly to individuals. Money is allocated to the special schemes as a bloc, and expenditure on any one scheme is not constrained by estimates for that scheme; these are based each year on previous take-up and other evidence of likely demand.

Between 1979-80 and 1988-89, total expenditure on all the special schemes for the disabled rose from £743,000 per annum to £5,669,000 per annum.

The financial information requested about the two schemes is as follows:

Job introduction scheme

Year	*Expenditure estimate £*	*Actual expenditure £*
1979-80	334,000	297,201
1980-81	457,000	269,433
1981-82	425,000	354,588
1982-83	531,500	439,861
1983-84	571,000	567,980
1984-85	646,000	659,000
1985-86	760,000	674,000
1986-87	837,000	574,000
1987-88	920,000	619,000
1988-89	609,000	614,000

Adaptations to premises and equipment scheme

Year	*Expenditure estimate £*	*Actual expenditure £*
1979-80	330,000	50,000
1980-81	381,000	64,233
1981-82	150,000	71,469
1982-83	177,000	107,334
1983-84	280,000	134,412
1984-85	190,000	243,649
1985-86	250,000	295,000
1986-87	450,000	256,000
1987-88	480,000	484,000
1988-89	354,000	423,000

NORTHERN IRELAND

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO exercise Wintex/Cimex 1987 and exercise Wintex/Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercise themselves; and what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Mr. Cope: The Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments each play their part in testing those procedures in which we have an interest. Staff participate as required. It would not be appropriate for me to supply the detail requested.

Arts

The Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the visits made by each of the Ministers in his Department to events in the arts in the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 1 November 1989]*: The information on official visits to arts events is as follows:

Secretary of State
Julius Caesar, Grand Opera House.
Armada Exhibition, Ulster Museum.
Don Giovanni, Grand Opera House.

Minister of State
Spanish Armada Exhibition—Ulster Museum.
Ulster Orchestra Concert—London.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State responsible for Health
Ulster Society of Women Artists Annual Summer Exhibition—QUB Department of Architecture, 15 Chlorine Gardens.
Save the Children Reception—Dolls House Exhibition—Ulster Folk Museum.
Faust—Grand Opera House.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State responsible for the Environment
Look Back in Anger.
Jazz Concert—Cornmarket.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State responsible for Education
Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts—Reception at Hillsborough Castle.
Armada Exhibition—Ulster Museum.
Young Farmers' Clubs Arts Festival, Ballymena.
Performance of Peter Pan by Scottish Ballet—Grand Opera House, Belfast.
"The Entertainers"—Little Theatre, Bangor.
National Choral Competition—Whitla Hall.
Opening Emigration Gallery and Ship—Ulster American Folk Park, Omagh.
American Waterways Wind Orchestra Performance—Donegall Quay, Belfast.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State responsible for Economic Development
National Portrait Gallery, London—private viewing.
Tate Gallery, London—private viewing.
Hayward Gallery, London—private viewing.
Grand Opera House, Belfast.
Tate Gallery, London—reception.
Castleward Opera.
British Museum.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State responsible for Agriculture

Spanish Armada Exhibition—Ulster Museum
British Food and Farming Exhibition—Cultra Manor.
Musical Evening.
Cinema Visit.
Queen's Film Theatre.

DEFENCE

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what investigations have been undertaken into the presence of polychlorinated biphenyls in radar units and other equipment; what steps have been taken to arrange for their safe disposal; what measures have been taken to protect the health and safety of operators; what plans there are to discontinue their use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Extensive checks have been made over a number of years by the services and the Procurement Executive to ascertain whether equipment in use contains polychlorinated biphenyls. Such checks continue to be made as required. When disposal action needs to be taken, special arrangements are made to ensure that polychlorinated biphenyls are disposed of in accordance with the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980.

Appropriate control measures have been laid down in general guidance on the handling of equipment containing polychlorinated biphenyls which has been issued to all units and establishments. This includes advice on the hazards involved and the steps to be taken to prevent contamination, including the use of protective clothing as appropriate.

In accordance with the relevant regulations, whole equipments or components containing polychlorinated biphenyls, which are already in service, are not disposed of until they become obsolete or reach the end of their service life, unless they need replacing sooner.

Defence Procurement

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will estimate the value of defence procurement in the northern region.

Mr. Neubert: Table 6.9 in volume II of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989" (SDE) shows that in 1986-87, the latest year for which figures are available, equipment expenditure of some £500 million was recorded against locations in the northern region of England. The assumptions which underlie the calculations are explained in an essay on pages 61-62 of SDE 88 volume II.

Emergency Broadcasts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the liaison arrangements between his Department and the United States civilian or military authorities on the proposed content of emergency radio and television broadcasts in the United Kingdom during a pre-war crisis.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No liaison arrangements have been made between my Department and United States civilian or military authorities on the proposed content of emergency radio and television broadcasts in the United Kingdom during a pre-war crisis, but there would naturally be liaison between the United Kingdom and its NATO allies over such matters at such a time.

NATO Courses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of United Kingdom military and civil participants in the biannual courses on civil-military co-operation held by NATO at Oberammergau.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom sends military field-grade officers of rank from major to colonel and civilians of equivalent status who have responsibilities for civil emergency or contingency planning, crisis management or aid to the civil authorities.

Civil-Military Co-operation Conference

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of United Kingdom delegates to the annual conference on civil-military co-operation at headquarters allied forces central Europe, Brunssum.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: United Kingdom representatives at lieutenant colonel or equivalent level who have responsibilities for contingency planning and crisis management will attend the conference.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO Exercise Wintex-Cimex 1987 and Exercise Wintex-Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercises themselves; and what are the ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department plays its part in testing those procedures in which we have an interest. Staff participate as required; it would not be appropriate for me to supply the detail requested.

Immingham and Tilbury Ports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present state of progress towards *(a)* Immingham and *(b)* Tilbury ports' development of Z-berths for nuclear-powered submarine visits.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The only ports which are currently under discussion with local authorities as possible venues for visits by nuclear-powered submarines are Swansea and Tilbury. Regarding Tilbury, I have nothing to add to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) on 5 May 1989 at column *277*.

Meteorological and Hydrographic Offices

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the nature of the differences between the agency to be established for the Meteorological Office and the defence support agency to be established for the Hydrographic Office at Taunton.

Mr. Neubert: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence explained in his speech in the defence debate on 18 October, at column 155, many support activities are an integral part of overall military capability and must remain within the chain of command. Nevertheless, we believe that many of these support activities can be organised on the same lines as full Next Steps agencies, within framework documents which set out the terms under which the support agencies are to be managed on a day-to-day basis. In this way, it is possible for more of the Ministry of Defence to share in the advantages of the Government's Next Steps initiative.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place copies of the criteria governing the management and operation of *(a)* the agency to be established for the Meteorological Office and *(b)* the agency to be established for the Hydrographic Office in the Library.

Mr. Neubert: It is my intention to place in the Library, when these activities become agencies next year, copies of their framework documents, excluding any classified or commercially sensitive parts.

Defence Support Agencies

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what *(a)* military survey activities, *(b)* defence accounts activities and *(c)* Royal Air Force training activities are due to become defence support agencies; and what is the nature of any other activities that are currently being considered for possible re-organisation into defence support agencies.

Mr. Neubert: We plan to start operating the Hydrographic Office at Taunton as a defence support agency from April 1990. In addition, we are currently preparing framework documents to cover the operations of the following activities:

(a) Directorate of Military Survey at Feltham (excluding overseas elements)
(b) Director General Defence Accounts, including its central bill-paying office at Liverpool and pay-roll offices at Cheadle Hulme and elsewhere
(c) The RAF's training organisation within RAF Support command, based at various locations within the United Kingdom
(d) Service Children's Schools in North West Europe.

We are also looking at a wide range of other possibilities for operation as defence support agencies, including activities in the areas of aircraft maintenance and repair, stores and transport, naval bases, computer services, education and chemical defence research.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what service schools in Germany are due to become defence support agencies.

Mr. Neubert: As announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 18 October at column 155, we are considering operating service children's schools in north-west Europe as a defence support agency, run on Next Steps lines, but remaining within the defence chain of command. The exact scope of the proposed new organisation is under study. There are 87 service children's schools in north-west Europe, located in the Federal Republic of Germany (and Berlin), Belgium and Sardinia.

Military Flights

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what details are required as standard operational practice before the competent authority authorises a flight by military aircraft operating within the United Kingdom airspace; and why no central records are kept of unauthorised low flights by military aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: The requirement for information varies according to the circumstances. No central records are kept of unauthorised low flights because none is required.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the offer by the Federal Republic of Germany to pay the costs of the alteration of the MSD 2000 radar to satisfy United Kingdom requirements for the European fighter aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Under agreed arrangements for procuring individual items of commonly required equipment, participants in the European fighter aircraft project pay for work undertaken within their own country. Two international consortia in which the industry of all four nations are represented have submitted proposals for developing radar for the European fighter aircraft; and discussions are proceeding among the European fighter aircraft nations with the aim of making a choice acceptable to all four participants.

Frigates

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the purchase of ships built under licence to the design of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation frigate replacement 90 programme in United Kingdom shipyards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Following the United Kingdom withdrawal from the NFR90 project, we are looking at how best to meet the Royal Navy's requirement for a replacement for the type 42 destroyer, to come into service at about the turn of the century. It is most unlikely that this would involve licensing any design which might emerge from the NFR90 project.

Low Flying

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many courts martial have been held in the RAF for alleged low-flying offences in the last 10 years for which information is available; how many findings of guilt there have been; and what sentences have been imposed.

Mr. Neubert: The table provides details of the Royal Air Force courts martial for low-flying offences in the last 10 years at which the accused were found guilty; there have been no cases in the past 10 years where individuals charged under sections 51 or 52 of the Air Force Act 1955 were found not guilty.

Year	*Number of courts martial*	*Number of personnel involved*	*Charges under Air Force Act 1955*	*Sentence*
1985	1	1	Sections 51 and 52	£300 fine and Severe Reprimand
1989	1	1	Sections 51 and 52	Loss of 18 months seniority and Severe Reprimand[1]

In addition one service man was charged under section 69[2] in connection with the 1989 case, and was sentenced to the loss of 18 months seniority and a severe reprimand[1].

[1] Findings and sentence subject to confirmation.

[2] Conduct to the prejudice of good order and Air Force discipline.

Conventional Forces

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the effect on the NATO doctrine of forward defence in the event that the CFE talks achieve substantial reductions in conventional forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Any CFE agreement will require the Alliance to examine its force structures. Our current assessment is that forward defence is likely to remain a key element in NATO strategy for the foreseeable future.

Airborne Stand-off Radar

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the deployment of an airborne stand-off radar system in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Studies into the feasibility and cost of an airborne stand-off radar system are in progress. No decisions to deploy such a system have been taken.

Conventional Weapons

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the redistribution of forces within NATO in the event that the CFE talks achieve substantial reductions in conventional weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The implications of a CFE agreement for NATO forces are under consideration in the Alliance.

Leaded Petrol

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any vehicles belonging to or used by his Department and used on public roads run on leaded petrol.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Most vehicles used by the Ministry of Defence on public roads either run on unleaded petrol, or use diesel fuel. However, there is a residual number of vehicles, in particular some types of Land-Rover, which run on leaded petrol and which it would not be cost effective to convert to unleaded fuel. As they reach the end of their useful life they are replaced with vehicles which can run on unleaded petrol or are diesel-engined.

SCOTLAND

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Scoland if he has been approached by Strathclyde police about the length of time taken by the West German federal police to release relevant evidence in the form of an Air Malta loading list from Frankfurt; and what effect this has had on the investigation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The investigation is being carried out by Dumfries and Galloway constabulary with assistance from Strathclyde police and other police forces who report to my noble and learned friend the Lord Advocate.

The police have not found it necessary to approach the Lord Advocate or any Government Minister in this connection.

The Lord Advocate does not consider that it is helpful to speculate upon specific lines of inquiry or their relevance to the general investigation.

Both he and the chief constable of Dumfries and Galloway constabulary have recently emphasised the importance and productivity of a good working relationship which exists with the West German police and prosecution authorities.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether all the available evidence that is held by the West German police forces investigating the Lockerbie air crash has been made available to the British police force investigating the crash.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As I have stated in another answer, my noble and learned friend, the Lord Advocate has overall responsibility for the criminal investigation and any criminal proceedings in this country which may result from it.

In a press statement which he issued on Monday 30 October and again on 5 November he emphasised that the degree of international co-operation in this case has been unprecedented. That co-operation has included unprecedented access to evidential material held by the West German federal police (BKA). Neither he nor the chief constable of Dumfries and Galloway constabulary, who is leading the international inquiry, has any reason to believe that any evidence available to the German police has been denied to the investigating team.

Oil Seed Rape

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the impact of the cultivation of oil seed rape on human health or allergies; and if his Department will sponsor any research on this subject.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Although oil seed rape pollens have been identified as a cause of allergic reactions in some individuals there are at present no medical grounds for distinguishing their effects from those of the pollens of other plants and trees. A range of medicines is available for the treatment of such allergic conditions.

The Scottish Office will give favourable consideration to any soundly based relevant research proposal.

Childhood Leukaemia

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by year to date, and by health authority, the number of incidences of childhood leukaemia that have been reported following the Chernobyl accident; and what was the reported number of incidences in 1980 and 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of cases of leukaemia recorded in children in the 0 to 14 age group in Scotland, analysed by health board of residence in the years 1980, 1986 and 1987, are shown in the following table. 1987 is the latest year for which cancer registration in Scotland is complete.

Health Board	*1980*	*1986*	*1987*
Argyll and Clyde	4	4	6
Ayrshire and Arran	2	1	4
Borders	1	0	0
Dumfries and Galloway	1	0	0
Fife	3	2	7
Forth Valley	4	1	3
Grampian	3	5	2
Greater Glasgow	12	11	9
Highland	3	1	0
Lanarkshire	5	1	5
Lothian	6	6	9
Orkney	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0
Tayside	7	0	5
Western Isles	0	0	1
Scotland	51	32	51

Gaelic Broadcasting

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to support a Gaelic broadcasting council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Government are currently considering the future of Gaelic broadcasting, including Comunn na Gaidhlig's proposals for the establishment of a Gaelic broadcasting council; and we will announce our conclusion shortly.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of Grampian Television to discuss Gaelic broadcasting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met the managing director of Grampian Television on 5 April 1989 to discuss issues, including Gaelic broadcasting, arising from the broadcasting White Paper. The meeting was also attended by representatives of Scottish Television and Border Television.

Advisers

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all current advisers to his Department who are not career civil servants, giving their date of appointment and fees.

Mr. Rifkind: There are currently two part-time advisers to the Scottish Office. They are:

Professor J. Lamb CBE, Scientific Adviser, appointed on 20 September 1987.

Dr. C. K. Bennington, Industrial Adviser, appointed on 8 August 1988.

It is not our practice to divulge the remuneration of industrial advisers. Fees are negotiated individually and relate to previous outside earnings.

School Boards

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number, in each regional council area, of schools in *(a)* the primary sector and *(b)* the secondary sector which now have a school board in place, showing each total as a percentage of the total number of such schools in the area.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table:

Number of schools with school board

Region/Islands areas	*Primary schools*	*Percentage of Primary schools*	*Secondary schools*	*Percentage of Secondary schools*
Borders	35	45	7	78
Central	60	51	10	53
Dumfries and Galloway	58	50	13	81
Fife	72	50	15	79
Grampian	151	55	28	72
Highland	83	41	22	81
Lothian	159	65	40	78
Orkney	15	75	5	83
Shetland	15	54	8	100
Strathclyde	636	71	158	85
Tayside	96	52	25	78
Western Isles	31	69	5	100

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number, in each regional council area, of schools in *(a)* the primary sector and *(b)* the secondary sector which did not require to hold elections for school boards, showing these as a percentage of the total number of boards currently in place.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table.

Number of schools where a School Board has been established without a contested election

Region/Islands area	*Primary*	*Percentage of total number of primary School Boards*	*Secondary*	*Percentage of total number of secondary School Boards*
Borders	7	20	2	29
Central	22	37	0	0
Dumfries and Galloway	28	48	5	38
Fife	23	32	4	27
Grampian	48	32	5	18
Highland	37	45	3	14
Lothian	39	25	4	10
Orkney	0	0	0	0
Shetland	5	33	0	0
Strathclyde	258	41	50	32
Tayside	29	30	4	16
Western Isles	22	71	1	20

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list of the bodies which have expressed themselves to his Department *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against the proposal to create three separate Nature Conservancy Councils, as referred to in the letter to the hon. Member for Linlithgow from the Minister of State at his Department, dated 31 October.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department consultation paper "Scotland's Natural Heritage" invited comments on the proposals to merge the Countryside Commission for Scotland (CCS) with a new Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland (NCCS) to form a single natural heritage agency for Scotland. Although not specifically invited to do so, some respondents commented on the Government's decision to create three separate NCCs but it is not possible to give a breakdown of these in the manner requested. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to announce the outcome of the consultation exercise soon.

Health Service (Grading Appeals)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report*, to the latest available date, the number of appeals against clinical grading which have now been heard, the number that are still outstanding and the figures for each health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 1 November 1989]:* The information is not available since there is no central record of the total number of appeals lodged nor of the number resolved at unit level.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what basis is the notional income on capital calculated, under the Housing Benefit (Community Charge Rebate) (Scotland) Regulations 1988, such that £1 is deemed the notional income for every £250 increment of capital between £3,000 and £8,000.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

Tariff income on capital progressively reduces entitlement to community charge rebate for those with higher levels of capital. The Government believe that it is right to expect claimants with savings above £3,000 to use some of those resources to meet their day-to-day living expenses thereby reducing the burden on taxpayers.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Local Government Finance

83. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the proportion of *(a)* all pensioner households and *(b)* those pensioner households financially dependent solely on state benefit likely to receive a rebate on the community charge.

Mr. Scott: All elderly people financially dependent solely on state benefits will be entitled to receive community charge benefit, and the vast majority of them will be entitled to maximum community charge benefit. The precise number of pensioner households who will receive community charge benefit will be affected by the community charge transitional relief scheme, and I will write to my hon. Friend about the remainder of his question when the Government's public expenditure plans have been published.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will now reconsider the six-month rule relating to attendance allowance in order to ensure that there is no systematic failure to provide early stage community care for people with a proven attendance need arising out of chronic sickness or disability.

Mr. Scott: The provision of community care services is a matter for local authority social service departments who will consider clients' needs whether or not they are getting attendance allowance. We shall look at the six months waiting period for the allowance when we consider the future of disability benefits in the light of the results of the OPCS disability surveys. Meanwhile, we have already announced our intention to remove this waiting period for terminally ill people.

Income Support

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the levels of weekly income which may be disregarded for persons whose families are in receipt of income support and who may have some part-time self-employed work; and how these levels of disregard have changed over the past 10 years, under the present system and the previous supplementary benefit system.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: The weekly amount of earnings that may be disregarded for people with families who are in part-time self-employment and receiving income suport are:

	£
Couples aged under 60 years who have been continuously in receipt of supplementary benefit/income support for two years or more.	15 per couple
Couples receiving or with underlying title to the disability premium (for example people who have been sick for 28 weeks or more, or are disabled).	15 per couple
All other couples.	5 each member
Lone parents.	15

The equivalent levels of earnings disregarded under the Supplementary Benefit scheme since 1979 were:

	1979-80 £	*November 1980—April 1988* £
People required to register for employment.	2	4
People not required to register for employment.	4	4
Lone parents.	6	[1]12 maximum

[1] £4 plus half the amount of any earnings between £4 and £20.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list in the *Official Report* the total numbers in each region of the United Kingdom of *(a)* direct recipients of supplementary benefit or income support payments and *(b)* the estimated number of dependants of such recipients in June of each year since 1986.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information for Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The information by social security region for Great Britain is as follows:

	Claimants			*Partners*			*Dependants*		
	[1]1986	*[1]1987*	*[1]1988*	*[1]1986*	*[1]1987*	*[1]1988*	*[1]1986*	*[1]1987*	*[1]1988*
North Eastern	794	777	700	200	193	155	376	386	382
London North	774	755	643	166	164	117	338	342	310
London South	680	664	581	134	121	93	280	267	273
Wales and South Western	624	607	546	142	129	105	258	245	240
Midlands	821	818	714	213	200	152	403	396	374
North Western	739	738	669	165	164	128	352	375	380
Scotland	506	535	499	107	102	92	219	225	236
Totals[2]	4,938	4,896	4,352	1,127	1,074	841	2,227	2,236	2,196

[1] Figures for June of each year are unavailable. The information relates to February 1986, May 1987 and May 1988. Figures are in thousands.

[2] Totals do not consistently sum due to rounding.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the number of sick people receiving income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information on the number of sick people receiving income support is not available. However, the latest available estimates are that some 248,000 income support claimants are in receipt of the disability premium which is payable to sick or disabled people.

Grants and Loans (Clothing)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discretion his Department's local offices have over the payment of grants or loans to help people on pensions, income support and invalidity benefit meet the additional costs of purchasing necessary extra clothing for a person as in-patients in hospital; and if he will take steps to ensure that these provisions are interpreted with adequate generosity at local level to ensure that the real needs of claimants are met.

Mr. Scott: Social fund budgeting loans and community care grants may be awarded, at the discretion of a social fund officer, to help people on income support with the cost of clothing. Hospital in-patients who are not receiving income support may be able to obtain a crisis loan where it is planned that they will be discharged from hospital within two weeks and a loan is the only means of avoiding serious risk to health or safety. Whether a loan or grant can be made is for a social fund officer to decide having regard to the circumstances of the individual case.

Benefit Limits

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretaryof State for Social Security if he will list in the *Official Report* the various capital limits that have existed for each relevant social security benefit, including housing benefit, since 1979, above which no benefit is payable.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is as follows:

£

	Supplementary benefit (to April 1988) *Income support (from April 1988)*	*Family income supplement (to April 1988)* *Family Credit (from April 1988)*	*Rent rebates and rent allowances[1] to April 1983)* *Housing benefit (from 1982-83)* *Community charge benefit (from April 1989)*
1979	Up to £1,200 ignored. Over £1,200, an income of 25p a week was taken into account for each complete £50	No capital limit	No capital limit
November 1980	Up to £2,000 ignored. No entitlement to benefit if capital exceeded £2,000	No capital limit	No capital limit

	Supplementary benefit (to April 1988) *Income support (from April 1988)*	*Family income supplement (to April 1988)* *Family Credit (from April 1988)*	*Rent rebates and rent allowances*[1] *to April 1983)* *Housing benefit (from 1982-83)* *Community charge benefit (from April 1989)*
November 1982	Up to £2,500 ignored. No entitlement to benefit if capital exceeded £2,500	No capital limit	No capital limit
November 1983	Up to £3,000 ignored. No entitlement to benefit if capital exceeded £3,000	No capital limit	No capital limit
April 1988	Up to £3,000 ignored. Over £3,000, an income of £1 a week is taken into account for each £250, or part of £250, between £3,000 and £6,000. No entitlement to benefit if capital exceeds £6,000	As in Income Support	As in Income Support
May 1988 to date	As above	As in Income Support	Up to £3,000 ignored. Over £3,000, an income of £1 a week is taken into account for each £250, or part of £250, between £3,000 and £8,000. No entitlement to benefit if capital exceeds £8,000

[1] *Note.*—Between 1979 and the phased introduction of Housing Benefit in 1982-83 assistance with rent and rates was through the former rent rebate, rent allowance and rate rebate schemes which were not Social Security benefits.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will allocate funds to set up a working group to investigate improvements of wheelchairs for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No. The disablement services authority, which has responsibility for the provision of wheelchair services in England, has this matter under consideration.

Offices (Doncaster and Wath-on-Dearne)

Mr. Martin Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by social security offices in *(a)* Doncaster and *(b)* Wath-on-Dearne, the number of social fund applications that remained unprocessed at the end of the financial year 1988-89, the number that are currently awaiting determination, and the underspend at each office in 1988-89.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is shown in the tables.

Social Fund Allocations 1988-89

Local Office	*Grants* *Allocation for grants remaining at 31 March 1989 (£000s)*	*Applications remaining to be processed at 31 March 1989*	*Loans* *Allocation for loans remaining at 31 March 1989 (£000s)*	*Applications remaining to be processed at 31 March 1989*
Doncaster East	—[1]	2	—[1]	57
Doncaster West	97	33	75	181
Wath-on-Dearne	77	13	9	114

Social Fund Allocations 1989-90

Local Office	*Grants* *Allocation for grants remaining at 30 September 1989 (£000s)*	*Applications remaining to be processed at 30 September 1989*	*Loans* *Allocation for loans remaining at 30 September 1989 (£000s)*	*Applications remaining to be processed at 30 September 1989*
Doncaster East	71	10	187	49
Doncaster West	152	33	290	163
Wath-on-Dearne	68	28	170	93

[1] Figures not available.

Part-time Workers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce legislation to revise the current national insurance plan to include provision for cover for part-time workers on a pro-rata basis.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Part-time workers who earn above the lower earnings limit, currently £43 per week, are already included in national insurance on the same basis as full-time employees. We have no current plans to introduce legislation to extend national insurance to those who earn less than the lower earnings limit.

Homelessness

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what problems he has identified arising from recent changes in social security regulations relating to homelessness among young people; and whether he intends to make any changes to the regulations.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The broad thrust of our policy for the majority of 16 and 17-year-olds is correct; it would be irresponsible to provide a perverse incentive to leave home needlessly.

However, our monitoring and discussions with interested bodies revealed earlier this year that a minority were facing real difficulties. As a result, the following changes were made in July:

(a) 16 and 17-year-olds on income support who, for good reason, have to live independently, became entitled to a higher rate of income support as a recognition of higher and unavoidable expenses (there was a similar relaxation in the rules governing housing benefit);

(b) in addition, entitlement to income support during the child benefit extension period was extended to those 16 and 17-year-olds genuinely estranged from their parents;

(c) those 16 and 17-year-olds who seek emergency accommodation in night shelters are now automatically considered for payment of income support under the "severe hardship" provisions;

(d) special training arrangements were introduced for those officials who deal with claims from the vulnerable group of young people who are estranged from their families or who have had to leave home for some other good reason.

Those who are homeless continue to be able to claim a social fund crisis loan to enable them to secure accommodation.

We continue to monitor the effects of the 1988 social security reforms including those affecting 16 and 17-year-olds.

Social Fund

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount for each social security region of unspent social fund allocations, and the national total, for both loans and grants, for the last financial year.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is contained in the table.

Table

Year 1988–89	*Grants Outstanding balance*	*Loans Outstanding balance*
National £ million	18·5	17·5
North East Region	3·0	1·5
North West Region	1·5	2·5
Midlands Region	2·5	2·0
London North Region	2·0	4·0
London South Region	2·0	4·0
Wales and South West Region	1·0	1·0
Scotland	5·5	2·5

Note: Figures rounded to the nearest £½ million.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many housing benefit recipients are *(a)* retired pensioners, *(b)* unemployed and *(c)* sick.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information is not collected on a basis which can identify those who are sick. The information available is in the table.

Estimated numbers receiving housing benefit: Great Britain May 1988

	Claimants also in receipt of Income Support (000)	*Claimants in receipt of Housing Benefit only (000)*
Claimant or partner aged 60 or over	1,440	1,720
Registered unemployed	880	n/a

Single Claimants

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average weekly payment of *(a)* unemployment benefit, *(b)* sickness benefit, *(c)* invalidity benefit and *(d)* retirement pension received by a single claimant.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The table shows the average weekly payments of unemployment benefit, invalidity benefit and retirement pension, at the latest available dates, to persons without adult dependants. They may be single, married, widowed or divorced. I regret that similar information is not available for sickness benefit, but the average payment to all sickness beneficiaries at 2 April 1988 was £33·65.

Type of benefit	*Average weekly payment to persons without adult dependants*
Unemployment benefit	£34·41 (at May 1989)
Invalidity benefit	£46·74 (at 2 April 1988)
Retirement pension[1]	£38·87 (at 31 March 1989)

[1] Contributory retirement pension only.

Unemployed Persons

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the number of unemployed persons in receipt of *(a)* unemployment benefit only, *(b)* unemployment benefit combined with income support and *(c)* income support only.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is as follows. The figures relate to August 1989, the latest date for which they are available.

	Number of unemployed claimants
Unemployment benefit only	242,573
Unemployment benefit and income support	88,128
Income support only	1,001,918

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he is yet in a position, following the undertaken given during the Committee stage of the Social Security Bill 1989, to publish the results of the monitoring exercise undertaken to establish the effects of the increase in the maximum period of disqualification for unemployment benefit on grounds of voluntary unemployment.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have today arranged for copies of two reports, one by Social and Community Planning Research, the other by the Department, to be placed in the Library.

War Widows

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is, for the latest year for which records exist, the average pension received from all sources by a war widow whose husband was of private rank or equivalent and who died or left the armed forces *(a)* before 31 March 1973 and *(b)* after that date.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 October 1989]:* I regret this information is not available. Under the war pension scheme administered by the Department of Social Security a war widow of a private would receive currently a tax-free war widows pension of £56·65. In addition, age allowances of £6·10 at 65, £12·20 at 70 and £15·30 at 80 are payable. It is unlikely that widows whose husbands served on or after 31 March 1973 would be eligible for age allowances. A war widow whose husband served on or after 31 March 1973 would also receive a forces family pension paid under the armed forces pension scheme. For the widow of a private this would be about £68 a week, the exact figure depending on the year in which her husband's service ended. About 75 per cent. of war widows are also in receipt of a retirement pension, but no information is available about the rates received. Nor is it known what other pensions or income individual war widows may have.

Mr. Neil Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what definition his Department uses of war widow for pension purposes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* The Department applies the legislation for the time being in force. Different orders or schemes apply in different circumstances, but none of these provides an express definition of the term "war widow". The Service Pensions Order provides a pension in certain circumstances for a widow of a member of the armed forces whose death was due to service. Whether death was due to service is determined in accordance with the substantive provisions of the order. The civilians scheme includes provision for the award of pensions to widows where the late husband's death was a direct result of war injuries or war service injuries. There are a number of other schemes which also provide pensions for widows who satisfy the requirements of that particular scheme. These include widows whose late husbands were members of the Naval Auxiliary Service, Mercantile Marine, Her Majesty's Coastguard, Auxiliary Coastguard, Home Guard, Ulster Defence Regiment, Polish forces who served under British command during world war 2, the Polish resettlement forces, or the nursing and auxiliary services.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to increase the pensions of widows of the two world wars to make them more comparable with the benefits paid to widows of service men who died after 1973.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 1 November 1989]:* Under the war pensions scheme administered by the Department of Social Security, the pension paid to a war widow is the same regardless of when she was widowed. Provision for service men's widows through the occupational forces family pension paid under the armed forces pension scheme is a matter for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence. The pensions paid under the war pensions scheme are larger than national insurance widows' pensions, can be received in addition to a retirement pension on the widow's own contributions and are free of tax. In addition, age allowances of £6·10 at age 65, £12·20 at 70 and £15·30 at 80 are paid. These allowances are unique to the war pensions scheme and will be increased from next April to £7, £13·50 and £20 respectively. Eighty five per cent. of all war widows receive age allowances.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

River Crane

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what surveys or investigations concerning the River Crane in Isleworth have been carried out or authorised by or on behalf of his Department and what financial assistance is being given or promised by his Department to the National Rivers Authority for works connected with the River Crane.

Mr. Gummer: My Department's involvement in works in connection with the alleviation of flooding from the River Crane has been limited to giving agreement to the outline proposals for contract 1 which comprises the rebuilding of the channel of the tidal river downstream of Talbot Road bridge to its confluence with the Thames. No financial commitment has yet been requested or issued.

Monofilament Fishing Nets

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will extend the prohibition on the use of monofilament nets by fishing fleets in inshore Scottish waters to cover the whole of Great Britain and offshore waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: We have no plans to extend the prohibition on the use of nylon monofilament gill nets although we maintain close monitoring of the fishery. However, there are national mesh size restrictions pursuant to the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975; the use of such nets is variously controlled in some inshore waters under byelaws made by National Rivers Authority regions or sea fisheries committee; and we announced on 27 July 1988 our intention to introduce certain national restrictions on the use of gill and other nets whose mesh sizes fall between 65mm and 89mm.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the fishing industry.

Mr. Curry: I am well aware of the current difficulties facing the industry but these must be seen against the years of unparalleled growth and prosperity since 1983. I am sure that the industry will be able to tackle the future with confidence within the framework of the common fisheries policy.

Sheepmeat Regime

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current state of negotiations on the future of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Curry: The Council of Agriculture Ministers adopted a regulation in September providing for substantial changes to the sheepmeat regime. The regulation will begin to have effect in January next year.

Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by county in England and Wales the Forestry Commission woodlands which have been sold during each of the last three years, stating for each disposal the hectarage involved.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland on 6 November 1989 at column *486*.

Animal Products (Exports)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which countries require additional certificates accompanying animal products exported from the United Kingdom to show they are free from radioactivity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Scientific advice on which the Government rely is to the effect that all food produced and marketed in the United Kingdom may be safely consumed as free from harmful radioactive material. Nevertheless since the Chernobyl incident a number of countries—especially in the middle and far east—have required official certificates to this effect in respect of their food imports from the United Kingdom. My Department has routinely provided these at the request of the exporters to facilitate exports. No exhaustive list of those importing countries requiring such certification has been maintained and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Salmonella

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he has taken or he plans to take to ensure that breeding flocks in other European Community countries known to be contaminated with salmonella enteriditis become free of this bacteria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I am pressing for the adoption of Community measures to tackle the problem of salmonella in poultry flocks.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any evidence to link salmonella typhimurium with the contamination of eggs, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Salmonella typhimurium is known to be present in some poultry laying flocks and, like Salmonella enteritidis, has the potential to contaminate eggs. This can arise in a number of ways including contamination of the shell by infected faeces as the egg is laid and subsequent penetration into the egg contents. The evidence supporting this view was upheld by the Select Committee on Agriculture in its first report on salmonella in eggs published in February 1989.

Contaminated Meat

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library the results of the research carried out at his central veterinary laboratory on the bacteriological contamination of poultry meat and sausages.

Mr. Gummer: No research on the bacteriological contamination of poultry meat and sausages is carried out at the central veterinary laboratory, Weybridge.

London Food Commission

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to invite a representative from the London Food Commission to participate in the new consumer panel announced by him on 2 November.

Mr. Maclean: I have written to the National Consumer Council, the Consumers Association and the Consumers in the European Community group inviting each organisation to nominate representatives of consumer interests to the consumer panel. I have suggested that in those nominations they should put forward ordinary consumers rather than representatives of particular organisations or lobby groups.

Potassium Bromate

Mr. Cran: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take as a result of the recent review by the Food Advisory Committee on the use of potassium bromate in foodstuffs.

Mr. Maclean: Potassium bromate is currently approved for use as a flour improver. That approval was given on the basis that when the flour was used in bread the baking process ensured that there were no residues left. Recently, improved analytical techniques have indicated that this is not necessarily the case and that there may be some very small residues. The Food Advisory Committee has thus recommended that approval for potassium bromate as a flour improver should be withdrawn. I accept that advice and as the law requires will be circulating the draft regulations for consultation today. Potassium bromate is also used in the brewing industry but there are not the same residue questions there and this usage will therefore be allowed to continue for the present.

I have deposited a copy of the Food Advisory Committee's advice in the Library of the House.

Straw and Stubble Burning

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by county the number of successful prosecutions for breaches of straw and stubble burning law for the current year, and the penalties imposed.

Mr. Patten *[holding answer 27 October 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

Information held centrally for 1988 is given in the table. Of the 33 offenders found guilty one (in Hertfordshire) was given an absolute discharge and the remainder were fined. Data for 1989 are not yet available.

Offenders found guilty under section 235 of the Local Government Act 1972—Byelaws relating to the burning of straw or stubble

Police force area	*Total found guilty*	*Average amount fined (£000)*
Avon and Somerset	3	45
Bedfordshire	1	200
Cambridgeshire	5	210
Cleveland	3	50
Gloucestershire	1	200
Hertfordshire	4	100
Lincolnshire	9	110
Northamptonshire	1	100
North Yorkshire	2	50
Warwickshire	1	100
Wiltshire	3	190
England and Wales	33	125

BSE

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he proposes to take any further action in the light of the Southwood report on bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to the reply, 13 June 1989, c. 352]:* All bovine animals which are found to have BSE are slaughtered and destroyed. Meat from these animals does not enter the food chain either for human or animal consumption. Earlier this year my predecessor announced that he would take a further precaution which would be to exclude certain bovine offals derived from healthy animals. Further technical studies have now been carried out and additional independent expert advice has been taken. The offals affected are brain, spinal cord, thymus, spleen, tonsils and intestines. A full consultation with all interested parties as required by law has now been completed with one exception, subject to results in this final case, we are proposing to make new regulations today to implement the ban to come into effect on Monday 13 November.

Offals from calves under six months of age will be excluded from these arrangements since any of these offals which may be used for human food will not present a human health hazard. There are no known cases of human beings being infected by any animal encephalopathy. This is a further addition to the very tough measures which Sir Richard Southwood's expert committee recommended earlier this year.

HEALTH

Funding

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much funding for the Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde district health authority and the West Lancashire family practitioner committee has increased in the period 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Freeman: The recurrent revenue funding for the Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde district health authority has increased from £37·8 million in 1982-83 to £65·3 million in 1989-90. This increase of £27·5 million represents an increase in real terms of about 16 per cent., and an increased share of north-western region's recurrent revenue expenditure from 4·7 per cent. to 5·1 per cent. The health services now provided by the Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde health authority were part of the Lancashire area health authority up to 1982-83 and expenditure on them was not separately identified.

The recurring revenue funding of the Lancashire family practitioner committee has increased from £1·15 million in 1985-86 to £1·42 million in 1989-90. This increase of £270,000, in cash terms, represents an increase in real terms of 19 per cent.

Family practitioner committee administration expenditure prior to 1985-86 is not available as it was included as part of district health authorities expenditure and not separately identified.

Insulin

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date synthetic human insulin was licensed in Britain; and on what date warnings to patients were inserted in packs.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Synthetic human insulin was licensed in June 1982. General patient leaflet warnings were available from the outset. As a result of reports that some patients had noticed less pronounced or no symptoms of hypoglycaemia on transferring to human insulin the licensing authority reviewed all data sheets and patient information leaflets. In March 1989 they requested manufacturers to add a specific warning to this effect.

Fluoride

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department is carrying out, and what information he has gathered, regarding the effect on the health of people of fluorides in drinking water.

Mr. Freeman: The Department is not currently commissioning any research into the effects of fluoridated water on general health. The Government remain convinced that fluoridation at a concentration of one part per million—the level used in all United Kingdom fluoridation schemes—has no adverse effects upon health, and there is no medical evidence to challenge this view. Numerous studies undertaken in this country have, however, demonstrated that dental caries is reduced in fluoridated areas by as much as one third to one half compared to non-fluoridated areas.

Waiting Lists (Southampton)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the hospital waiting list numbers for the Southampton and South West district health authority for the last six years for which records are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The requested information is given in the table.

Numbers of cases on the in-patient waiting list, Southampton and South West Hampshire DHA, at 31 March, 1984 to 1989.

Year	*Total numbers*
1984	9,199
1985	8,732
1986	8,492

Year	Total numbers
1987	8,217
[1]1988	7,051
[1]1989	8,542

[1] Total less self deferred cases to give comparable data with earlier years.

Mental Handicap Hospitals

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has given to health authorities on the protection of day services in mental handicap hospitals during the period of rundown in patient numbers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Planning guidelines issued to health authorities in Health Circular (88) 43 (a copy of which is in the Library) state that health authorities should aim

> "to provide good quality care for mentally handicapped people in all settings including maintaining and where necessary improving standards in large hospitals as their populations reduce."

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has about the current provision of day services in mental handicap hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The most current information available for 1987-88 concerning the provision of day care facilities in England is contained in the Department of Health publication "Summary of KH14—NHS Day Care Facilities", a copy of which is in the Library. These figures include facilities outside mental handicap hospitals.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he will take to ensure that the resources of large mental handicap hospitals are redeployed for the benefit of people with mental handicap, in particular for the provision of day services, when these funds are no longer required on site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Decisions regarding the use of resources released from large mental handicap hospitals are primarily matters for health authorities in consultation with the relevant local authorities—as they are best placed to know the needs of the population in their area. Arrangements already exist whereby health authorities can transfer funding to local authorities to assist in the provision of community care. Proceeds from the sale of mental handicap hospitals must be used specifically for the development of services for that client group unless there are exceptional circumstances and the Department has agreed otherwise.

Community Care

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will encourage health and local authorities to co-operate in ensuring continuity of day service provision when residents move out of hospital, in particular the provision of therapist input to community day services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Government policy is to encourage the development at local level of a comprehensive range of well-co-ordinated health and social services for mentally handicapped people. Every district is required by 1991 to have agreed in consultation with the relevant local authorities policy statements and action plans for meeting those needs of mentally handicapped people for which health authorities have the relevant skills, expertise and responsibility. This includes the provision of therapy services.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in the preparation of the White Paper on community care, he has considered the training provided by the Crossroads care attendant schemes for care attendants, local voluntary management committees and co-ordinators of local schemes; and whether this might provide a model for training by local authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Training needs will be considered along with other implementation issues following publication of the White Paper.

Mental Handicap (Community Care)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will instruct health authorities to review their day services for people with mental handicap following the social services inspectorate report on day services outside hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We expect health authorities to review their day services for people with a mental handicap as part of their general responsibility to keep all the services which they provide under review.

Patients

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will give the number of patients treated in the northern region for each year since 1983 as *(a)* in-patients and *(b)* out-patients.

Mr. Freeman: The information is given in the table.

Cases treated, NHS hospitals, Northern Regional Health Authority, 1983—1987-88

Year	In-patient cases treated	New out-patients
1983	409,115	557,125
1984	420,080	569,743
1985	433,131	595,232
1986	441,095	602,318
1987-88	462,766	592,469

Hospital Improvements

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list major hospital improvements in the northern region since 1983, together with the cost of each.

Mr. Freeman: Following is a list of capital schemes over £1 million in northern region which, according to information available centrally, have been completed since 1 January 1983, together with the cost of construction at tender stage in each case:

Project/scheme	Construction cost £
Blyth Community Hospital & Health Centre	4,258,871
Darlington Memorial Maternity Department	1,125,935
Fenhan Blood Transfusion Service Centre	3,542,500
Freeman Hospital—ENT(D)	2,865,079

Project/scheme	*Construction cost £*
Furness (Barrow) DGH scheme 1 phase 1	9,966,609
Furness General scheme 1 phase 2	1,496,150
Furness General scheme 2 phase 1	6,080,209
Hartlepool DGH scheme 2 phase 1	4,906,403
Hartlepool DGH scheme 3 phase 1	2,395,891
Hartlepool DGH scheme 3 phase 4	1,900,440
Jarrow Community Hospital	3,314,250
Middlesbrough General Hospital	1,567,825
North Tyneside scheme 1 phase 1	10,364,538
North Tyneside scheme 2 phase 1	4,140,250
Queen Elizabeth Gateshead scheme 3 phase 1	6,139,179
Queen Elizabeth Gateshead scheme 3 phase 2	1,762,698
Royal Victoria Infirmary scheme 1 phase 4	13,640,929
South Cleveland General scheme 2 phase 1A	1,257,000
South Cleveland General scheme 2 phase 1B	6,154,060
South Cleveland General scheme 2 phase 1C	1,035,884
South Cleveland General Newlington Brokerage (D)	2,552,000
St. Georges Hospital boilerhouse	1,238,183
Number of schemes = 22	Total: £91,704,884

Darlington Health Authority

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list the total spending allocated to Darlington health authority for each year since 1983, adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Freeman: Gross revenue expenditure in Darlington health authority between 1982-83 and 1988-89, the latest year for which figures are available, is shown in the table.

£ million

Year	*Cash*	*At 1989-90 prices*[1]
1982-83	22·7	32·4
1983-84	24·0	32·7
1984-85	25·6	33·2
1985-86	26·8	32·9
1986-87	29·0	34·5
1987-88	31·4	35·6
1988-89[2]	34·6	36·5

[1] Figures have been revalued using the Gross Domestic Product deflator.

[2] 1988-89 figures are provisional (ie unaudited).

North Tees Health Authority

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list the total spending allocated to North Tees health authority for each year since 1982, adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Roger Freeman: Gross revenue expenditure in North Tees health authority between 1982-83 and 1988-89, the latest year for which figures are available, is shown in the table.

£ million

Year	*Cash*	*At 1989-90 prices*[1]
1982-83	22·7	32·3
1983-84	24·3	33·1
1984-85	25·5	33·0
1985-86	26·8	32·9
1986-87	28·9	34·4
1987-88	31·9	36·1
1988-89[2]	34·3	36·2

[1] Figures have been revalued using the Gross Domestic Product deflator.

[2] 1988-89 figures are provisional (ie unaudited).

South Tees Health Authority

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list the total spending allocated to South Tees health authority for each year since 1982, adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Freeman: Gross revenue expenditure in South Tees health authority between 1982-83 and 1988-89, the latest year for which figures are available, is shown in the table.

Year	*Cash £ million*	*At 1989-90 prices*[1] *£ million*
1982-83	53·1	75·7
1983-84	55·9	76·1
1984-85	58·1	75·4
1985-86	60·7	74·6
1986-87	66·0	78·6
1987-88	73·2	82·9
[2]1988-89	81·9	86·4

[1] Figures have been revalued using the gross domestic product deflator.

[2] 1988-89 figures are provisional (ie unaudited).

Northern Region (Spending)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list total spending in the northern region for each year since 1983 adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Freeman: Gross revenue expenditure in the northern region between 1982-83 and 1988-89, the latest year for which figures are available, is shown in the table.

Year	*Cash £ million*	*At 1989-90 prices*[1] *£ million*
1982-83	520·8	741·8
1983-84	554·0	754·1
1984-85	586·9	761·3
1985-86	620·1	762·4
1986-87	664·7	791·8
1987-86	726·4	822·3
[2]1988-89	802·7	846·8

[1] Figures have been revalued using the gross domestic product deflator.

[2] 1988-89 figures are provisional (ie unaudited).

Breast Cancer

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of women aged *(a)* between 50 and 64 years and *(b)* over 64 years, have now been screened for breast cancer in each health authority; and how many cases of breast cancer have been detected as a result of this screening.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The NHS is setting up a national breast cancer screening service over the three years to 1990, and the service is not yet operational in all health authority areas. Following the introduction of a new statistical return for breast cancer screening from April 1989, we expect to have details of the percentage of women screened in 1989-90 towards the end of 1990. Preliminary data assembled by the cancer screening evaluation unit from 16 screening centres indicates that, as at June 1989, of 154,191 women aged 50 to 64 invited for screening by these centres, 679 women were found to have breast cancer.

Helicopter Ambulances

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list in the *Official Report* those ambulance services in England which have helicopter ambulance facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We do not collect this information centrally. However, we are aware that several health authorities now have dedicated helicopter ambulances. In the London area an emergency helicopter service has been operating for some months and in Cornwall the first air ambulance service has been operating for over two years. South East Thames has announced that it is shortly to commence a limited helicopter trial. In addition, other authorities have been co-operating with police forces in helicopter projects.

All health authorities can make use of RAF helicopter transport in emergency rescue missions which are free and in secondary transfers for which a charge is made. Fixed wing transport is also sometimes used where appropriate, again at commercial rates.

Disablement Services Authority

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if, in the light of an overall overspend on the wheelchair service, and the forecast increase in patient attendance, and the supply of non-powered wheelchairs and of special seating, he will increase the level of funding to the Disablement Services Authority; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what provision is made for inflation and rising salary costs when determining the level of resources for the Disablement Services Authority; and on what basis that provision is decided.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the Disablement Services Authority has the financial resources to carry out its planned service development in indoor/outdoor wheelchairs and special wheelchair seating; if he will indicate the source of funding for these developments and whether it is to come from a reduction of other savings or from savings of improved efficiency; whether these savings have so far been realised in the two and a quarter years' existence of the authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: These are matters that have been addressed in the public expenditure survey, the result of which will be announced shortly.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many haemophiliacs have been infected with HIV due to contaminated blood products for the period *(a)* since 1979, *(b)* since 1985 and *(c)* in the current year;

(2) how many haemophiliacs have died as a result of having been infected with HIV due to contaminated blood products for the period *(a)* since 1979, *(b)* since 1985 and *(c)* in the current year.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 7 November which gives the information currently available for the numbers of haemophiliacs reported as HIV-antibody positive.

The latest information available on the numbers of haemophiliacs with AIDS known to have died in the United Kingdom is given in the table. No reliable figures are available for years before 1983.

	Number
For the period 1983-85	14
For the period 1986-88	71
For 1989 up to 31 October 1989	22
Total	107

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures are now being taken to ensure that all blood, imported or otherwise, and blood products, used by the National Health Service for treatment of haemophiliacs in Britain is not contaminated by HIV.

Mr. Freeman: The safety of the blood supply in this country is maintained in two ways. First, since August 1983 potential donors have been given a leaflet which asks those at risk of HIV infection not to give blood. Secondly, since October 1985 all blood donations have been tested for antibodies to HIV-1. In addition, since June 1988 all donations from donors who have visited certain specified west African countries where HIV-2 is more common have been tested for antibodies to HIV-2.

All blood products (home-produced or imported) used in this country, including Factor VIII which is used in the treatment of haemophilia, are now made from screened plasma, and are treated to inactivate HIV. All products concerned are also tested by the National Institute of Biological Standards Control under its batch release system.

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO exercise Wintex/Cimex 1987 and exercise Wintex/Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercises themselves; and what are the ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Mr. Freeman: This Department plays its part in testing those procedures in which we have an interest. Staff participate as required; it would not be appropriate for me to supply the detail requested.

Oil Seed Rape

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has about the impact of the cultivation of oil seed rape on human health or allergies; and if his Department will sponsor any research on this subject.

Mr. Freeman: The Department is aware that several studies were being conducted during the summer of 1989 into the possible links between oil seed rape and allergy. We will be interested in seeing the findings when the results are published in due course. The Department's view is that there is no conclusive proof of any link between the growing of oil seed rape and the increase in the numbers of allergy, hay fever, and asthma sufferers. It is possible that other factors such as pollens from less visibly prominent sources are causal or contributory factors. The Department has no plans to sponsor any research in this area.

Childhood Leukaemia

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by year to date, and by regional health authority, the number of incidences of childhood leukaemia that have been reported in England and Wales following the Chernobyl accident; and what were the reported incidences in 1980 and 1986.

Mr. Freeman: Cancer registration data for 1985 onwards are still being collected, and thus the requested information for 1986 and for the period since the Chernobyl accident in 1987 is not yet available. The table shows the data for 1980.

Number of newly diagnosed cases of leukaemia[1], *ages 0-14 years, England and Wales, 1980*

Area of usual residence	*Males*	*Females*
England and Wales	195	143
Northern RHA	7	8
Yorkshire RHA	13	6
Trent RHA	13	14
East Anglian RHA	7	6
North West Thames RHA	10	7
North East Thames RHA	17	10
South East Thames RHA	13	12
South West Thames RHA	19	16
Wessex RHA	23	12
Oxford RHA	9	5
South Western RHA	17	5
West Midlands RHA	24	18
Mersey RHA	7	6
North Western RHA	11	12
Wales	5	6

[1] ICD Ninth Revision code 204-208.

Spina Bifida

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the health authorities that provide a test for spina bifida in the foetus; and when this test will become generally available to pregnant mothers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Screening tests for spina bifida are already generally available to pregnant mothers.

Midwives (Grading)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of midwives still awaiting the results of their regrading claim; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on the number of appeals to district health authorities is not collected centrally.

Tranquillisers

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health following the publication of the findings by the Association of Health Councils for England and Wales, if he will institute research to ascertain why tranquillisers are prescribed in connection with physical illness and as to whether guidelines should be issued on the management of different conditions which could avoid the use of benzodiazepines; and if he will take steps to institute a practice policy on repeat prescribing involving frequent monitoring and review.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We share the association's concern about inappropriate prescribing of benzodiazepines. It is a matter for clinical judgment whether a patient with a physical illness needs to be treated with a benzodiazepine drug either to treat the physical symptoms themselves or in addition to a drug or drugs to treat such symptoms. Doctors already have all the guidance they need about the use of benzodiazepines.

From April 1990 under our proposals in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" it will be a responsibility of family practitioner committees to encourage the development of repeat prescribing control systems in those practices that do not already have such a system.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will assess the findings by the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales published in "Health News Briefing—Benzodiazepines: A Suitable Case for Treatment", on numbers of people taking benzodiazepines and the reasons for the prescriptions being made.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The association's report acknowledges that the number of people taking benzodiazepines and all the reasons for prescriptions are unclear. In 1988 in Great Britain the number of prescriptions for these drugs fell by 9 per cent. from 25·5 million in 1987 to 23·2 million. This is a reduction of nearly 25 per cent. since 1979, when 30·9 million prescriptions were written.

I share the association's conclusion that benzodiazepine prescribing could be further reduced.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will assess whether the findings by the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales suggest that inappropriate long-term prescribing of benzodiazepines comes to an end and as to whether benzodiazepone prescribing for *(a)* women and *(b)* the elderly constitutes a disproportionate percentage of all benzodiazepine prescribing; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not collected centrally about the numbers or types of patients prescribed drugs.

Advice has been issued to doctors by the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the Royal College of Physicians, psychiatrists and general practitioners and the British Medical Association. This advice, contained in the "British National Formulary", addressed appropriate use of benzodiazepines and strategies for reducing long-term prescribing, including prescribing for women and for the elderly. We support that advice.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue guidelines to hospitals to take account of the findings by the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales on benzodiazepine use.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The use of benzodiazepines in the treatment of a patient is a matter of clinical judgment, and therefore a matter for the clinician and the patient concerned to decide in any individual case. Some hospitals have already established their own drug formularies and we welcome this move.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review the advice given to doctors in the Committee on Safety of Medicines bulletin "Current Problems, No. 21", January 1988, in the light of the findings of the Association of Community Health Councils of England and Wales.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The advice on benzodiazepines, dependence and withdrawal symptoms published in "Current Problems No. 21" remains valid and is summarised in the latest edition of the "British National Formulary" which the Department issues free to all doctors.

Dependent Adults

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give consideration to legislation to provide dependent adults with legal status, basic rights and social protection should their carer be unable to provide for them;

(2) what powers exist for the appropriate authorities to ensure that the rights and health of dependent adults are safeguarded in the event of their carer being unable to provide for them;

(3) what protection exists to safeguard the care of dependent adults in the event of their carers being unable to provide for them;

(4) what steps he plans to take to ensure that dependent adults' personal and medical welfare is properly protected by effective liaison between all interested professional parties in the event of their carer being unable to provide for them.

Mr. Freeman: Section 47 of the National Assistance Act 1948 and sections 115 and 135 of the Mental Health Act 1983 empower local authorities to take action to safeguard the welfare of dependent people who are not receiving proper care. The exercise of these powers is a matter for the local authority concerned which will need to keep in touch with the appropriate health authority. When failures of care come to light we ask the authorities for reports which are carefully studied to see whether any action is called for.

Contraception

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on women and the Dalkon shield contraceptive device.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans for Government intervention in relation to this matter of litigation in the United States courts. For the initial claims deadline, the court itself directed, and approved, publicity by the Dalkon shield manufacturers. Further extensions of the deadline have received independent media publicity. It is for individual health authorities to decide whether they wish to direct their resources to specific activity on this matter. Our longstanding advice has been that they should be as helpful as possible with regard to the release of information.

Petrol

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health authority vehicles run on *(a)* unleaded petrol, *(b)* leaded petrol, *(c)* diesel and *(d)* have three-way catalytic converters.

Mr. Freeman: The information in the form requested is not available centrally and the cost of obtaining it would be disproportionate. All regional and district health authorities in England are implementing a lead-free policy and are converting their vehicles at the earliest opportunity.

Energy Efficiency

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to issue guidelines to health authorities requiring them to carry out an energy audit for health authority buildings, identify priority areas for energy saving and segregate fuel bills for each building.

Mr. Freeman: The Department has issued comprehensive guidance, the national energy code (ENCODE), on all aspects of energy efficiency for health care buildings including the need for energy audit and prioritising energy saving measures. Recommendations for separate metering where applicable will be issued shortly.

We have no plans to require health authorities to undertake a formal energy audit.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will require health authorities to establish an energy management unit and allocate responsibility for energy efficiency to one member of staff for each building.

Mr. Freeman: The comprehensive guidance, the national energy code (ENCODE), on energy efficiency published by the Department recommends a level of energy management and responsibility appropriate to the size of the estate and potential for energy savings.

Environmental Audit

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to require health authorities to carry out an environmental audit on *(a)* energy consumption, *(b)* purchasing policy, *(c)* waste arising and disposal methods, *(d)* pollution from health authority premises and *(e)* environmental training.

Mr. Freeman: Health authorities are expected to comply with all relevant statutory legislation. We have no plans to require them to carry out environmental audits on energy consumption, purchasing policy, waste arising and disposal methods, pollution from health authority premises or environmental training.

Environment Policy

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will allocate funds for implementing an environment policy for the National Health Service;

(2) if he will draw up an environment policy for the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: It is for health authorities to decide on their overall environmental policies and the allocation of associated resources.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will include as items for the regional review by Ministers *(a)* any adverse impact of health authority practices on the environment and *(b)* any adverse impact of environmental factors on public health within the region.

Mr. Freeman: This year public health issues were discussed with each region in preparation for regional reviews, which are now normally conducted by the chief executive of the management executive. Where there are serious concerns about these or other specific areas, they are raised at the review itself. Management action is taken in relation to the impact of health authority practices on the environment as they arise.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue guidance banning the use by health authorities of products proven to be environmentally damaging where an alternative is available.

Mr. Freeman: No. We consider that, as responsible public bodies, health authorities should be able to take account of all relevant factors, including environmental factors and statutory requirements, in securing best value for money in their purchasing policies.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those health authorities which have regular planning and consultative meetings with local authority environmental health officers; and what exchange of information there is between them.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about health authorities as *(a)* consumers, *(b)* waste producers and *(c)* polluters.

Mr. Freeman: It is for health authorities to ensure that they perform their duties effectively, efficiently and responsibly with due regard to the effects on the environment.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will require health authorities to monitor progress on their environment policies and practice and report to him.

Mr. Freeman: The Department already monitors a number of key aspects of health authorities' environmental policies and practices and will continue to do so.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there is an environmental component in the training and qualification of *(a)* nurses, *(b)* doctors, *(c)* radiographers, *(d)* hospital administrators and *(e)* health visitors.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Nurses and health visitors: The standard and content of training for nurses and health visitors is determined by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

(b) Doctors: The General Medical Council recommend the curriculum for undergraduate medical students.

(c) Radiographers: The Council for the Professions Supplementary to Medicine through its Radiography Board, is responsible for regulating the professional education of radiographers.

(d) Hospital Administrators: Health authorities and the National Health Service Training Authority are responsible for the standard and content of training for hospital administrators.

Air Pollution

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the health authorities premises which have boilers and incinerators giving rise to air pollution problems.

Mr. Freeman: Information on health authority premises where boiler and incinerator are known to give rise to air pollution problems is not available centrally but all installations are expected to comply with current legislation.

Waste Management

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if there is a staff member specifically responsible for waste management in each health authority.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available centrally. It is for health authorities to determine responsibilities for waste management. As far as clinical waste is concerned, the Department has issued guidance to health authorities which recommends that it should be the responsibility of a designated officer within each authority.

Lead Piping

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of health authority buildings have lead piping.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available on the extent to which lead piping is installed within health care buildings. All current guidance recommends the use of copper piping.

Recycling

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which health authorities provide collection facilities for *(a)* glass, *(b)* paper and *(c)* cans for recycling.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of National Health Service stationery is *(a)* 100 per cent. recycled and *(b)* not recycled.

Mr. Freeman: National contracts for copy paper and listing paper for computer use do make provision for the use of recycled paper. No figures are yet available to show the percentage of recycled paper used. However, it is unlikely that the use of 100 per cent. recycled stationery will be significant. Large quantities of chemicals are necessary to achieve a desirable standard of whiteness in the paper. This calls into question the level of benefit to the environment, and can involve higher costs of production than ordinary paper.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has issued guidance to health authorities requiring them to phase out the use of chlorofluorocarbons as sterilant gases.

Mr. Freeman: Regional supplies directors were advised at a meeting of the national procurement group in September 1988 that the small-scale use of chlorofluorocarbons in sterilisers as a carrier gas for ethylene oxide should be avoided, if possible, since pure ethylene oxide and ethylene oxide/carbondioxide mixtures were available as satisfactory alternatives.

Nurses

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many enrolled nurses have been turned away from conversion to first-level nursing places in the last year;

(2) what is the current average waiting list for an enrolled nurse conversion course.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many practising enrolled nurses there are in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally. Information provided by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting about the numbers in the United Kingdom who have paid the periodic fee and were therefore on the effective register shows that on 31 March 1989 there were 158,500 people who held an enrolled nurse qualification.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by health district *(a)* the current nursing staff establishment, *(b)* the number in post at the latest available date and *(c)* the number who had left the National Health Service in the preceding year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* Information on the number of nursing and midwifery staff employed in each district health authority in England at 30 September 1988 is given in the table.

We do not collect information on nursing staff establishments centrally. Reliable information on the numbers leaving the National Health Service last year is not yet available.

Doctors and Dentists

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his latest meetings with doctors and dentists.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have frequent formal and informal meetings with doctors and dentists, mostly very amicable, constructive and supportive of our objectives. I met the British Dental Association on 27 September when I reached full agreement with it on the terms of its new contract. I met the British Medical Association on 18 October to discuss the implementation of our proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" and had a friendly and constructive discussion.

Residential Care

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made on the Government's initiative announced in February for improving life for people in residential homes; whether he proposes to take any further action on the recommendations of the committee on residential care chaired by Lady Wagner; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In February we announced our intention to launch a development programme aimed at improving life for people in residential homes, based on recommendations of the committee chaired by Lady Wagner.

We have appointed five agencies to carry forward important recommendations from the committee's report "Residential Care: A Positive Choice". Work has now begun and will continue for the next three years at a total cost of around £2·2 million. This initiative aims at better training for staff in homes, better information for the public in making choices, effective, accessible and widely known arrangements for making suggestions and complaints, a closer relationship between homes and their local communities and better management of homes. Cost-effective ways of achieving these objectives will be explored through a wide range of development projects. The results of these activities will be made widely and regularly available to national and local agencies concerned and will be independently assessed.

The thrust of many of the committee's recommendations, for example on the organisation and funding of community care, has been taken into account in the wider context of community care development and will be reflected in the forthcoming White Paper.

The committee's recommendations on setting and maintaining standards have been incorporated in our proposals to achieve even-handedness in inspection of residential care homes, as between independent and local authority homes, through the setting up of inspection units in social services departments at arms length from the management of local authorities' own homes. Issues concerning children and young people, on which the Wagner committee made recommendations, are covered in the Children Bill, including education and health needs of children in care, keeping siblings together wherever practicable and appropriate, the needs of ethnic minority groups and accommodation for young people leaving care. And we are considering issuing guidance on encouraging and enabling people in residential care homes to manage their own finances where they are capable of doing so.

The Wagner committee has done a valuable service in pointing the way to better standards. The Government are playing their part in responding to its report. We also look to local authorities and private and voluntary agencies, to whom much of the report was primarily addressed, to take those messages to heart and act on them.

The selected agencies and their fields of activity are as follows:

Basic training programmes for care staff: the National Institute for Social Work;

Ways of increasing contacts between homes and their local communities and a wider role for volunteers: the Social Care Association (Education);

Methods of self-assessment and performance evaluation by managers: the Polytechnic of North London;

Ways of providing information to help people in choosing a home or alternative to residential care: the Policy Studies Institute.

The department of government, Brunel university will co-ordinate this activity, provide an information service and publish an independent assessment of the programmes.

In addition the Department's social services inspectorate will develop procedures for dealing with suggestions and complaints.

National Health Service staff in post in England nursing and midwifery by district health authority[1] at 30 September 1988

	Whole time equivalent[2]
Total England	403,880
Northern RHA HQ	70
Hartlepool	860
North Tees	1,280
South Tees	2,650
East Cumbria	1,600
South Cumbria	1,120
West Cumbria	1,160
Darlington	1,170
Durham	1,180
North West Durham	730
South West Durham	1,620
Northumberland	3,170
Gateshead	1,400
Newcastle	5,200
North Tyneside	970
South Tyneside	970
Sunderland	2,600
Yorkshire RHA HQ	120
Hull	2,660
East Yorkshire	1,610
Grimsby	1,300
Scunthorpe	1,240
Northallerton	530
York	2,300
Scarborough	890
Harrogate	1,170
Bradford	2,740
Airedale	1,440
Calderdale	1,570
Huddersfield	1,990
Dewsbury	970
Leeds Western	3,420
Leeds Eastern	3,310
Wakefield	2,000
Pontefract	1,070
Trent RHA HQ	100
North Derbyshire	2,270
South Derbyshire	3,980
Leicestershire	6,570
North Lincolnshire	2,230
South Lincolnshire	2,110
Bassetlaw	680
Central Nottingham	2,250
Nottingham	5,670
Barnsley	1,700
Doncaster	2,560
Rotherham	1,850
Sheffield	6,310
East Anglian RHA HQ	50
Cambridge	2,600
Peterborough	1,780
West Suffolk	1,660
East Suffolk	2,640
Norwich	3,950
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	1,410
West Norfolk and Wisbech	1,300
Huntingdon	770
North West Thames RHA HQ	[3]—
North Bedfordshire	1,380
South Bedfordshire	1,900
North Hertfordshire	1,020
East Hertfordshire	1,050
North West Hertfordshire	3,060
South West Hertfordshire	1,240
Barnet	2,870
Harrow	1,430
Hillingdon	2,050
Hounslow and Spelthorne	2,030
Ealing	1,760
Brent	2,000
Paddington and North Kensington	2,050
Riverside	3,910
North East Thames RHA HQ	110
Basildon and Thurrock	2,180
Mid-Essex	1,910
North East Essex	2,980
West Essex	1,670
Southend	2,000
Barking, Havering and Brent	3,350
Hampstead	2,120
Bloomsbury	3,210
Islington	1,510
City and Hackney	2,620
Newham	1,410
Tower Hamlets	2,390
Enfield	1,500
Harringey	1,350
Redbridge	1,520
Waltham Forest	2,660
South East Thames RHA HQ	10
Brighton	2,250
Eastbourne	1,700
Hastings	1,280
South East Kent	1,610
Canterbury and Thanet	2,590
Dartford & Gravesend	1,880
Maidstone	1,580
Medway	1,640
Tunbridge Wells	1,890
Bexley	1,580
Greenwich	2,050
Bromley	2,180
West Lambeth	2,370
Camberwell	2,310
Lewisham and North Southwark	3,550
South West Thames RHA HQ	120
North West Surrey	1,640
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	1,340
South West Surrey	1,750
Mid-Surrey	1,820
East Surrey	1,740
Chichester	1,370
Mid-Downs	1,780
Worthing	1,570
Croydon	2,300
Kingston and Esher	1,550
Richmond, Twickenham and R.	1,260
Wandsworth	2,940
Merton and Sutton	2,590
Wessex RHA HQ	10
East Dorset	3,210
West Dorset	1,820
Portsmouth and South East	3,930
Southampton and South West	4,180
Winchester	1,310
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	1,780
Salisbury	1,440
Swindon	1,860
Bath	3,120
Isle of Wight	1,030
Oxford RHA HQ	70
East Berkshire	2,310
West Berkshire	2,870
Aylesbury Vale	1,710
Wycombe	1,250
Milton Keynes	730

	Whole time equivalent[3]
Kettering	1,510
Northampton	2,410
Oxfordshire	4,150
South Western RHA HQ	80
Bristol and Weston	3,470
Frenchay	2,690
Southmead	2,160
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	2,900
Exeter	3,300
North Devon	1,000
Plymouth	2,890
Torbay	1,850
Cheltenham	1,350
Gloucester	2,490
Somerset	3,130
West Midlands RHA HQ	130
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1,150
Herefordshire	1,200
Kidderminster	1,280
Worcester	1,700
Shropshire	2,740
Mid-Staffordshire	1,760
North-Staffordshire	4,190
South-Staffordshire	1,900
Rugby	460
North Warwickshire	1,490
South Warwickshire	1,910
Central Birmingham	2,860
East Birmingham	1,400
North Birmingham	1,380
South Birmingham	2,610
West Birmingham	2,540
Coventry	2,600
Dudley	2,070
Sandwell	1,490
Solihull	1,150
Walsall	1,960
Wolverhampton	2,210
Mersey RHA HQ	70
Chester	1,730
Crewe	1,790
Halton	630
Macclesfield	1,580
Warrington	2,350
Liverpool	5,160
St. Helens and Knowsley	2,580
Southport and Formby	1,230
South Sefton	2,290
Wirral	2,770
North Western RHA HQ	120
Lancaster	2,120
Blackpool Wyre and Fylde	2,540
Preston	2,490
Blackburn Hymburn and Ribb	1,930
Burnley Pendle and Rossend	3,240
West Lancaster	920
Chorley and South Ribble	610
Bolton	1,900
Bury	1,100
North Manchester	2,450
Central Manchester	2,070
South Manchester	3,120
Oldham	1,480
Rochdale	1,170
Salford	3,320
Stockport	2,160
Tameside and Glossop	1,420
Trafford	1,230
Wigan	2,110
London Post Graduate SHA's	
The Hospital for Sick Children	1,240
The National Hospital	410
Moorfields Eye Hospital	190
The Bethlem Royal Hospital	720
The National Heart and Chest	640
The Royal Marsden Hospital	460
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes	1,230
Eastman Dental Hospital	10
LAS	[3]—
BTS	70
PHLS	10
Other	10

[1] Including unqualified nursing and midwifery staff and agency staff.

[2] Figures independently rounded to nearest ten (10) whole time equivalents.

[3] Indicates less than five (5) whole time equivalents.

Source: Department of Health (SM13) annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

Drug Deaths

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths per year in the United Kingdom are attributable to the use of hard drugs.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* The exact information requested is not available. The table shows the number of deaths attributable to certain drugs in the United Kingdom 1986-88.

Numbers of deaths attributable to certain drugs, United Kingdom 1986-88

	1986	*1987*	*1988*
Drug dependence or addiction[1]	63	65	56
Other drug abuse or intoxication[2]	16	14	21
Other poisoning by drugs[3]	105	129	128

[1] Morphine type.
Heroin, Methadone, Opium, Opium alkaloids and other derivatives, Synthetics with morphine-like effects.
Cocaine.
Coca leaves and derivatives.
Combinations of morphine type drugs with any other.

[2] Morphine type.
Cocaine type.

[3] Opiates and related narcotics.
Codeine (methylamorphine), Heroin (diacetylmorphine), Pethidine (mepiridine), Methadone, Morphine, Opium (alkaloids).
Surface and infiltration anaesthetics.
Cocaine, Lignocaine, Procaine, Tetracaine.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Guidance

8. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what comments he has received on his proposal to drop the special prescription in favour of development from the draft PPG3 planning guidance note.

Mr. Howard: None so far, although a number of informal responses indicate a generally favourable reaction to our draft guidance.

Toxic Waste

17. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to deal with the problems of disposing of toxic wastes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am preparing legislation, to be introduced at the earliest opportunity, to strengthen the law on waste disposal. This will include a duty of care on waste producers and improved controls over the disposal or treatment of waste. I shall also be issuing a consultation paper on the review of the special waste regulations shortly.

Sewage Works

19. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to introduce legislation to provide local authorities with powers to abate odour nuisance from sewage treatment works.

Mr. Trippier: We are currently considering the possibility of doing so.

European Community Water Directives

20. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last discussed United Kingdom compliance with European Community water directives with the Community environment commissioner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I discussed United Kingdom compliance with the drinking water directive with Commissioner Ripa when I attended the meeting of the Environment Council in Brussels in September.

76. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress towards reaching agreement with the Commission of the European Communities on plans for the implementation of the drinking water directive, 80/778/EEC, and the bathing water directive, 76/160/EEC.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 30 October to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), *Official Report*, columns *261-62*.

42. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what date the United Kingdom will meet the requirements of European Council directives on water quality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: In the majority of cases the United Kingdom already meets the requirements of the various European Community directives concerning water quality. For the remainder of cases measures are in hand to achieve these, notably in the case of the directives on the quality of drinking water and bathing waters, where timetabled improvement programmes have been submitted to the Commission of the European Communities.

Dioxins

21. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what standards there are for the control of the emissions of dioxins in processes of burning or incineration.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is impractical at present to set specific limits for emissions of dioxins, as the monitoring and analysis of these compounds is complex, slow and expensive. Emissions of dioxins are therefore controlled in the United Kingdom, as in the European directives on municipal waste incineration plants, through effective control of combustion conditions and the fitting and use of suitable abatement equipment.

Home Ownership

22. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has plans for additional assistance to people seeking to become home owners.

34. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to help people into home ownership.

70. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any new proposals to assist first-time home owners.

Mr. Howard: The Government will continue with the policies which have enabled there to be 3½ million more home owners today than in 1979.

69. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the level of home ownership in the south-west of England.

Mr. Chope: Estimates of the number and percentage of dwellings in owner-occupation in the South West region are given in table 9.4 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1978-1988", a copy of which is available in the Library.

South Africa (Sporting Links)

23. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent steps he has taken to discourage sporting links with South Africa.

Mr. Moynihan: The sixth conference of European Ministers responsible for sport which I attended in Reykjavik from 30 May to 1 June 1989 agreed a resolution concerning apartheid in sport and discouraging sporting contact with South Africa. The resolution has been adopted by the Committee of Ministers and I have asked the Sports Council to circulate a copy of it to the governing bodies of sport.

In August I wrote to the chairman of the Test and County Cricket Board and the president of the Rugby Football Union about the proposed tours to South Africa restating the Government's commitment to the Gleneagles agreement and our policy of seeking to discourage sporting contact with South Africa. I asked for copies of my letters to be passed on to individual players who had accepted invitations to visit South Africa.

81. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government's current policy on sporting links with South Africa.

Mr. Moynihan: Her Majesty's Government remain fully committed to the Commonwealth statement on apartheid in sport—the Gleneagles agreement.

Water Industry (Investment)

24. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total estimated cost of the investment programme in the water industry over the next 10 years.

Mr. Moynihan: The estimated expenditure by the English water plcs, required by the programmes of which account was taken by the Secretary of State in setting the initial level of K, is £22·8 billion in prices prevailing at November 1989.

Rural Housing

25. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any measures were announced during the summer adjournment to ensure that low-cost rural housing association property remains available for local housing needs after the first occupants move on.

Mr. Howard: The Housing Corporation issued a consultation paper on 10 October on the way in which the repurchase scheme for shared ownership properties in rural areas would work.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress being made in providing affordable housing in rural areas to fulfil local needs.

Mr. Chope: The Government's policy on rural housing was set out in a statement of 5 July 1988, and in statements of 3 and 7 February this year, copies of which are in the Library. It will take some time for this initiative to have its full effect, but I am sure that in due course it will make a significant impact on availability of housing in rural areas.

Green Belt

26. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on his policy regarding planning applications for development within green belt areas.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend continues to be fully committed to upholding green belt policy as set out in planning policy guidance note 2.

57. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it remains Government policy that land vested in local authorities under the Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act 1938 including land occupied by tenanted properties will be treated as inalienable.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) on 24 July at column *469*. The Government remain committed to ensuring that all green belt land, including land held under the 1938 Act, continues to fulfil green belt objectives.

Domestic Waste

28. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to enable him to reach his target of a substantial increase in recycled domestic waste by the year 2000.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A substantial increase in the amount of domestic waste recycled can be achieved only by a combination of measures. First, by manufacturers designing recyclability into their products, cutting down on the amount of unnecessary packaging and pricing recycled products competitively. Secondly, by consumers knowing about and choosing recycled products and making use of recycling facilities provided by local authorities, retailers and voluntary groups. Thirdly, by local authorities and retailers substantially increasing their commitment to providing recycling facilities so that the majority come up to the standard of the best. Fourthly, by Government creating the right waste management framework for an increase in recycling through measures which we intend to bring forward in the Environmental Protection Bill and through our support for major experiments such as Recycling City in Sheffield, intended to identify and apply best practice in recycling techniques.

County Hall, London

31. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on the future of the County hall, London SE1.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The future of County hall is in part the subject of an appeal to the House of Lords against a judgment of the Court of Appeal given on 20 July, and in part the subject of planning applications considered at a public inquiry which closed on 6 November.

Acid House Parties

32. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to take further measures to eliminate so-called acid house parties.

48. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he proposes to take to tackle the noise problems associated with acid house parties.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Department and the Home Office are currently consulting local authorities and the police about the possible need to extend their powers to prevent or control acid house or similar parties. We will consider further action in the light of that consultation.

Environmentally Friendly Products

35. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to regulate the labelling of ecologically friendly products.

62. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he intends to provide to consumers who wish to purchase products which do not damage the environment.

Mr. Trippier: We have announced our support for the establishment of an EC-wide scheme of eco-labelling in a discussion paper which I issued in August jointly with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I am pleased to say that the Environment Council on 19 September asked the Commission to bring forward proposals as soon as possible.

Association of County Councils

36. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Association of County Councils; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend last met the Association of County Councils and other local authority associations on 17 October to discuss the Government's proposals for the community charge transitional relief scheme.

Dutch Minister for Sport

37. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Minister for Sport next expects to meet his equivalent from the Dutch Government; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Moynihan: I have no immediate plans to meet the new Dutch State Secretary for Welfare, Health and Cultural Affairs, who has responsibility for sport. Officials from his Department and mine are members of the Council of Europe standing committee on the European convention on spectator violence. The committee is meeting today.

Community Care

38. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what help from the transitional relief scheme will be available to those people discharged from residential care into the community after 1 April 1990.

Mr. Chope: It is the Government's intention that the scheme for transitional relief should operate under rules that are as simple as possible so as to produce practicable arrangements which will enable authorities to issue community charge bills next April which reflect both transitional relief and rebates. As with other schemes it will be necessary to establish a qualification date for entitlement. We have proposed that in order for a person to qualify for relief at an address that person should be entered in the charging authority's community charges register for 31 March 1990 as living at that address.

Rents

40. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has agreed any definition of an affordable rent or a market rent.

Mr. Chope: Section 14 of the Housing Act 1988 sets out how a rent assessment committee should determine a market rent.

Sports Council

41. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Sports Council; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Moynihan: I will next meet the chairman of the Sports Council on 16 November when we will discuss current issues in sport.

Royal Parks

43. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review encroachment fees charged by his Department in relation to the fringes of royal parks.

Mr. Trippier: Encroachment licences are essential to control developments on the boundaries of the royal parks. Encroachment fees are normally reviewed every five years but in some cases there has been a considerably longer period without review. There is an element of catching-up in some of the increases.

Planning Appeals

44. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of planning appeals have been allowed during the latest 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Moynihan: In the 12 months to 31 August 1989, 35·4 per cent. of planning appeals were allowed.

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many local authority planning appeals referred to him were agreed by him in 1979, 1984 and 1989;

(2) how many local authority planning appeals referred to him were subject to a change in the inspector recommendation in 1979, 1984 and 1989;

(3) what was the number of appeals against planning permissions to local authorities which were referred to him for 1979, 1984 and 1989.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested is given in the table.

	Planning appeals				*Secretary of State's decision contrary to inspector's recommendation*
Year	*Received*	*Decided*	*Allowed*		
			Number	*Percentage*	
1979	12,990	8,933	2,602	29·1	17
1984	16,192	11,643	3,773	32·4	16
1988-89	28,659	21,061	7,734	36·7	19

Planning Applications

46. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding the process for determining planning applications.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend receives a number of representations about the operation of the development control system. In particular, more than 400 individuals and organisations have responded to a consultation paper entitled "Efficient Planning" which we issued on 28 July.

Low-cost Housing

45. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to improve the supply of low-cost housing for rent and shared ownership.

54. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress his Department is making in its policy of increasing the supply of affordable housing.

61. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to increase the supply of affordable housing.

Mr. Chope: We have planned for an increase of more than 60 per cent. between 1989-90 and 1991-92 in public support through the Housing Corporation to housing associations, which are now the main providers of new subsidised housing; associations' output will increase further as a result of their enhanced capacitity to use private finance. Deregulation of the private rented sector will stimulate new investment in housing to rent. We have also announced a series of measures to promote supply of affordable housing for rent and sale, including shared ownership sale, in rural areas. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement will set out the Government's revised plans for expenditure on subsidised housing rolled forward to 1992-93.

Water Pollution

47. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress towards the removal of pollution from inland coastal waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the investment plans that I have announced for improvements to sewage treatment works *Official Report*, 7 December 1988, cols. *199-200* and to bathing waters, *Official Report*, 20 October 1989, cols. *261-2*. These programmes are the biggest of their kind, and will bring about substantial improvements to the quality of our estuarial and coastal waters.

Councillors' Allowances

49. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the letter dated 14 July from the chairman of the three local authority associations about members' allowances.

Mr. Chope: The Government have introduced amendments in another place to the Local Government and Housing Bill which will give power to implement a new system of councillors' allowance on the lines supported by the chairmen of the three local authority associations concerned.

Nitrates

50. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to reduce the level of nitrates in public water supplies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Water undertakers have prepared firm programmes to achieve compliance as quickly as practicable with the nitrate standard of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 which is the same value as that set by the EC drinking water directive. Some water undertakers are already blending water that has a high nitrate concentration with water that has a low nitrate concentration in order to meet the standard. Investigation is also proceeding of treatment processes, such as ion exchange and biological de-nitrification. In addition, agricultural measures to prevent pollution will be introduced under a pilot scheme in nitrate sensitive areas.

Waste Recycling

51. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to legislate on waste recycling.

Mr. Trippier: We hope to bring forward provisions to promote recycling in the Environmental Protection Bill.

School Sport

52. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policies his Department has to encourage sport for schoolchildren outside school hours.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government are committed to promoting participation in sport for schoolchildren both in and out of school hours.

The Sports Council's initiatives aimed at increasing young people's participation in sport, include the "Ever thought of Sport?" and 'What's your Sport?" campaigns. The Government are currently considering the recommendations of the School Sport Forum; our response will be published shortly.

Stop Notices

53. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to introduce changes to planning laws relating to stop notices.

Mr. Moynihan: As soon as parliamentary time permits.

Environmental Groups

55. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any official engagements he has between the present time and the end of November with environmental groups.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

Sports and Recreation Facilities

56. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend compulsory competitive tendering to the management of local authority sports and recreation facilities.

Mr. Moynihan: The draft order requiring competition in the management of local authority sports and leisure facilities was laid before Parliament on 25 October. Subject to parliamentary approval, implementation in England will take place in three stages between 1 January 1992 and 1 January 1993.

Unleaded Petrol

58. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure he has for unleaded petrol sales.

67. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of petrol sold in the United Kingdom is unleaded.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot).

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any vehicles belonging to or used by his Department run on leaded petrol.

Mr. Chope: The exact answer can be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. Wherever possible all vehicles that can be run on unleaded fuel do so. Those vehicles which can run only on leaded fuels are being replaced.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any Government ministerial cars run on leaded petrol.

Mr. Chope: Most ministerial allocated cars run on unleaded petrol. It is our intention to move the rest of the Government car fleet to unleaded petrol as the vehicles fall due for replacement.

Housing Report

59. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the Association of District Councils report, "A Time to Take Stock".

Mr. Chope: The report makes a useful contribution to the discussions we shall be having about the details of the new local authority capital finance system and the new renovation grant system that remain to be settled. We shall be discussing points raised in their report with the Association of District Councils and other local authority associations when the Housing Consultative Council meets at the end of this month.

Motor Fuel

60. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of different fuel brands and of petrol, lead-free petrol and diesel, respectively, on the environment.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The composition of motor fuels sold in the United Kingdom is controlled and no assessment is made of the environmental effects of different brands. The reduction in lead content of petrol in 1986 and the growth in sales of unleaded petrol have more than halved the concentration of lead in the air. However, it is now estimated that some 80 per cent. of lead in air still comes from petrol vehicle emissions. Diesel fuel has no lead added to it.

The impacts on the environment of other materials emitted from vehicles are given in the report of the Department's terrestrial effects review group, acid rain review group, and building effects review group. The proportions of total emissions of these materials which come from diesel and petrol vehicles are given in the Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics. Copies of review group reports and the digest are in the Library of the House.

Housing (Hackney)

63. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to visit the London borough of Hackney to discuss housing finance.

Mr. Chope: No, but the Department has regular contacts with the borough and has recently held a meeting with the council in the current housing investment programme round.

Planning Guidance

64. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any representations on the draft PPG3 planning guidance note.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has not so far received many formal responses to our draft planning policy guidance note, "Housing". He has, however, received a number of informal responses which indicate a generally favourable reaction to the new draft guidance.

Comments may be made on the draft guidance until 5 January 1990.

Planet Protection Fund

65. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he supports the creation of a planet protection fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We do not need new international institutions to tackle the environmental problems facing the world today. Instead, we support the use of the existing bilateral and multilateral channels for environmental assistance, adapting or improving those channels as necessary. In her statement in the House on 26 October my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister drew attention to the support expressed in the Langkawi declaration on the environment for existing international environmental organisations, especially the United Nations environment programme. We consider that any additional resources should not go towards creating new bureaucracies but directly to measures to protect and improve the environment.

Council Tenants

68. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to take any action to ensure that tenants have the right to receive information on their council's effectiveness in housing policy.

Mr. Chope: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave on 1 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo).

Homelessness

72. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department plans to offer to local authorities which are obliged to house people made homeless as a result of mortgage arrears.

Mr. Chope: We will announce the conclusions of our review of the homelessness legislation very shortly.

Housing Repairs

73. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has made any estimate of the total amount needed to tackle housing disrepair in England and Wales.

Mr. Chope: The most recent English house condition survey estimated that the average cost of repair of all dwellings was, in 1986, £950 which sums to £17·9 billion for the housing stock in England as a whole. Against this should be set the same survey's estimate of the annual value of work undertaken on the repair and improvement of the stock which was, in 1986, £17·3 billion. Figures relating to Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Estate Action

75. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has since his appointment visited any housing projects funded by Estate Action.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has not done so but he hopes to do so in future. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning visited Holmewood estate, Bradford, at the end of September and last week I visited Marlborough Road estate in Derby where Estate Action funding has totalled more than £2·1 million last year and this.

Ivory

77. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to curtail the global trade in ivory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Effective action to curtail world trade in ivory requires concerted international co-operation, principally through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES). We strongly supported the ban on commercial trade in African elephant ivory at the recent CITES conference. We were also successful in obtaining agreement to our resolution urging all parties to the convention to implement these more stringent controls immediately. The Indian elephant is already subject to a similar prohibition.

Litter

78. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to enable local authorities to impose fixed penalties for the dropping of litter.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am pleased to inform my hon. Friend that our proposals for legislation to tackle the problem of litter, published on 20 July, include a provision which will allow all district and borough councils to operate a fixed penalty scheme for littering.

Lower Grange Estate, Bradford

80. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to approve grants enabling new homes for rent and for sale to be built on the Lower Grange estate in Bradford, and some existing homes to be modernised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: An application for city grant in respect of 280 houses to be built for sale and 28 flats to be refurbished for sale was received on 6 October. It is being examined and my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities hopes to issue a decision as quickly as possible.

My Department has not yet received a detailed application for estate action support in respect of the houses which the city of Bradford metropolitan council intend to refurbish. The Housing Corporation has also not yet received a detailed appplication for housing association grant for the houses proposed to be built for rent by North British Housing Association. Both applications, when received, will also be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Northumbrian Water Authority

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give the capital spending of the Northumbrian water authority for each year since 1983 and the total spending planned over the next five years.

Mr. Howard: Northumbrian Water Group plc estimates that expenditure required in 1990-95 by the investment programme which was taken into account in setting K will amount to £540 million at November 1989 prices. Northumbrian water authority's capital expenditure since 1983, taken from the authority's annual report and accounts and repriced, was as follows:—

Northumbrian Capital Expenditure 1982-83 to 1988-89

£ million (1988-89 prices)

	DOE services	*Land drainage*
1982-83	49·1	0·2
1983-84	41·9	0·2
1984-85	34·3	0·3
1985-86	47·2	0·2
1986-87	42·8	0·3
1987-88	44·1	0·2
1988-89	41·2	0·2

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO exercise Wintex/Cimex 1987 and exercise Wintex/Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercises themselves; and what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department plays its part in testing those procedures in which we have an interest. Staff participate as required; it would not be appropriate for me to supply the details requested.

English Heritage

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total per head of the population of England that was spent by English Heritage in each of the past three years.

Mr. Trippier: On the basis of OPCS mid-year population estimates and English Heritage gross expenditure, the spend per head for the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 was £1·42, £1·50, and £1·65 respectively.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by individual water company the amounts proposed for *(a)* industry debt written off and *(b)* the injection of new Government capital.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 26 October 1989 to my hon. Friend for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) [*Official Report*, col. 555].

Seaforth Nature Reserve

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the reasons why the Seaforth nature reserve is being demolished; how many appeals has he received in favour of the reserve; and how many against.

Mr. Trippier: I have received 23 representations supporting the reserve, but I understand that Sefton MBC, the local planning authority, proposes to meet the Merseyside Docks and Harbour Company—the land owners—to discuss the issues of present concern at Seaforth. It is too soon to tell what the future of the reserve will be.

Radioactive Discharges

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has monitored the effect of radioactive discharges from the Health Service to air and water.

Mr. Trippier: Radioactive waste may be disposed of only if an authorisation has been issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP). Authorisations are issued only after careful assessment of the environmental impact of the proposed disposals. They impose strict conditions and activity limits, which are designed to ensure that any dose to the general public is well below the maximum permissible as recommended by the International Commission on Radiological Protection. The premises concerned are subject to inspection to ensure compliance with the terms of authorisations.

Monuments (Policy Review)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the policy review on the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments—England, Wales and Scotland that was undertaken by Peat, Marwick and McClintock; and when he expects to act on the report's recommendations.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 7 November 1989]:* The consultant's review was commissioned as part of a policy review of the three commissions undertaken jointly by the Department, CADW Welsh Historic Monuments and the Scottish Development Department. We announced our decisions on the main points of principle raised in the PMM report's recommendations relating to the English Commission on 20 February at columns 496-97. There remain further points of detail which affect all three commissions. We aim to conclude this further work by the end of the year.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people have been affected by the use of local authorities' powers to restrict the amount of rent payable through housing benefit such that only part of the eligible rent is assessed for benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply. This information is not held centrally.

Local Government Finance

18. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to prevent the circulation by councils to community charge payers of misleading information on *(a)* on the level of charge and *(b)* the sums by which it is calculated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The code of practice issued under the Local Government Act 1986 already requires publicity issued by local authorities to be accurate and balanced. In addition I propose to lay regulations before the House under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 prescribing the precise form of bills to be sent to charge payers next year.

79. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the proposed system for transitional relief for the poll tax.

Mr. Chope: The Government have issued two proposals papers on 11 October and 20 October, copies of which have been placed in the Library. Discussions are now taking place with the local authority associations following which a further consolidated paper will be issued. The paper will set out the detailed arrangements for the operation of the scheme.

66. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning his recent statement relating to the community charge.

74. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning his recent announcement relating to the community charge.

Mr. Chope: I have received representations from individual local authorities and other bodies. The Department has also held a number of discussions with the local authority associations.

39. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on all those degenerative mental conditions which can now be assessed for poll tax exemption.

Mr. Chope: The revised exemption for people who are severely mentally impaired will not refer to specific conditions. Any person who is entitled to a qualifying benefit—which will now include attendance allowance and constant attendance allowance—and who has a certificate from a registered medical practitioner stating that his intelligence and social functioning are severely impaired, whatever the cause, will be exempt from the community charge.

33. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the likely administrative costs of the poll tax transitional relief scheme in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 18 October at column *155.*

29. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the causes for the relative levels of base community charge in areas of greater social needs as against areas without such problems.

Mr. David Hunt: The proposals for Standard Spending Assessments which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 6 November take account of substantial research which has been discussed with the local authority associations over the last year.

30. **Mr. Summerg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what costings have been undertaken by his Department as to the financial and manpower implications of implementing a two-tier system of local government finance, comprising a local income tax and a property tax.

Mr. David Hunt: A two-tier system of local government finance could, we estimate, cost up to twice as much to administer as the community charge.

27. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any intention to revise the indicators used in the calculation of revenue support grant in those local authorities whose amount of grant is adversely affected by the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Chris Patten: I announced my proposals for the calculation of revenue support grant in my statement on 6 November.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 9 November 1989

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Rudolf Hess

Mr. Morg[illegible] To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 7 November to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West, if he will place in the Library a copy of the Jones report on the circumstances of the death of Rudolf Hess.

The Attorney-General: No. The document which the hon. Member refers to as the Jones report is a report submitted by the Metropolitan police to the Director of Public Prosecutions setting out the result of a police investigation into an alleged criminal offence. Such reports are confidential.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information his Department has on the length of time taken to respond to letters from Members.

Mr. Ridley: The majority of letters from hon. Members should receive a substantive reply within three weeks. Exceptionally, replies to some letters about matters receiving considerable public attention at the time of writing may be delayed until a substantive reply can be sent.

European Trade Mark

Mr. Iain Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on current negotiations on the establishment of a common European trade mark and the location of the proposed European trade mark office.

Mr. Forth: There has been no progress on either issue in recent months. Earlier this year the European Community devoted its efforts to negotiations with other countries on the international registration of marks. These were successfully concluded at a diplomatic conference in June. Indications are that negotiations on the European Community trade mark system will resume next year.

Chocolate Eggs (Safety)

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, in the light of the death of Jennifer Ashton aged three on 6 November, he will consider the safety aspects of Kinder chocolate eggs and their contents; and if he will urge their withdrawal from sale pending any recommendations for their improved safety.

Mr. Forth: I was saddened to learn of the death of baby Jennifer Ashton. My Department is seeking full information on all the circumstances and this will of course include the findings of the coroner's inquest which is to be held on 10 November. When all the facts are available I will give the matter my urgent attention. I hope that the considerable media attention which this tragic accident has attracted will alert parents to the dangers which can be associated with small toys and their parts.

Common Air Interface

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made on the common air interface; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The common air interface has been issued by my Department as a standard, with the reference MPT 1375. It has been notified as a United Kingdom national standard to the European Commission under the procedure laid down in directive 83/189/EEC. My Department is currently preparing to issue an accompanying test specification schedule. A number of other European countries are considering adopting this standard.

CT2

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any proposals to specify technical standards for CT2 following the grant of licences to four consortia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The technical standards for CT2 have for the most part already been specified. Equipment has to satisfy the requirements of the standards BS6833 and MPT 1334. It is intended that by the end of next year the Telepoint operators will be obliged by conditions of their licences to install the common air interface in their base stations. Equipment using this interface will have to satisfy the standard MPT1375. A test specification schedule to this standard is in preparation. At some future time, after consulting the industry and taking advice from the Director General of Telecommunications, consideration will be given to the general adoption of the common air interface for Telepoint equipment. It is not expected that the adoption of this interface will be mandatory for CT2 equipment which is not capable of being used for Telepoint.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy at the next European Council of Industry Ministers on 14 November in Brussels, to introduce initiatives on *(a)* recycling of materials, including paper, packaging, metals and chemicals, *(b)* environmental protection for industrial plants, in regard to potential trans-frontier pollution and *(c)* energy policies in industry to reduce carbon dioxide and chlorofluorocarbon release to help mitigate the greenhouse effect.

Mr. Forth: Environmental issues such as those cited by the hon. Gentleman have important implications for business and it may be expected that these will in due course be considered by the Council of Industry Ministers. However, there are no plans to raise them at the meeting on 14 November.

The agenda for Council of Ministers meetings is determined by the presidency which is currently held by France.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has been invited to participate in the seminar on waste incineration and the environment, to be held at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers in London on 13 December.

Mr. Forth: Two members of the pollution abatement division of Warren Spring laboratory will be attending this conference.

ENVIRONMENT

Wheelchairs

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current level of support provided to local authorities through the rate support grant for the supply of wheelchairs.

Mr. Chope: The Disablement Services Authority which is a centrally funded special health authority provides wheelchairs free to all those with a clinical need, generally on the recommendation of a general practitioner, occupational therapist or physiotherapist. There is therefore no need for support to local authorities through rate support grant.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what protection there will be for private sector tenants who at the moment pay contractual rental inclusive of rates upon the introduction of the community charge; and how tenants will be protected where landlords do not wish to settle on the basis of individual contracts.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) on 9 May at column *386*. We are preparing an explanatory booklet for tenants about rent and rates, and reference to this will be included in the prescribed notes attached to community charge bills.

Mobility Back-up

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make provision for a statutory back-up to mobility across all tenures and providers.

Mr. Chope: I have received the report of the mobility working party and will make an announcement soon.

Aerials

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish his consultative document on aerials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: We hope to be able to issue a consultation paper on planning controls over satellite television antennas and other telecommunications development within the next two or three months.

Environmental Policies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the reasons for his decision not to meet representatives from Greenpeace (United Kingdom) to discuss environmental policies and environmental protection.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has made no such decision. He expects to meet representatives of Greenpeace in the next few weeks.

Radioactive Waste Disposal

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in establishing an agency responsible for the final disposal of high-level radioactive waste.

Mr. Trippier: It is too early to consider whether an agency will be required to be responsible for the final disposal of heat generating or high level radioactive waste. This waste is being stored at British Nuclear Fuels' site at Sellafield for at least 50 years to enable a reduction in the heat and radioactivity to take place before disposal.

Sunderland Enterprise Zone

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has as to the number of full-time equivalent jobs that will arise within *(a)* the Hylton colliery area and *(b)* the Southwick shipyard area of the Sunderland enterprise zone by the end of each year from 1990 to 1994, inclusive, listing the estimated numbers separately for each of the areas.

Mr. Moynihan: It is estimated that, when fully developed, these and the other parts of the proposed Sunderland enterprise zone may together give rise to some 3,000 to 4,000 jobs. It is not practicable to break this down further, as the timing and location will depend inter alia on the progress of reclamation and development and the decisions of individual firms.

Rutland Water

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information is available to the National Rivers Authority about *(a)* the specific extent of the toxicity of the blue-green algae at Rutland Water in early September; and whether that toxic level was a normal seasonal phenomenon and *(b)* whether any animals died as a result of toxic blue-green algae poisoning at any other reservoirs under the scrutiny of the National Rivers Authority during the period in question;

(2) whether he will place in the Library and make available to Rutland district council and Leicestershire country council *(a)* the scientific findings relating to the death of animals at Rutland Water carried out by the National Rivers Authority, *(b)* the similar investigations and reports by Dundee university on behalf of Anglian Water and *(c)* information made available to the National Rivers Authority as a result of post-mortems by veterinary surgeons following the death of dogs and sheep.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* I understand that the NRA has results of mammalian toxicity tests performed in September which showed the blue-green algae in Rutland Water to be highly toxic. It is not possible to determie whether or not the level of toxicity at Rutland Water was a normal seasonal phenomenon, although blooms of blue-green algae in later summer are a common occurrence in many waters of the United Kingdom. Apart from Rutland Water, the NRA has no knowledge of animal deaths elsewhere which can be attributed to toxic blue-green algae.

Data from monitoring the algae at Rutland Water have been made available to the appropriate local authority environmental health officers and this, together with the results of the toxicological work commissioned from Dundee university, is also included on the public register maintained by the NRA. Studies and post mortems on animal deaths at Rutland Water connected with the algae have been carried out by the veterinary service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I understand that final results are not yet available.

TRANSPORT

M20 (Improvements)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if the proposed improvements to the M20 between junctions 5 and 8 will be completed before the opening of the Channel tunnel;

(2) what is the estimated completion date for the improvement of the M20 between junctions 5 and 8;

(3) when he expects to let the contracts for improvement of the M20 between junctions 5 and 8.

Mr. Atkins: The timing of contract letting will depend on the outcome of the statutory procedures, but subject to that it is our aim to complete the improvement before the Channel tunnel opens.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest available traffic flow figures on each link of the M20 motorway from junction 5 to junction 8.

Mr. Atkins: The figures based on 24-hour annual average daily two-way traffic flows in 1987 are as follows:

	Numbers
Between junctions 5 and 6	61,000
Between junctions 6 and 7	46,000
Between junctions 7 and 8	24,000

Intermodal Transport

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department had any representation at, or presented any papers to, the conference on intermodal transport and the single European market in Paris on 9 and 10 November.

Mr. Atkins: No.

Humber Bridge

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate what would be the impact on local poll tax payers if the whole of the outstanding debt on the Humber bridge was carried by people *(a)* within the city of Hull boundary and *(b)* within the county of Humberside boundary.

Mr. Atkins: Current discussion with the Humber Bridge Board will lead to the production of estimates of the effect of the recent toll increase on their debts. Although the Humber bridge legislation provides that deficiencies in toll revenue should be met by local taxpayers none of the estimates to be made will assume that the whole debt is met by them. In agreeing to treat the Humber bridge as a special case for assistance, the Government have accepted that they will have a part to play.

Traffic Information Broadcasts

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department received about the closing of the north and southbound carriageways of the A1 near Welwyn Garden City on Friday 27 October, due to an accident; when the BBC were informed; and what information he has on the timing of broadcasts by the BBC to warn motorists of the traffic chaos.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's agent, Hertfordshire county council, was notified of this incident by the police as soon as it was evident that its assistance would be required.

The BBC learnt of the accident from Hertfordshire police at 14.35 and broadcast the first bulletin on Radios 1 and 2 during the next 10 to 15 minutes. This was updated regularly throughout the afternoon.

Fare Increases (London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he received from London Regional Transport for proposed percentage fare increases in 1990; what increases he agreed to; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend has discussions with LRT covering the whole range of LRT finances, as part of the annual public expenditure survey. Final decisions on fares rest with the LRT board.

Rat-running

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safeguards are being considered to prevent rat running arising from the introduction of the autoguide system in London.

Mr. Atkins: The Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Act 1989 gives the Secretary of State power, in licensing driver information systems, to impose conditions about the roads on which systems can direct traffic. The need for such conditions in relation to a commercial Autoguide scheme will be considered in the light of the results of the proposed London pilot scheme. The local authority associations and the police will be closely involved in monitoring such a scheme.

Drowning Incident

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek the publication of the taped telephone and radio calls between callers to the Barnstaple 999 centre, Her Majesty's Coastguard and the emergency services relating to the accidental drowning of Mark Woodward on 16 August.

Mr. McLoughlin: Her Majesty's Coastguard tapes relating to this incident were kept and were available at the coroner's inquest. Following the inquest they were cleaned and put back into service. I understand that British Telecom plc has a similar arrangement for the recording of 999 calls. Any request for access to BT tapes should be made directly to BT.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tapajos Project

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policy considerations lie behind British support for the Tapajos project.

Mrs. Chalker: We have not agreed to provide support to this project from the aid programme, but only to explore the possibility of doing so. I understand that the aim of the project [illegible] to promote sustainable forest management and to provide demonstration areas in which to develop such management practices; these are relevant to the needs of Brazil and other countries.

DEFENCE

Halons and CFCs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent halons and chlorofluorocarbons are used for defence applications in the United Kingdom and by British forces abroad.

Mr. Neubert: Halons are widely used in fire-fighting systems. Chlorofluorocarbons are used for air conditioning/refrigeration equipment, aerosol propellants, and cleaning purposes (solvents) and are present in manufactured items such as insulation material.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist for reducing the use of halons and chlorofluorocarbons for defence applications, as a contribution to protecting the ozone layer.

Mr. Neubert: The testing and demonstration of fire-fighting systems based on the use of halons has already been curtailed. Plans exist to replace chlorofluorocarbons unfriendly to the ozone layer by alternative, ozone-friendly, substances as they become available. Steps have already been taken to reduce the emissions of CFC's in certain areas.

Electromagnetic Interference

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the latest precautions his Department is taking to reduce the potential hazard arising from electromagnetic interference to *(a)* ground based, *(b)* airborne and *(c)* seaborne nuclear weapon systems.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All nuclear weapon systems are designed to minimise their vulnerability to hazards such as electromagnetic interference. Standard safety procedures ensure that nuclear weapons are only handled, maintained or transported under conditions where the possibility of hazards is extremely remote. These procedures are kept constantly under review.

Microwave Transmission (Soviet Union)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the purpose of the powerful microwave transmission from the Soviet Union beamed at the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have no information on powerful microwave transmissions from the Soviet Union beamed at the United Kingdom.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there has been any change in the past five years in the microwave transmission intensity radiated to the United Kingdom from the Soviet Union and known as the woodpecker signal.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have no information on microwave transmissions radiated to the United Kingdom from the Soviet Union. "Woodpecker" is a high frequency over-the-horizon radar transmission to which there has been no change over the last five years.

Dunkirk Evacuation (Anniversary)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans are in train to mark the 50th anniversary of the Dunkirk evacuation; and what facilities are to be provided to enable members of the Dunkirk Veterans Association *(a)* from the United Kingdom and *(b)* from Commonwealth countries to participate in any planned commemorations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are considering requests for meservice participation in events in France to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Dunkirk evacuation. We have no plans to provide official facilities to enable members of the Dunkirk Veterans Association from the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth to participate in any of the planned commemorations.

RAF Jets (Cameras)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for replacing the 16mm cine cameras on Royal Air Force fast jets and jet-trainer aircraft with video cameras.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As a general rule, it is our intention that all new fast jet aircraft should be fitted with video cameras. Cine cameras on older aircraft are being replaced by video cameras where this is deemed cost effective.

RAF Jets

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made towards equipping all crews of Royal Air Force fast jets and jet-trainer aircraft with self-inflating life jackets and dinghies.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We intended to equip all fast jet and jet trainer aircrew with automatically inflating life-saving jackets. These have already been issued to Phantom aircrew, though the automatic inflation capability is not yet operational. The contract to equip the rest of the fast jet force has recently been awarded and it hoped that all the RAF's needs will be met by the end of 1991. All appropriate aircrew are already equipped with dinghies; these are easily inflatable manually and studies do not suggest that provision of a self-inflating variety would improve aircrew survival.

Electronic Warfare

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what action his Department is taking to prepare for defensive and offensive electronic warfare;

(2) what plans he has to counteract the effects of electronic warfare signals beamed at the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to comment on operational matters of this kind.

War Widows

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what would be the cost of applying the Ministry of Defence occupational pension to all war widows widowed prior to 1973; how many extra widows would then become entitled; and what would be the estimated average increase in pension per widow that they would then receive.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Separate figures relating to those war widows whose husbands died before 31 March 1973 are not available. The attributable forces family pension introduced into the armed forces occupational scheme in 1973 is payable only to those war widows whose husbands gave service on or after 31 March 1973. The cost of paying such a pension to all war widows whose husbands' service ended before that date, at current rates, is estimated to be around £200 million a year. About 52,000 war widows would benefit and the average increase in pension received per widow, on that basis, would be approximately £74 per week.

THE ARTS

European Literary Prize

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he is yet in a position to respond to the request from the hon. Member for Paisley, South that the proposed European literary prize should be launched in 1990 in Glasgow as the European City of Culture.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to the hon. Member for having made the suggestion that the new European literary prize should be launched in Glasgow in 1990. I am pleased to say that at their informal meeting on 2 November 1989, EC Ministers responsible for cultural affairs welcomed this proposal on my recommendation.

CIVIL SERVICE

Centre for Policy Studies

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service under what circumstances, and on whose authority, civil servants are permitted to participate in the deliberations of the Centre for Policy Studies; whether they are allowed to advise that body; and whether that body makes any payment for the professional expertise provided by such civil servants.

Mr. Luce: Guidance on the circumstances in which civil servants may attend or participate in activities organised by outside bodies such as the Centre for Policy Studies is set out in chapter 6 of the personnel management handbook, which also covers the question of payment. Copies of the handbook are available in the House Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Consumer Credit

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of current personal sector debt is accounted for by consumer credit; what percentage of the consumer debt is in the form of credit card borrowing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: At the end of 1988 consumer credit formed 14 per cent. of personal sector borrowing. At that time bank credit card lending formed 16 per cent. of consumer credit. More recent but less complete figures indicate that there has been no change since then in the proportion of consumer credit represented by credit card borrowing.

Building Societies Act

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has regarding the interpretation placed upon section 100 of the Building Societies Act 1986 by the Building Societies Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have nothing to add to the guidance issued by the Building Societies Commission on 20 October, copies of which have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament. This sets out the Building Societies Commission's interpretation of section 100. Nothing in the guidance calls into question the validity of schemes along the lines of that adopted by Abbey National.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to introduce legislation to amend section 100 of the Building Societies Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have no such plans.

Credit Unions

Dr. Godman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many credit unions have been established in each of the past 20 years; what is the approximate size of membership of each of these credit unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The number of credit unions registered since the coming into operation of the Credit Unions Act 1979, which provided the first statutory framework for credit unions in Great Britain, has been:

	Number
1979	2
1980	55
1981	16
1982	8
1983	2
1984	3
1985	2
1986	13
1987	16
1988	45
[1] 1989	44

[1] To 7 November.

According to the most recent annual returns received by the registrar of friendly societies from each credit union registered in Great Britain, the average membership of all credit unions is 141. However, there is considerable variation in membership levels, as the following table shows:

Number of members	*Number of credit unions*
Less than 100	109
100 to 250	44
250 to 500	23
500 to 1,000	8
More than 1,000	6

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to change the tax treatment of the receipt of workplace nursery provision by employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) on 3 November 1989 at column *361*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Refuseniks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Russian authorities about the case of Mark and Veronika Proekt and their sons, Alexander and Simon, of Leningrad.

Mr. Maude: We have not previously raised this particular case with the Soviet authorities, but we shall be happy to do so if my hon. Friend will provide the necessary details about this case.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Russian authorities about the case of Boris Tsirelson, and his parents, Simon and Esther, of Leningrad.

Mr. Maude: We take every opportunity to press the Soviet authorities on individual refusenik cases such as that of the Tsirelson family. This case was last raised when my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met Mr. Shevardnadze in New York on 29 September. We shall maintain our pressure until the Tsirelson family is allowed to emigrate.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Russian authorities about the case of Emmanuel and Judith Lurie, of Moscow.

Mr. Maude: We take every opportunity to press the Soviet authorities on individual refusenik cases such as Emmanuel and Judith Lurie. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised this case when he met Mr. Shevardnadze in New York on 29 September. We have recently heard the very welcome news that Emmanuel and Judith Lurie have at last received permission to emigrate from the USSR.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Russian authorities about the case of Boris and Anna Klemberg, of Kiev.

Mr. Maude: Boris Klemberg recently received permission to emigrate and is now in Israel with his daughter. We shall now include Anna Klemberg among those refusenik cases on which we press the Soviet authorities.

Israel-South Africa (Nuclear Weapons)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from the United Kingdom ambassadors to South Africa, Israel and the United Nations on the allegation made by the United States security services that the Israelis and South Africans are jointly developing a nuclear-capable launch vehicle and a compatible atomic warhead.

Mr. Maude: We are aware of the recent reports in the press to which the question refers. Any collaboration between Israel and South Africa in nuclear weapon or ballistic missile research would be a matter for serious concern. It is not our policy to comment on the substance of confidential diplomatic correspondence.

Microwave Transmission

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what protection has been provided to embassy staff and buildings in Moscow and elsewhere to counteract the effects of microwave radiation.

Mr. Maude: For security reasons, we do not divulge details of measures taken to protect Her Majesty's overseas missions and their staff.

PRIME MINISTER

Homelessness

Q33. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit the homeless people sleeping on the South Bank.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Central and Eastern Europe

Q45. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received concerning Her Majesty's Government's response to political events in central and eastern Europe.

The Prime Minister: I have received many representations on this subject, from hon. Members, the public and interested organisations. The Government greatly welcome current developments in Poland and in Hungary which are moving towards democracy, freedom and market-based economic systems. We are taking many practical steps to aid this process and we are prepared to do more. We hope that other countries in the region will evolve in the same way and that current changes in the GDR will continue.

Stevenage

Q93. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit Stevenage.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

European Council

Q115. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the proposals made by the president of the Council on monetary union and other matters on 25 October.

The Prime Minister: The issue of economic and monetary union will be on the agenda for the next meeting of the European council in Strasbourg on 8 and 9 December. The President of the Council will no doubt present any proposals he wishes to make at that meeting.

Edmonton

Q156. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit Edmonton.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Port Glasgow

Q158. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Port Glasgow in the near future.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

South Hams

Q195. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit South Hams.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Fishing Industry

Q198. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Prime Minister what representatives she has received from organisations representing the fishing boat building industry regarding the state of the industry; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Minister for Industry received a delegation from the Shipbuilders and Ship Repairers Association on 2 November at which the current problems of the fishing boat building industry were discussed.

The Commission has imposed a ban on state aid to fund boat building, but there are support measures available for the industry to help it to develop new products and export services to help in identifying and developing new markets.

Ministers (Financial Affairs)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what safeguards are in place to ensure that Ministers or former Ministers do not allow stockholding companies or financial intermediaries handling their personal affairs to trade in stocks where price-sensitive information has been made available;

(2) what safeguards are in place to ensure that former Ministers do not give price-sensitive information to stock market traders; whether any breaches have occurred in the period 1982 to 1988; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: For any individual knowingly to deal on the basis of unpublished price-sensitive information obtained (directly or indirectly) from an insider is a criminal offence under the insider dealing legislation. As has been the practice under successive Governments, Ministers are given advice, on taking up office, on steps which should be taken and action from which they should refrain in respect of any investments they may hold or acquire so as to avoid a conflict of interest. This includes the advice that Ministers should scrupulously avoid speculative investments in securities about which they have, or may be thought to have, early or confidential information likely to affect the price of those securities. I am unaware of any breaches of the legislation by Ministers or former Ministers having occurred in the period 1982-88.

Aging

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Prime Minister what steps she takes to co-ordinate Government policy on aging and related issues.

The Prime Minister: Elderly people, like all other groups in society, are affected by the policies of many different Government Departments. Consequently there are many occasions when policies cannot be made in isolation and Ministers and officials in different Government Departments consult each other as necessary. I am satisfied that these consultations permit issues to be dealt with speedily and effectively.

Cabinet Secretary

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what is her practice on the attendance of the Cabinet Secretary at Commonwealth heads of government conferences.

The Prime Minister: With my agreement, it is the practice of the present Secretary of the Cabinet not to accompany me to Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, or on other overseas visits, in order to permit him to use these opportunities to visit Civil Service locations outside London in his capacity as head of the home Civil Service.

Engagements

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

WALES

Community Charge

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what will be the average cost per family in Newport that will be demanded by the community charge.

Mr. Grist: If Welsh local authorities spend in line with standard spending assessments for 1990-91 the average community charge in Wales will be £175. However, until relevant population figures from community charge registers are available it would be misleading and unhelpful to produce illustrative figures for individual authorities for 1990-91. Ultimately it will be for local authorities themselves to set their budgets and fix actual community charge levels in spring 1990.

Hospital Ward Closures

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) against what criteria he expects health authorities in Wales to have taken decisions on possible ward closures during the Christmas period;

(2) how many beds will be involved in ward closures during the Christmas period in each health authority in Wales;

(3) if he will give, for each health authority in Wales, the average number of days per bed that will be involved in ward closures during the Christmas period;

(4) if he will list the ward closures during the Christmas period planned by each health authority in Wales;

(5) what arrangements have been made by each health authority in Wales to guarantee the comfort and wellbeing of any patients affected by ward closures during the Christmas period;

(6) what categories of speciality are involved in possible hospital ward closures during the Christmas period in each health authority area in Wales;

(7) what guidance he has offered to health authorities in Wales in regard to meeting the personal needs of patients affected by ward closures during the Christmas period.

Mr. Grist: Arrangements for the provision of hospital services over the Christmas period are operational matters for the district health authorities concerned.

Announcements

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria he employs in deciding whether to make an announcement by oral statement in the House, by written answer, by depositing papers in the Library or by press notice; and how these criteria were applied to his announcement of the proposed system of Welsh revenue support grant on 6 November.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on Monday 6 November.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current or most recent salary level for the administrator post in respect of each of the family practitioner committees in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The current salary bands which apply to each of the FPC administrator posts in Wales are shown in the table:

FPC	*Salary* *Minimum* £	*Maximum* £
Clwyd	22,404	27,258
Dyfed	22,404	26,210
Gwent	22,404	27,258
Gwynedd	20,714	24,233
Mid Glamorgan	22,404	27,258
Powys	20,714	23,301
South [illegible]amorgan	22,404	27,258
West [illegible]morgan	22,404	27,258

The maximum salary figures for all the posts except that of Powys FPC reflect an element of salary protection consequent upon assimilation onto the new pay scale for NHS administrative and clerical staff applicable from 1 April 1989.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what salary level has been set for the chief executive's post in respect of each family practitioner committee in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The flat rate salaries currently proposed for the FPC general manager posts in Wales are shown in the table:

FPC	*Salary* £
Clwyd	29,300
Dyfed	28,300
Gwent	29,300
Gwynedd	28,300
Mid Glamorgan	30,400
Powys	25,500
South Glamorgan	29,300
West Glamorgan	29,300

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of advertising the posts of chief executive for each of the family practitioner committees in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The new general manager posts for the family practitioner committees in Wales were advertised by means of a comprehensive advertisement in the national and specialist health service press. The cost of this was £13,257.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost of appointing chief executives to the family practitioner committees in Wales, including advertisers, costs of interviews, travel and meetings for everyone involved, and the costs of staff time involved.

Mr. Grist: This information is not yet available as the appointment exercise is only now being completed and several final accounts have still to be presented.

A55 Expressway

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he proposes to protect the environment of North Wales consequent upon the completion of the A55 Expressway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am confident that planning authorities will in discharging their responsibilities continue to take full account of the need for balance between conservation and new development.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has received a copy of the Institute of Welsh Affairs report entitled "Prospects for North Wales: the New A55 Expressway;" and if he will make a statement on his response to its recommendations.

Mr. Peter Walker: The chairman of the institute forwarded a copy of the report to me on 11 October. I attach a copy of my response which I am also placing in the Library.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish a task force to respond to the effects of the A55 Expressway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I expect to make an announcement before the end of the year in response to the views which my hon. Friend the Minister of State has sought on how the opportunities presented by the A55 improvements can best be used to the advantage of north Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the annual increase in inward migration in Wales consequent upon the completion of the A55 Expressway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The mid-year estimates of population for Gwynedd and Clwyd indicate an increasing net inward migration since 1981 into both counties. I would expect this trend to continue as the A55 improvements bring forward further opportunities for industrial and economic development.

BP Plant (Balan Bay)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ask Her Majesty's chief inspector of pollution to investigate the potential dangers to the local population in South Wales from the incident on 6 July at the British Petroleum Balan Bay plant.

Mr. Grist: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has already investigated this incident and are satisfied that there was no danger to the local population on account of atmospheric emissions from the plant.

SOCIAL SECURITY

NATO Exercises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the extent of involvement by his Department in NATO exercise Wintex/Cimex 1987 and exercise Wintex/Cimex 1989; what is the number of staff engaged in the exercise planning process and in the exercises themselves; and what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of the staff involved.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department plays its part in testing those procedures in which it has an interest. Staff participate as required; it would not be appropriate for me to supply the detail requested.

Registered Unemployed

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the effect of the changes in social security on the number of registered unemployed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We expect the changes will result in a reduction of some 50,000.

Local Office, Norcross

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time it takes his Department's office at Norcross, Blackpool to reply to letters from *(a)* claimants and *(b)* hon. Members; and what steps are being taken to speed up the process.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information on the average time taken to reply to letters from claimants is not available, but the quality of service provided by the Department's offices at Norcross is currently being monitored. The average time taken to reply to letters from hon. and right hon. Members is between five and six days.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current level of support for the provision of wheelchairs for disabled people.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for the Disablement Services Authority to which my hon. Friend may wish to address his question.

Hostel Board and Lodging Charges

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements will be made, following the recent changes to hostel board and lodging charges, to cover charges for ineligible services once the present transitional arrangement period ends; and what is the position for the payment of ineligible services payments for new hostels.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Hostel dwellers are expected to meet their normal, day-to-day service charges from income support, in the same way as other income support recipients. As explained in the statement given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) on 16 March (*Official Report*, column *546*), from April 1991 the money expended by the central unit to maintain hostel income will be transferred to existing funding sources. We would expect hostels to take this into account when setting their charges. The Department of Social Security has transferred a total of over £2 million in a full year to the Department of the Environment, Scottish and Welsh Offices to help certain new hostels.

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the overall cost of *(a)* increasing the rate of income support for all single people under 25 years to the same rate as those over 25 years and *(b)* extending entitlement to full income support to all those under 18 years in receipt of bridging allowance, special hardship allowance and those registered as waiting for a YTS place with no other income; and if he will express these figures as a percentage of the total social security budget.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The overall estimate cost of *(a)* increasing the rate of income support (and aligned income-related benefits) for all single people under 25 years is £205 million, or 0·4 per cent. of the total social security budget, and *(b)* extending entitlement and giving the full income support personal allowance to all under 18 years in receipt of bridging allowance and "severe hardship" allowance is £12·5 million, or 0·025 per cent. of the total social security budget.

Information about those registered as waiting for a YTS place is not available.

Community Charge Rebate

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the numbers of adult residents of *(a)* each London borough and *(b)* each district council likely to be entitled to the maximum rebate, during the first year of operation of the community charge in England and Wales; and if he will express these figures as a proportion of the estimated population of each local authority liable to community charge.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is not possible to estimate the number of adult residents in each local authority area who will be entitled to maximum community charge benefit in 1990-91. Current estimates suggest that, in Great Britain as a whole, between one quarter and one third of those liable to pay the full community charge will be entitled to community charge benefit.

Tax Benefit Model Tables

Mr. French: To ask the Secretry of State for Social Security when he expects to publish the 1989 edition of the tax benefit model tables.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Copies will be placed in the Library today.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Agricultural and Food Research Council

75. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the Agricultural and Food Research Council's research and development budget.

Mr. Jackson: Grant-in-aid to the agricultural and food research Council in 1989-90 is expected to be £74·563 million. The figure for 1990-91 will be decided by my right hon. Friend after he has considered the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils later this year. The council will also receive in 1989-90 approximately £45·6 million in commissioned research from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and a further £16 million from other sources.

Youth Service

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local government expenditure on the youth service in (i) 1979-80, (ii) 1984-85, (iii) 1985-86, (iv) 1986-87, (v) 1987-88 and (vi) 1988-89 in 1989 prices.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is given in the table.

Expenditure on the Youth Service—England (1988-89 Real Terms)

Financial Year	*Central Government £ million*	*Local Government £ million*
1979-80	14	132
1984-85	11	159
1985-86	12	159
1986-87	13	171
1987-88	14	197
1988-89	13	[1]171

[1] Estimated

Notes

(1) The figures given for central Government expenditure reflect direct expenditure by the Department to voluntary organisations and specific grant payments to local authorities in support of youth service activities as recorded by local authorities in their annual returns.

(2) The figures given for local government expenditure reflect outturn as recorded by local authorities in their annual returns. This expenditure will not only have been supported by central Government specific grant payments, but also by unhypothecated rate support grant.

(3) The cash figures for the earlier years have been repriced to 1988-89 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator. They include recurrent and capital expenditure on the youth service.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by local education authority *(a)* 1988-1989 expenditure on the youth service and *(b)* the related grant-related expenditure allocation for each local education authority.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Figures for the expenditure of local authorities in 1988-89 are not yet available. Table 1 shows the actual recurrent expenditure of each local education authority on youth and community services in 1987-88, with the exception of four authorities which failed to make a return. Table 2 shows the grant related expenditure assessment for the youth and related services for each local education authority in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Table 1

Expenditure by local authorities on the youth service[1]

LEA	*£ million*
Barking	0·6277
Barnet	0·9704
Bexley	0·7829
Brent	3·6245
Bromley	0·8248
Croydon	0·8399
Ealing	n.a.
Enfield	0·6866
Haringey	n.a.
Harrow	0·6207
Havering	0·7041
Hillingdon	0·7136
Hounslow	0·7270
Kingston-upon-Thames	0·5724
Merton	0·3763
Newham	0·9110
Redbridge	0·8766
Richmond-upon-Thames	0·3872
Sutton	0·4786
Waltham Forest	1·2862
ILEA	30·5352
Birmingham	4·1965
Coventry	0·9061
Dudley	0·8359
Sandwell	0·6573
Solihull	0·3864
Walsall	1·9555
Wolverhampton	0·8758
Knowsley	0·4879
Liverpool	2·1011

LEA	*£ million*
St. Helens	Nil
Sefton	0·6090
Wirral	1·0252
Bolton	0·9214
Bury	0·8718
Manchester	2·2352
Oldham	0·6295
Rochdale	1·3196
Salford	0·5164
Stockport	0·7861
Tameside	1·0388
Trafford	0·5685
Wigan	0·8193
Barnsley	0·5193
Doncaster	1·3659
Rotherham	0·8892
Sheffield	n.a.
Bradford	2·8268
Calderdale	0·9297
Kirklees	1·3253
Leeds	2·5921
Wakefield	0·6777
Gateshead	0·7946
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1·1552
North Tyneside	0·5115
South Tyneside	1·5489
Sunderland	0·7333
Isles of Scilly	0·0014
Avon	4·0172
Bedfordshire	1·0577
Berkshire	n.a.
Buckinghamshire	2·1876
Cambridgeshire	1·6258
Cheshire	1·7389
Cleveland	2·3472
Cornwall	0·5328
Cumbria	1·2557
Derbyshire	4·5220
Devon	2·6109
Dorset	1·4586
Durham	1·1045
East Sussex	0·9809
Essex	3·3893
Gloucestershire	1·6986
Hampshire	2·8567
Hereford and Worcester	1·1929
Hertfordshire	2·4412
Humberside	3·1777
Isle of Wight	0·4175
Kent	2·2912
Lancashire	4·0522
Leicestershire	2·6153
Lincolnshire	1·0138
Norfolk	1·6031
North Yorkshire	1·4100
Northamptonshire	1·6093
Northumberland	0·6983
Nottinghamshire	4·6301
Oxfordshire	1·1005
Shropshire	1·5869
Somerset	1·9266
Staffordshire	2·4209
Suffolk	1·9660
Surrey	2·0726
Warwickshire	1·4359
West Sussex	1·3936
Wiltshire	1·4994

Note:

(1) The figures are based on LEA Expenditure Returns to the Department of the Environment.

Table 2

Grant related expenditure assessment for the Youth Service

	£ million	
	1987-88	*1988-89*
Barking	0·6466	0·7247
Barnet	1·3569	1·5983
Bexley	0·7781	0·8854
Brent	1·704	1·9525
Bromley	1·0066	1·1557
Croydon	1·4463	1·6359
Ealing	1·7228	2·0186
Enfield	1·1923	1·3698
Haringey	1·3051	1·4829
Harrow	0·8502	0·9768
Havering	0·8152	0·9217
Hillingdon	0·8795	1·0217
Hounslow	0·9910	1·1627
Kingston	0·4396	0·5051
Merton	0·664	0·7675
Newham	1·5136	1·7016
Redbridge	0·9299	1·0807
Richmond	0·5254	0·6010
Sutton	0·5622	0·6358
Waltham Forest	1·1910	1·3575
ILEA	13·5539	15·7985
Birmingham	6·2099	7·0554
Coventry	1·6513	1·8607
Dudley	1·1429	1·2853
Sandwell	1·6993	1·9088
Solihull	0·7872	0·8916
Walsall	1·2700	1·4426
Wolverhampton	1·5820	1·7882
Knowsley	0·9341	1·0535
Liverpool	2·3518	2·6738
St. Helens	0·7321	0·8300
Sefton	1·1197	1·2468
Wirall	1·3205	1·5001
Bolton	1·2094	1·3808
Bury	0·6528	0·7389
Manchester	2·5769	2·9052
Oldham	1·0371	1·1889
Rochdale	0·9877	1·1241
Salford	1·0763	1·2145
Stockport	0·9997	1·1194
Tameside	0·8632	0·9825
Trafford	0·8517	0·9529
Wigan	1·1906	1·3396
Barnsley	0·8553	0·9632
Doncaster	1·169	1·3386
Rotherham	1·0344	1·1806
Sheffield	2·1371	2·4256
Bradford	2·6083	2·998
Calderdale	0·8201	0·9244
Kirklees	1·8524	2·1149
Leeds	2·9679	3·3513
Wakefield	1·1943	1·3342
Gateshead	0·7803	0·8785
Newcastle	1·1234	1·2864
North Tyne	0·6706	0·7416
South Tyne	0·6393	0·7045
Sunderland	1·2265	1·3969
Isle of Scilly	0·0082	0·0086
Avon	3·2428	3·7704
Bedfordshire	2·2661	2·5803
Berkshire	2·9080	3·3858
Bucks	2·3102	2·6987
Cambridge	2·3576	2·7287
Cheshire	3·5269	4·0092
Cleveland	2·5817	2·9118
Cornwall	1·4396	1·6487
Cumbria	1·6178	1·8312
Derbyshire	3·3976	3·9118
Devon	3·1875	3·6755
Dorset	1·9263	2·2293
Durham	2·2334	2·5561
East Sussex	2·0816	2·4702
Essex	5·0704	5·8156
Gloucestershire	1·8349	2·0656
Hampshire	5·5135	6·3066

	1987-88	*1988-89*
Hereford and Worcestershire	2·3375	2·6699
Hertfordshire	3·4851	3·9546
Humberside	3·4163	3·8735
Isle of Wight	0·3722	0·4282
Kent	5·4128	6·1952
Lancashire	5·6399	6·4836
Leicester	3·7412	4·2788
Lincolnshire	1·9696	2·3038
Norfolk	2·4064	2·7636
North Yorkshire	2·2754	2·6432
Northants	2·1373	2·4591
Northumberland	0·9865	1·1280
Nottinghamshire	4·0506	4·6292
Oxfordshire	2·1233	2·4258
Shropshire	1·5405	1·7807
Somerset	1·5133	1·7320
Staffordshire	3·6713	4·1617
Suffolk	2·1397	2·4045
Surrey	3·3897	3·8675
Warwickshire	1·8544	2·0837
West Sussex	2·0874	2·4099
Wiltshire	2·0462	2·3429

PE Teachers

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, in the latest available figures, the number and percentage of vacancies for physical education teachers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: LEA returns to the Department's regular collection of vacancy data showed 162 vacancies for teachers of physical education in England in January 1989. This suggests a vacancy rate of 1·2 per cent.

Physical Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce a working party on physical education under the provisions of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 7 November at columns *579-80.*

Research Councils

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any proposals to reverse the decline in the number of researchers employed by *(a)* the agricultural and food research council, *(b)* the natural environment research council and *(c)* other research councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has no plans to suggest to the councils how many researchers they should employ. The numbers of researchers employed by the agricultural and food research council, natural environment research council and the three other research councils are matters for the councils themselves to determine within the resources available to them.

School Governors

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had about the deselection of school governors by the Isle of Wight county council; and what advice he has given London education authorities about deselection of school governors on political grounds.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have received a number of representations concerning the removal from office of school governors appointed by local education authorities, including the Isle of Wight. These matters are currently being investigated.

We have not issued advice to local education authorities generally on this subject. We are considering whether it would be appropriate to do so, following the recent judgment of the House of Lords in the case involving the Haberdashers' Aske's schools.

Civil Service Dispersal

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to relocate his Department's offices to the north-east of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Not at present. My Department is proposing to relocate a further 50 posts from London to its Darlington office during 1990. In addition, a senior official of the Department is about to undertake a study of the long-term location requirements of the Department in the light of the Government's policy on relocation. The study will consider various possibilities, including the handling of some functions regionally.

Student Rents (London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average student rent in London; and how much the average student in London will receive in housing benefit during term time.

Mr. Jackson: Data from a survey of undergraduate income and expenditure conducted by Research Services Limited in 1988-89 indicate that average rent payments for single students living in privately rented accommodation in London totalled £1,531 per student over the 1988-89 academic year. The average amount of housing benefit received by such students in the same period was £324.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the comparable average teachers' pay in 1979 and 1988.

Mrs. Rumbold: The average salary of teachers in primary and secondary schools in April 1988 was £13,670. The equivalent figure in 1979 (at 1988 prices) was £10,493.

State Schools (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last visited a state school in Nottingham.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has not yet visited a state school in Nottingham.

Church Aided and Voluntary Schools

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce the allocation of funds for capital projects for church aided and voluntary schools for 1990.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend expects to be able to announce the 1990-91 allocation for capital projects for voluntary aided and special agreement schools shortly before Christmas.

Hampshire (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will allocate additional resources to Hampshire's county education budget for the capital expenditure programme outlined in its 1989 strategic planning document; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend is currently considering submissions from all local education authorities, including Hampshire, covering their planned capital expenditure programmes for 1990-91. He expects to announce each authority's annual capital guidelines for that year shortly before Christmas.

Japan (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what lessons were learnt for the research work of British universities from the recent official visit to Japan of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson).

Mr. Jackson: My recent visit to Japan, accompanied by the biological secretary to the Royal Society, was extremely valuable. Comparisons between the United Kingdom and Japanese systems for support of university research and for science were fascinating. My view was reinforced that British public funding of university research has sustained high quality and creative work. Our system, with autonomous universities and a Universities Funding Council separate from the Government, delivers a high quality and quantity of research. Equally interesting is the way in which Japanese business is succeeding in the development of "strategic" science and in harnessing scientific insights to the production of commercial products.

School Visits

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the schools which he has visited in his official capacity since becoming Secretary of State, with dates, the purpose of each visit and whether the school is private or maintained.

Mr. MacGregor: I visited three LEA maintained schools in Norfolk to meet local teachers—Costessey high (19 September), Redenhall Dove first (25 September), and St. Augustine's county primary (3 November). I accompanied my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the opening of the Djanogly city technology college in Nottingham on 29 September, and met teachers at Hinchingbrooke school, Huntingdon on 2 October.

I have also had many other meetings with teachers and shall be visiting further LEA and grant-maintained schools in Manchester, Kent, Norfolk and London shortly.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table for each local education authority with a total for England of the amount of the bid made to him for capital allocation for *(a)* county and voluntary-controlled schools, *(b)* voluntary-aided schools and *(c)* all maintained schools for the financial year 1990-91.

Mr. MacGregor: It is not possible to provide the information sought, since not all LEAs have yet submitted their bids.

Teaching Posts

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all the local education authorities in England showing *(a)* the established teaching posts and *(b)* the current vacancies for such posts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The numbers of full-time teachers employed by each local education authority in England, together with the number of vacancies, are given in the table.

The figures relate to January 1989, the last date for which complete information for all authorities is available.

Full-Time Permanent Teacher Vacancies and Teachers in Post in maintained Nursery, Primary and Secondary Schools—England January 1989

	Number of Vacancies	*Teachers in Post*
Gateshead	31	1,709
Newcastle Upon Tyne	50	2,199
North Tyneside	0	1,817
South Tyneside	0	1,452
Sunderland	13	2,686
Cleveland	12	5,119
Cumbria	22	3,846
Durham	15	4,706
Northumberland	11	2,494
North	154	26,028
Barnsley	5	1,837
Doncaster	22	2,635
Rotherham	32	2,274
Sheffield	12	3,795
Bradford	28	4,578
Calderdale	20	1,689
Kirklees	30	3,429
Leeds	61	6,110
Wakefield	70	2,643
Humberside	29	7,031
North Yorks	46	5,106
York & Humberside	355	41,127
Knowsley	10	1,543
Liverpool	20	4,464
St Helens	9	1,727
Sefton	3	2,254
Wirral	19	2,748
Bolton	11	2,398
Bury	14	1,406
Manchester	55	3,971
Oldham	7	2,076
Rochdale	33	1,995
Salford	58	2,086
Stockport	14	2,239
Thameside	38	1,811
Trafford	9	1,508
Wigan	9	2,869
Cheshire	24	7,562
Lancashire	193	10,679
North West	526	53,336
Derbyshire	76	7,685
Leicestershire	44	7,046
Lincolnshire	52	4,232
Northamptonshire	10	4,668
Nottinghamshire	108	8,168
East Midlands	290	31,799
Birmingham	188	8,615
Coventry	24	2,994

	Number of Vacancies	*Teachers in Post*
Dudley	48	2,559
Sandwell	25	2,810
Solihull	27	1,686
Walsall	4	2,637
Wolverhampton	24	2,438
Hereford & Worcester	50	4,886
Shropshire	13	3,214
Staffordshire	50	8,044
Warwickshire	31	3,677
West Midlands	484	43,160
Cambridgeshire	39	4,830
Norfolk	31	5,218
Suffolk	36	4,585
East Anglia	106	14,633
Barking	51	1,264
Barnet	85	2,197
Bexley	31	1,610
Brent	32	2,011
Bromley	10	1,805
Croydon	39	2,290
Ealing	116	2,119
Enfield	72	2,001
Haringey	128	1,509
Harrow	16	1,321
Havering	51	1,885
Hillingdon	58	1,665
Hounslow	24	1,639
Kingston	9	966
Merton	47	1,139
Newham	194	2,365
Redbridge	36	1,558
Richmond	1	872
Sutton	21	1,110
Waltham Forest	75	1,790
Ilea	1,028	15,703
S E Greater London	2,124	48,839
Bedfordshire	117	4,247
Berkshire	91	5,231
Buckinghamshire	73	4,531
East Sussex	74	3,907
Essex	123	10,969
Hampshire	134	10,569
Hertfordshire	109	7,664
Isle of Wight	0	890
Kent	224	10,840
Oxfordshire	9	3,565
Surrey	131	6,001
West Sussex	74	4,476
Other South East	1,159	72,890
Avon	21	6,405
Cornwall	47	3,464
Devon	122	6,429
Dorset	11	4,182
Gloucestershire	0	3,797
Somerset	73	3,095
Wiltshire	68	4,017
South West	342	31,389
Total England	5,540	363,201

GCSE changes

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the necessary changes to be made to GCSE in order to meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The future development of the GCSE examination was the subject to a report from the School Examinations and Assessment Council sent to my right hon. Friend on 13 July. Copies of the report, together with my right hon. Friend's reply, have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Long-serving Teachers

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment his Department has made of the availability of special allowances to long-serving teachers in small special needs schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: The interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions has been asked to advise on what further increase should be made in the number of incentive allowances, and in their value relative to the main professional grade. All teachers in special schools, other than heads and deputies, receive at least a B incentive allowance. The Department's present plans assume that the proportion of special schools teachers receiving higher value allowances will progressively increase until 1990.

Supply Teachers

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to encourage an increase in the number of supply teachers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Our education support grant programme to assist teacher recruitment urges local education authorities to encourage flexible working practices, including part-time working. This should stimulate the employment of supply teachers. However, the employment and deployment of teachers is a matter for local education authorities and schools. It is for them to decide how many supply teachers to appoint. They also have discretion to pay teacher on short-notice contracts at rates they consider appropriate in order to recruit and retain the teachers they need.

SCOTLAND

Fish Farms

74. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effect of *(a)* deliberate release of fish from fish farms and *(b)* accidental escape of fish from fish farms on the habits and genetic coding of North Atlantic salmon.

Mr. Lang: A study of "genetic protein variation in farmed Atlantic salmon in Scotland: comparison of farmed strains with their wild source of populations" was published in August in "Scottish Fisheries Research Report No. 42". Further studies on both wild and farmed populations of salmon have been completed or are in progress.

At this stage it is too early to predict what scientific conclusions might emerge. The recently published work does show that there are genetic differences between farmed strains of salmon and the wild populations from which they are drawn. The genetic consequences of interaction between farmed fish and a wild stock are unknown but are thought likely to be complex. So far there is no direct evidence of adverse effects of actual damage to any wild stocks in Scotland.

A Report "The Genetic Impact of Farmed Atlantic Salmon on Wild Populations" was published by the

Nature Conservancy Council in August. This made a number of recommendations about further research and about mangement of wild and farmed stocks of salmon. We support the view that further studies are required and that great care is needed to ensure that deliberate restocking of rivers is carried out in the right way and that releases of farmed fish are prevented or reduced as far as possible.

Land Acidity

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence his Department has about deterioration in terms of acidity of Scottish agricultural land over the past 10 years; and whether he will re-introduce a lime subsidy for Scottish agriculture.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The farming industry is well aware that regular liming is an essential and cost-effective element of land husbandry and I understand that lime usage is currently at about the same level as it was when a general lime subsidy was available. We have no plans to reintroduce a lime subsidy, but grant assistance is available for the application of lime for certain grassland improvement operations under the farm and conservation grant scheme (EC).

Oilseed Rape

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hectares of oilseed rape were harvested in 1989; what tonnage was produced; what was the value of the crop; and what subsidy was paid from public funds for its production or processing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Latest estimates show that in 1989 some 36,000 hectares of oilseed rape were harvested in Scotland producing some 122,600 tonnes. The value of the 1989 crop in the United Kingdom as a whole is still being assessed. An estimate of the value will be included in "Agriculture in the United Kingdom" due to be published early in 1990. Production aid for oilseed rape under the EC oilseeds scheme is being paid on the 1989 crop; final estimates of the total amount will not be known until at least the end of the 1989-90 marketing year.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the presence of pollen and other airborne material derived from flowering crops of oilseed rape giving the concentration in the atmosphere above the crop and the maximum extent of detectable contamination; and if he will give comparable information for other agricultural crops.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no information on concentrations of airborne material from oilseed rape in the atmosphere above the crop nor comparable information on other crops. I am aware that some experiments have been carried out by individuals to detect the presence of oilseed rape pollen in the atmosphere in the vicinity of crops.

Legal Profession

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to introduce a separate Scottish Bill dealing with proposed reforms to the legal profession; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is currently considering what legislative provision may be necessary to implement the conclusions to his review of the legal profession which were set out in "The Scottish Legal Profession—The Way Forward" which he issued on 10 October.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress in site evaluation in terms of geology, transportation routes and effects on local economies, of prospective sites for the disposal of *(a)* low level, *(b)* intermediate level and *(c)* high level radioactive wastes in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In relation to low and intermediate-level wastes it is for the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive (Nirex) to evaluate these factors in relation to sites in the United Kingdom which it wishes to investigate. As regards possible geological investigations at Dounreay, I would refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 6 November, at column *495*. If Nirex were subsequently to propose the construction of a repository it would be required to present a full safety case and environmental impact assessment, and a public inquiry would be held.

It is Government policy to store high-level radioactive wastes at the sites where they arise for at least 50 years. No current site evaluation is taking place for the disposal of this category of waste.

Health Service (Contracts)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he has given to Lothian health board about awarding Health Service catering contracts to outside contractors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None in relation to any specific contract.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards sending in auditors to examine the workings of health boards which have awarded in-house contracts.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As with any area of health board expenditure, the procedures governing the award of contracts may be the subject of examination at any time by the statutory auditor.

Housing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report*, by district council area, the average time taken by each district council in processing applications by sitting tenants for purchasing their council houses; and if he will also list for each district council their total housing stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

Average processing time for houses sold in the quarter ended 30 June 1989 and local Authority stock at 31 March 1989

	Average processing time (months)	*Stock at 31 March 1989*
Local authorities	9·6	797,315
Borders		
Berwickshire	6·0	2,379
Ettrick and Lauderdale	7·4	3,956
Roxburgh	6·0	5,179
Tweeddale[1]	9·8	1,479
Central		
Clackmannan	7·0	8,442
Falkirk	7·6	28,787
Stirling[1]	9·2	11,825
Dumfries and Galloway		
Annandale and Eskdale	8·9	4,718
Nithsdale	6·8	7,074
Stewartry	5·1	2,263
Wigtown	7·9	4,216
Fife		
Dunfermline[2]	7·8	18,793
Kirkcaldy	9·3	22,767
North East Fife	9·3	6,522
Grampian		
Aberdeen	10·8	37,088
Banff and Buchan[2]	9·3	11,370
Gordon	8·5	5,432
Kincardine and Deeside	7·1	3,547
Moray	6·1	9,881
Highland		
Badenoch and Strathspey	5·3	1.028
Caithness	5·2	3,746
Inverness	9·0	6,357
Lochaber	7·7	2,844
Nairn	5·0	1,051
Ross and Cromarty	5·0	6,034
Skye and Lochalsh	7·0	775
Sutherland	11·0	1,725
Lothian		
East Lothian	8·3	13,649
Edinburgh	11·8	45,931
Midlothian	9·9	10,516
West Lothian	10·9	19,636
Strathclyde		
Argyll and Bute	12·1	7,840
Bearsden and Milngavie	11·5	1,714
Clydebank	11·0	10,787
Clydesdale	10·3	8,890
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	10·1	3,907
Cumnock and Doon Valley	8·9	9,263
Cunninghame[2]	9·2	20,876
Dumbarton	11·3	11,621
East Kilbride	6·7	1,268
Eastwood	8·4	1,728
Glasgow	12·7	161,019
Hamilton	7·0	21,041
Inverclyde[2]	9·6	17,832
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	9·0	15,687
Kyle and Carrick[1]	9·0	16,011
Monklands[2]	10·4	26,741
Motherwell[2]	9·0	36,511
Renfrew	9·7	35,000
Strathkelvin	6·1	9,224
Tayside		
Angus	6·7	12,490
Dundee	13·3	36,845
Perth and Kinross	9·2	14,073
Orkney Islands[1]	5·6	1,406
Shetland Islands	10·8	2,601
Western Isles[1]	7·6	2,411

[1] Latest stock figure available 30 September 1988.

[2] Average processing time for quarter 1 1989.

Storm Damage

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, which local authorities will benefit from the Bellwin scheme invoked after the severe storms in February of the current year; and by how much.

Mr. Rifkind: The claims have now been assessed and I can announce that a quarter of a million pounds in grant will be made available for those authorities which, in terms of the scheme of special financial assistance which I announced on 27 April, suffered an undue financial burden in responding to the storms and floods of February.

The details of the grant are:

	£
Highland Regional Council	207,975
Inverness District Council	29,250
Western Isles Islands Council	14,058
	251,283

Subject to parliamentary approval of a supplementary estimate which will be presented shortly payments will be issued to those authorities as soon as possible.

Roads

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number and location of proposed improvements to the A96 which require SDD funding.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 November 1989]:* The following programme of improvements on the A96, to be funded by the Scottish Development Department, has been developed in line with the strategic six-point plan for the route which I announced last December:—

1. Major Schemes (over £1 million)

There are 7 major schemes programmed.

Bucksburn Diversion
Blackburn Bypass
Kintore Bypass
Inveramsey-Waterside
Keith Bypass
Lhanbryde Bypass
Nairn Railway Bridge

In addition, the Scottish Development Department is considering the justification and possible options for bypassing Fochabers. If a satisfactory scheme can be worked out it will be added to the trunk road programme.

2. Minor Schemes (less than £1 million)

Three improvement schemes are planned to start this financial year. These are the Dramlachs climbing lane at Fochabers, the Tearie junction at Brodie and the Drumine to Gollanfield scheme. In addition, a report has been commissioned from Grampian regional council which is expected to identify at least another 5 minor schemes for early implementation which will provide overtaking opportunities along the route. In parallel with this, a specialist consultant has been appointed to develop a computer based simulation model for the whole of the A96 to assist in the identification of the optimum locations for further overtaking opportunity schemes.

3. Accident Remedial Schemes

Good progress has already been made on accident remedial schemes on the A96, and Grampian and Highland regional councils will in the near future be recommending a further programme of schemes for the next financial year. These schemes will be implemented quickly in line with departmental policy.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number and location of SDD funded improvements which are currently being undertaken on the A96.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 November 1989]:* One major scheme, the Inverurie bypass, is currently under construction. In addition, seven accident remedial schemes involving measures such as signing and surface dressing are under way or recently completed at a number of locations along the route. This work has also included a thorough overhaul of all road markings on the route with highly reflective, long-lasting materials to the most recent specification.

EMPLOYMENT

Agricultural Equipment (Safety)

73. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what initiatives to improve safety of agricultural equipment are currently being funded by his Department.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission are currently funding seven research projects in the area of safety of agricultural equipment:—

(1) Seat belts in agricultural tractors;

(2) Interlocking devices for component guards on agricultural machinery;

(3) Tractor driven equipment—noise test procedures;

(4) Practical application of noise reduction methods in agriculture;

(5) Power take-off shafts—alternative power supply systems;

(6) Integrity of safety cabs fitted to tractors;

(7) Dynamic and static test methods for tractor mechanical coupling components.

Factory Inspectors

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many extra factory inspectors will be employed in January 1990.

Mr. Nicholls: A recent recruitment campaign has resulted in 27 extra inspectors being appointed since August. The increase will be partly offset by January by retirements and resignations. A further campaign is now under way to ensure that the figure planned in the Health and Safety Commission's plan for 1 April next is met; the inspectorate will continue to grow thereafter.

Health and Safety at Work

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he proposes to take on the issue of the level of fines for health and safety at work offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Following representations from the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission and the director general of the Health and Safety Executive about the low level of fines for health and safety offences, my right hon. Friend is considering them in conjunction with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Noise at Work

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements he has made to monitor the effectiveness of the Noise at Work Regulations 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: Inspectors appointed under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 will enforce the regulations as they do other regulations made under the Act. In addition inspectors will be carrying out a special programme of visits during 1991 and 1992 to obtain information on the extent to which employers and employees together with the makers and suppliers of machinery understand and meet their obligations under the regulations.

Council for Social Aid, Manchester

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide *(a)* details of the destinations of all the employment training trainees who were on the Council for Social Aid scheme in Greater Manchester at the time of the scheme's closure in May of the current year and *(b)* give the numbers of those who were unable, or refused to join another scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The table lists the latest known destinations of the trainees who were on the Council for Social Aid's scheme at the time of the closure.

	Number
Transferred to other Training Managers	818
Known to have found permanent employment through Employment Training	23
Not known	170

All trainees were offered a place with another training manager.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide details of the additional cost incurred by the Training Agency to date as a result of the closure of the Council for Social Aid's employment training scheme in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Nicholls: Additional costs of £12,270 have been incurred in payment of start fees to the training managers who took over the training of Council for Social Aid's former trainees.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has about the present employment of the staff formerly employed on the Council for Social Aid scheme in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Nicholls: I have no information on the present employed/unemployed status of the former employees of the Council for Social Aid.

Employment Training, Manchester

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide the most recent details of the ethnic origin, sex and disability of employment training trainees for each scheme in the Greater Manchester area.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not readily available in the form requested and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

RUC

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary stationed at Kells Royal Ulster Constabulary station during the period 1 June 1988 to 1 March 1989 were transferred to other duties in other parts of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope: The Chief Constable has informed me that three members of the RUC serving at Kells RUC station were transferred during the period in question.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who were stationed at Kells Royal Ulster Constabulary station from 1 January 1988 and 1 March 1989 resigned from the police service during that period or subsequent to it.

Mr. Cope: The Chief Constable has informed me that two members of the RUC serving at Kells RUC station have resigned from the force since 1 January 1988.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Royal Ulster Constabulary authorised and carried out a search for arms and ammunition at Kells Royal Ulster Constabulary station during the period 1 January 1988 to 1 March 1989.

Mr. Cope: The Chief Constable has informed me that a search of the RUC station at Kells was carried out on 12 October 1988. No unauthorised firearms or ammunition were discovered.

Nurses

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by health district *(a)* the current nursing staff establishment, *(b)* the number in post at the latest available date and *(c)* the number who had left the National Health Service in the preceding year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* The information requested in respect of the current nursing staff establishment and the number in post at the latest available date is as follows:—

Nursing staff[1]—current funded establishment at March 1989

	Number
Eastern Health and Social Services Board	9,330·20
Northern Health and Social Services Board	2,680·79
Southern Health and Social Services Board	2,443·92
Western Health and Social Services Board	2,799·44
Northern Ireland Total	17,254·35

[1] 'Nursing staff' includes staff employed in the personal social services.

Nursing staff[1] in post at March 1989

	Number	*Whole time equivalent*
Eastern Health and Social Services Board	11,013	9,368·71
Northern Health and Social Services Board	3,179	2,786·49
Southern Health and Social Services Board	3,246	2,781·18
Western Health and Social Services Board	3,053	2,856·21
Northern Ireland Total	20,491	17,792·59

[1] 'Nursing staff' includes staff employed in the personal social services.

The number of nursing staff who have left the Health Service is not known.

EC Border Area Programme

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total amount received by each Northern Ireland Government Department, from the European Community's border areas programme, in each of the years since 1980.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The total amounts received by Northern Ireland Government Departments and Government-sponsored agencies from the Europen Community's border areas programme since 1980 are as follows:

	1988–89 £	*1989–90* £
Department of the Environment	600,000	—
Local Enterprise Development Unit	450,053	75,569

Further payments will fall due to these bodies as the programme progresses. Resources available from the start of the programme in 1980 were used in the early years to finance district council schemes.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will list all those projects and initiatives in Northern Ireland which have received financial aid from the European Community's border areas programme.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* A total of 99 tourism and communications projects have been approved for financial support from the European regional development fund under the border areas programme. A number of initiatives benefiting small and medium-sized companies have also received financial aid from the programme.

I will write to the hon. Gentleman enclosing a full list of projects and initiatives assisted under the programme.

Industrial Development Board

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will list the entire stock of advance and refurbished factories for new investment, held by the Industrial Development Board, giving details by district council areas.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The information is as follows:

District council	*Advance and refurbished factories now available*	*Vacant factories not refurbished*	*Factories awaiting surrender*	*Under construction*
Antrim	1	1	1	4
Ards	—	1	—	1
Armagh	1	—	—	—
Ballymena	1	1	—	—
Ballymoney	—	—	1	—
Belfast	—	4	—	1
Carrickfergus	—	1	—	1
Coleraine	—	2	—	—
Craigavon	1	1	1	—
Derry	1	3	—	1
Down	—	1	—	—
Dungannon	1	—	—	—
Larne	—	2	—	—
Newry and Mourne	—	1	1	—
Omagh	—	1	—	—
Strabane	—	6	2	—

Police

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures are being taken to ensure further effective development of the policy of ensuring that there should be a police presence in operations which involve direct contact between the armed forces and the community; and whether additional police are being recruited for this purpose.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 6 November 1989]*: As agreed between the British and Irish Governments at the last Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference meeting on 18 October 1989 a working group has been established on the subject. The results of this work will be considered when they are available.

Industrial Development

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all those parcels of land held by the Department of Economic Development, LEDU or the Industrial Development Board and zoned for industrial development by the planning authorities, giving details by district council area.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 November 1989]*: The IDB's land holdings for future industrial development are as follows. Neither the DOE nor LEDU owns land for industrial development purposes.

Industrial zoned land available for letting

District Council	*(Acres)*
Antrim	84
Ards	22
Armagh	9
Balleymena	79
Ballymoney	nil
Banbridge	3
Belfast	50·3
Carrickfergus	23
Castlereagh	2
Coleraine	75·3
Cookstown	10
Craigavon	206·5
Derry	218
Down	43·8
Dungannon	22·1
Fermanagh	24·4
Larne	29·8
Limavady	17
Lisburn	183·5
Magherafelt	5·5
Moyle	1·1
Newry and Mourne	56·6
Newtownabbey	262·5
North Down	68
Omagh	14·5
Strabane	9

Funding (North Down and Ards)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the level of funding for the home help service in the North Down and Ards unit of management of the Eastern health and social services boards in each of the past three years; how many persons received the assistance of home helps in each of these years; and if he will make a statement on the future development of the home help service within the North Down and Ards unit of management.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

	Expenditure £	*Recipients*
1986-87	962,744	1,354
1987-88	1,187,434	1,376
1988-89	1,255,714	1,320

Responsibility for the management and delivery of the home help service in the North Down and Ards unit of management is primarily a matter for the Eastern health and social services board. The initial allocation of funds to health and social services boards in Northern Ireland in 1989-90 amounted to £696 million. This provides for an 8·4 per cent. increase over 1988-89 and affords boards the scope to increase expenditure on the provision of particular services, including the home help service, in the light of their view of priorities.

HEALTH

District Medical Officers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current notional national complement of district medical officers; how many are currently in post; and what steps he is taking to increase levels of recruitment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We accepted the recommendations of the report "Public Health in England" (published December 1988) that each health authority should designate a director of public health (formerly district medical officers). Regional health authorities are to submit manpower plans to meet the report's recommendations by December 1989.

As at 30 September 1988 there were 136 district medical officers in post and 18 vacancies.

We have funded 40 additional training posts to aid future recruitment to the specialty.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now support an out of court compensation scheme to alleviate the physical and financial distress of families of haemophiliacs who have contracted AIDS through National Health Service treatment.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have already provided an ex gratia payment of £10 million to set up the Macfarlane Trust to meet the special needs of haemophiliacs infected with HIV and their dependants. Claims for compensation are now being pursued through the courts and I am advised these matters are sub judice.

Hospices

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he intends to introduce financial support for hospices similar to the pound-for-pound scheme introduced by the Scottish Office.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Arrangements for financial support for hospices in England have been under careful consideration for some time. It is hoped to bring forward plans in due course.

NHS Reform

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will be giving the budget figures for hospitals wishing to opt out.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS trusts will remain an integral part of the NHS. In common with other NHS units, they will derive the majority of their revenue income from contracts with health authorities and GP practice budget holders to provide services for NHS patients. In addition they will be able to borrow money both from the Government and private sector, subject to an external financing limit which will be set for each trust and reviewed annually. Each trust will be expected to frame its budget so as to remain within its external financing limit.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total sum spent in securing the implementation of the health services Bill to date; and what is his estimate of the sum which will be spent for this purpose before this measure is enacted.

Mr. Freeman: The Government announced on 11 May 1989 that £82 million has been allocated in 1989–90 for implementing the proposals contained in the White Paper "Working for Patients". By no means all of the proposals will require legislation, but for those that do we shall seek a Bill at the earliest opportunity. Future levels of support will be announced shortly.

Salmonella

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were *(a)* the number of outbreaks of food poisoning, connected with salmonella for each month of the current year to date, *(b)* the corresponding figures for 1988 and *(c)* the source of the information.

Mr. Freeman: There were 712 outbreaks of salmonellosis in humans reported in England and Wales in the period January to September 1989. The corresponding figure for 1988 was 332. Figures are not routinely collated on a monthly basis. The dates are based on formal reports to the communicable disease surveillance centre by public health laboratory service and other laboratories and by local authorities, and were published on 30 October in the "Update on salmonella infection" produced jointly by the public health laboratory service and the state veterinary service.

Artificial Insemination

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of those women who received artificial insemination by donor in the latest year for which figures are available were *(a)* married, *(b)* unmarried, *(c)* fertile and *(d)* infertile.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to ensure that artificial insemination by donor is available only as a treatment for married, infertile women; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The White Paper "Human Fertilisation and Embryology: A Framework for Legislation" explains that it is Government policy to introduce legislation in this Parliament to license the provision of specified infertility services including those provided through artificial insemination by donor (AID). The statutory licensing authority's licensing structure and code of practice will cover arrangements for counselling, assessment and screening; these will need to take into account the position of the donor, the recipient, the individual clinician and the interests of the child or children who may result from AID.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning the numbers of women who have received artificial insemination by donor in each year for which figures are available from each of the clinics which currently provide such a service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not held centrally.

Polkinghorne Report

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether the letter with which he circulated copies of the Polkinghorne report to health authorities made it clear that the contents of the report and its recommended code of practice had no statutory authority;

(2) why he decided to circulate to health authorities copies of the Polkinghorne report before the House had fully debated its conclusions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on 23 October 1989 at column *315*. Health circular (89) 23, issued in July 1989, informed health authorities of the Government's acceptance of the Polkinghorne committee's main recommendations and asked authorities to ensure that the new Polkinghorne code of practice on the use of foetuses and foetal material in research and treatment is adhered to.

Medical Research

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce legislation to require medical research in non-National Health Service establishments to be supervised by medical ethical committees.

Mr. Freeman: There are no plans to introduce legislation. The general principles governing research in human subjects are contained in the declaration of Helsinki. The General Medical Council, whose powers derive from the medical Acts, is responsible for enforcing professional standards.

Tobacco (Marketing)

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to sign the voluntary agreement between Her Majesty's Government and United States Tobacco International on the marketing of oral tobacco in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have been seeking to conclude a revised voluntary agreement with United States Tobacco International, without prejudice to my decision on whether to ban oral snuff, for some considerable time. On 6 October I wrote to Jack Africk the President of United States Tobacco, enclosing a copy of a new agreement which I had signed, for his signature. So far I have received no reply.

Leeds General Infirmary

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will call for a report from the chairman of Leeds Western health authority on the proposal for Leeds general infirmary to opt out; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The decision on whether or not to prepare a formal application for NHS trust status is a matter for the sponsors of the expression of interest in the unit concerned. There is no question of any hospital "opting-out" of the NHS.

Measles Vaccination

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department is taking any measures to examine what limitations of the vaccine used against measles there may be; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department continues to monitor adverse events and reactions to all vaccines using the yellow card reporting system. The incidence of measles is also monitored and it is a notifiable disease.

The Medical Research Council continues its long-term (25-year) study of 10,000 recipients of measles vaccine.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if there are any proposals to modify immunisation strategies for the measles virus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There are no current plans to modify the present measles immunisation strategy. This strategy aims to continue to improve the uptake of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine to achieve the elimination of measles as an indigenous disease by the year 2000, in accordance with the World Health Organisation's objective for its European region.

Uptake of measles-only vaccine in England in 1987-88 reached 76 per cent. and the incidence of measles in the first three quarters of 1989 is lower than that in any comparable previous period.

Ambulance Service (Pay)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average pay increase for ambulance men in each year since 1978-79.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Increases were as follows:

	Per cent.
1979-80	[1]23·0
	[1]13·0
1980-81	7·3
1981-82	6·0
1982-83	4·5
1983-84	4·5
1984-85	[2]10·0
1985-86	6·0
1986-87	5·0
1987-88	[3]5·4
1988-89	[4]6·5

[1] Staged Clegg award paid 1 August 1979 and 1 April 1980.

[2] Introduction of new salaried structure—average increases more than 10 per cent.

[3] In addition the standard working week was reduced by one hour.

[4] Current offer from 1 April 1989—additional 2·8 per cent. for qualified staff in the London ambulance service.

Cervical Cytology

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list *(a)* the median, *(b)* the longest and *(c)* the shortest time in each district health authority between a woman having a cervical smear for screening and when she is notified of the results.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* area health authority, the number of cervical cytology screening call-recall systems in operation; and what is the average waiting time for processing of cervical smears in each category.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 23 June 1989]:* All 190 district health authorities in England introduced computerised call and recall system for cervical cancer screening by April 1988. Information on laboratory processing times is not available in the form requested. In September over 75 per cent. of districts were achieving the Department's target for laboratories of returning results of smear tests to the doctor who took them within one month. We do not collect figures on processing times in these districts. The average processing time of districts failing to meet the one month target is 6·5 weeks.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Illegal Weapons

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions there have been for the illegal carrying of knives since this section of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 was implemented.

Mr. John Patten: Section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 which relates to the possession of knives in public places came into force on 29 September 1988. In 1988 in England and Wales, 150 persons were prosecuted for the offence of which 130 were found guilty.

Drugs

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the recent allocation of Government funds for an anti-crack campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have received a number of representations about the drug prevention initiative which was announced on 11 October. These representations will be taken into account in developing our plans for a central drug prevention unit and the initial nine local drug prevention teams to be located in areas where the misuse of drugs, particularly of cocaine and crack, presents a serious problem.

Joy Riding

Mr. David Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the number of fatalities involved with joy riding and on the measures he recommends local police forces to take when giving chase to those who steal cars.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The police service faces a genuine dilemma between the apprehension of offenders and the safety of the public. On many occasions when a driver fails to stop, the police do not know whether they are dealing with a joy rider or a more serious crime. The police manual "Roadcraft", which is used as the basis for police driver training, states that no emergency is so urgent as to justify an accident. This is emphasised in the more detailed guidance which chief officers give members of their forces.

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what provisions he proposes to include in the proposed Broadcasting Bill to ensure that the Broadcasting Standards Council or the Independent Television Commission have adequate powers to enforce representation of deaf people and to monitor and enforce standards for hard of hearing and deaf people;

(2) what provisions he will include in his proposed Broadcasting Bill to ensure access to television viewing for deaf viewers through subtitling or sign language and for the monitoring of sound quality.

Mr. Mellor: The arrangements we propose in relation to subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing were set out in a reply given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) to my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) on 26 July. The Independent Television Commission (ITC) will be empowered to require Channel 3 and 5 licensees and Channel 4 to provide services of a high technical standard, including high sound quality.

The ITC will act as a licensing and regulatory body. Its members will be chosen on the basis of their experience and knowledge but will not represent specific interest groups. The Broadcasting Standards Council was set up to deal with matters of taste and decency on television and radio. Since these issues affect all viewers and listeners, it would not be appropriate to appoint a member solely concerned with the needs of people who are deaf.

Magistrates Clerks

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the magistrates courts in England and Wales showing *(a)* the established posts for clerks and *(b)* the number of vacancies for the posts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Manpower returns received from 88 of the 105 magistrates courts committees in England and Wales indicated that there were 149 vacancies for court clerks out of an establishment of 1,249 at 30 June 1989 the latest date for which information is available, as shown in the table.

	Full-time staff only		
Magistrates courts committee	*Authorised complement*	*Staff in post*	*+/−*
Avon	22	19	−3
Barking	6	3	−3
Barnet	7	6	−1
Barnsley	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bedfordshire	21	17	−4
Berkshire	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bexley	6	5	−1
Birmingham	36	36	0
Bolton	8	8	0
Bradford	16	16	0
Brent	9	7	−2
Bromley	7	7	0
Buckinghamshire	10	10	0
Bury	6	6	0
Calderdale	8	8	0
Cambridgeshire	7	5	−2
Cheshire	27	25	−2
Cleveland	19	19	0
Cornwall	n/a	n/a	n/a
Coventry	11	10	−1
Croydon	11	11	0
Cumbria	9	8	−1
Derbyshire	24	16	−8
Devon	n/a	n/a	n/a
Doncaster	11	8	−3
Dorset	16	16	0
Dudley	9	9	0
Durham	10	9	−1

Magistrates courts committee	*Full-time staff only* *Authorised complement*	*Staff in post*	*+/−*
Ealing	11	10	−1
East Sussex	n/a	n/a	n/a
Enfield	5	5	0
Essex	27	24	−3
Gateshead	6	6	0
Gloucestershire	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hampshire	41	40	−1
Haringey	9	7	−2
Harrow	n/a	n/a	n/a
Havering	6	6	0
Hereford and Worcester	19	17	−2
Hertfordshire	22	17	−5
Hillingdon	8	8	0
Hounslow	14	12	−2
Humberside	23	22	−1
Isle of Wight	3	2	−1
Kent	46	32	−14
Kingston	3	3	0
Kirklees	12	11	−1
Knowsley	6	5	−1
Lancashire	43	39	−4
Leeds	31	31	0
Leicestershire	15	11	−4
Lincolnshire	10	9	−1
Liverpool	22	17	−5
London (City of)	5	5	0
London (inner)[1]	36	29	−7
Manchester	26	23	−3
Merton	8	7	−1
Newcastle	11	11	0
Newham	10	10	0
Norfolk	19	14	−5
North Tyneside	3	1	−2
North Yorkshire	16	15	−1
Northamptonshire	17	16	−1
Northumberland	n/a	—	—
Nottinghamshire	39	31	−8
Oldham	9	8	−1
Oxfordshire	n/a	—	—
Redbridge	n/a	—	—
Richmond	6	6	0
Rochdale	10	9	−1
Rotherham	7	7	0
Salford	10	10	0
Sandwell	n/a	—	—
Sefton	n/a	—	—
Sheffield	16	16	0
Shropshire	5	5	0
Solihull	6	5	−1
Somerset	11	8	−3
South Tyneside	6	5	−1
St. Helens	n/a	—	—
Staffordshire	25	21	−4
Stockport	14	12	−2
Suffolk	n/a	—	—
Sunderland	9	8	−1
Surrey	27	25	−2
Sutton	n/a	—	—
Tameside	8	9	1
Trafford	7	6	−1
Wakefield	13	12	−1
Walsall	9	9	0
Waltham Forest	7	6	−1
Warwickshire	23	11	−12
West Sussex	28	27	−1
Wigan	11	10	−1
Wiltshire	11	10	−1
Wirral	n/a	—	—
Wolverhampton	7	4	−3
Clwyd	11	9	−2
Dyfed	11	8	−3
Gwent	10	10	0
Gwynedd	n/a	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	17	17	0
Powys	1	1	0
South Glamorgan	14	14	0
West Glamorgan	12	12	0
Total	1,249	1,100	−149

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[1] Comparable grade

The staff in post figure includes trainees occupying court clerk posts, but information on their number is not readily available.

The problems of recruitment and retention of court clerks, especially those qualified as solicitors or barristers, were addressed in the pay settlement for magistrates courts staff which I have recently approved for grant purposes.

Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, by open prison *(a)* the percentage of inmates convicted of sexual offences and serving life sentences and *(b)* the number of inmates who have absconded during the last 12 months; and if he will show, in his answer, which of these figures concern female inmates.

Mr. Mellor: According to the information held centrally, which is approximate, there were seven males on 30 June 1989 serving life sentences for sexual offences in open prisons in England and Wales. All were held at Leyhill accounting for 2 per cent. of its population. Information on absconds from open prisons is given in the table.

Absconds from open prisons in England and Wales: by establishment, October 1988 to September 1989

Establishment	*Absconds*[2]
Male open prisons	
Ford	65
Highpoint	3
Kirkham	125
Leyhill	26
Morton Hall	27
North Sea Camp	28
Rudgate	117
Spring Hill	26
Standford Hill	71
Sudbury[1]	68
All male open prisons	556
Female open prisons	
Askham Grange	8
Drake Hall	49
East Sutton Park	14
All female open prisons	71

[1] Includes Foston Hall

[2] During October 1988 to September 1989

Burglary (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the most recent figures for burglary in South Yorkshire; and what is the national figure.

Mr. John Patten: The latest information relates to the 12 months to the end of June 1989; for England and Wales the information is published in table 4 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 29/89 and for South Yorkshire in a separate table, copies of both are available in the Library.

Overseas Students

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications from overseas students seeking extensions to their leave to remain in the United Kingdom were outstanding at the latest convenient date; and what was the comparable figure for each of the previous five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The estimated number of student applications outstanding in July this year was 14,000. Comparable figures for the previous five years are not available.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances overseas students are currently being granted extensions to their leave to remain in the United Kingdom despite their applications being submitted out of time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Any application from an overseas student who has overstayed his or her last leave to remain is considered on its individual merits, taking account, for example, of the time since leave expired and the reasons for overstaying.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what relaxations in immigration procedures have recently been introduced to reduce the backlog of applications from overseas students seeking extensions to their leave to remain in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: An exercise was mounted recently to clear applications from students where most of the period of leave applied for had already passed. It did not involve any relaxation of the immigration rules. In addition improved working procedures have been introduced to reduce the time taken to process after-entry cases, including applications from overseas students.

Community Issues (Leicester)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations or reports from the Chief Constable of Leicestershire concerning the Divali celebrations in Leicestershire on 29 and 30 October.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of Leicestershire, Mr. Michael Hirst, as to the criteria he applies in deciding whether to meet the hon. Member for Leicester, East to discuss community issues.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. This is a matter for the chief constable to decide in the exercise of his responsibilities. We fully support the chief constable's continuing efforts to ensure good relations between the police and all sections of the community in Leicestershire.

Police and Fire Services (Pay)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average pay increase for *(a)* firemen and *(b)* police in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is as follows:

1. Fire Service (5th year qualified firefighter)

	Per cent.
1978	22·15
1979	20·45
1980	18·8
1981	10·1
1982	7·5
1983	7·8
1984	7·2
1985	7·2
1986	7·3
1987	7·3
1988	8·6
1989	8·6

2. Police (officers below the rank of superintendent)

	Per cent.
1978	[1]39
1979	13·5
1980	21·3
1981	13·2
1982	10·3
1983	8·4
1984	5·13
1985	7·5
1986	7·5
1987	7·75
1988	8·5
1989	9·25

[1] Implemented in two phases.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers are currently at Heathrow airport; and how many are in accommodation provided by the immigration service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information centrally available relates to passengers who are detained under the Immigration Act 1971 having claimed asylum on arrival in the United Kingdom, and in respect of whom an asylum questionnaire has been completed. On 8 November the number in detention was 21. The immigration service does not provide accommodation for passengers given temporary admission although hotel accommodation is occasionally arranged in cases of exceptional need.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what facilities are made available at major ports of entry for asylum seekers arriving in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Asylum seekers without means of support in the United Kingdom will, if they meet the relevant criteria, qualify for social security benefits and emergency housing. In addition a number of voluntary organisations assist asylum seekers.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the plight of asylum seekers at ports of entry into the United Kingdom; and what resources are provided by his Department to voluntary organisations providing assistance for asylum seekers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A number of organisations concerned with the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers have made representations concerning the need for better reception facilities for asylum seekers who arrive at ports of entry and who have no means of support in the United Kingdom. An element of the Home Office grant to the British Refugee Council goes to assist asylum seekers arriving at Gatwick airport. We have agreed in principle to grant being made available to strengthen the reception arrangements which are made by the voluntary sector, and officials are in discussion with the refugee agencies about specific proposals.

Probation and Magistrates Services

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to cash limit the specific grants to the probation and magistrates courts services.

Mr. Waddington: Under the new capital finance system for local authority services, capital grant for probation and magistrates courts will be cash limited from April 1990. Following our consultations with the local authority associations and relevant service organisations about the specific grants payable in respect of these services, I propose to introduce cash limits on their current grants. I shall be seeking a suitable opportunity for the necessary legislative provision with a view to implementing the new arrangements in April 1992. We shall be discussing further with the relevant bodies possible mechanisms for the allocation of cash-limited grant.

Citizenship Applications

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available the income and expenditure account for the administration of citizenship applications for 1988-89.

Mr. Waddington: I have today placed in the Library a copy of the nationality fees income and expenditure account for the 12 months ended 31 March 1989.

Experimental Reparation Schemes

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the research report on experimental reparation schemes which was submitted to his Department in April 1988 and which according to the Green Paper, "Punishment, Custody and the Community" was to be published by the end of 1988.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 27 October 1989]*: Assessment of the four experimental reparation schemes is part of a wider study of reparation and mediation. Some results have been published but the main report has taken longer to prepare for publication than we expected. We hope to publish it in the next few months.

Drugs

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women and from which country of origin, are currently serving prison sentences for attempting to bring drugs into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 3 November 1989]*: The latest readily available information is given in the table. The recording of nationality for citizens of Commonwealth countries, Pakistan and the Irish Republic is not always reliable.

Population of females sentenced for all drugs offences in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1989: by nationality

Nationality (name of country)	*Number*[1]
Colombia	14
Ghana	15
Guyana	5
India	6
Jamaica	16
Nigeria	76
United States of America	6
United Kingdom	150
Other nationalities[2]	25
Not recorded	10
All nationalities	323

[1] Provisional. The figures are those recorded centrally which are approximate; detailed checking would involve disproportionate cost.

[2] Nationalities with less than five persons recorded.

ENERGY

Coal Supplies

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will examine the prices of imported coal within the Community to establish any variations which may exist or be developing.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department receives regular information on the price of imported coal in European Community countries. The average price of coal imports into the United Kingdom is currently higher than that of imports into other Community countries as a high proportion of United Kingdom imports are of premium quality coking rather than steam coal. In addition, United Kingdom imports of steam coal usually have to be transshipped from deep water ports on the Continent and this adds to their cost.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, in planning the future arrangements to secure British energy supplies, he has taken into account the likelihood of changes in the value of sterling.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government seek to ensure that the United Kingdom has adequate, diverse and secure supplies of energy in the forms that people want at the lowest realistic prices. We aim to achieve this wherever possible by ensuring that energy prices reflect their true economic costs and by subjecting as much of energy supply to market forces as is feasible. We believe that this approach provides the flexibility to bring about any necessary adjustment of the energy economy in response to outside influences, of which the value of sterling would be one.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what advice he has given to the electricity industry in regard to any development of dependency upon imported coal.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None. Coal purchases are a commercial matter for the CEGB.

Nuclear Safeguards

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions have taken place between his Department and the officials of *(a)* the Euratom

Safeguards Agency and *(b)* the International Atomic Energy Agency Safeguards Division, on the subject of the fungibility of nuclear materials under safeguards controls.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The international requirements covering fungibility of materials are contained in article 20 of the Official Journal of the European Communities, Commission regulation 3227/76 of 19 October 1976. No recent discussions have taken place on these requirements with Euratom. The IAEA is concerned solely with the total amounts of nuclear material not its origin.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what provisions have existed *(a)* since May 1979 and *(b)* since June 1986, to ensure that plutonium originating in safeguarded electricity board reactors in the United Kingdom has never been put into the military unsafeguarded stockpile following reprocessing of Magnox spent fuel at Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Pursuant to the requirements of article 14 of INFCIRC 263 the Department of Energy must approve all withdrawals of nuclear material from safeguards. It is Government policy that plutonium originating from the electricity board reactors will not be used for defence purposes.

Natural Uranium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the average spot market price in 1988 for commercial natural uranium traded *(a)* within Euratom member states and *(b)* to Euratom member states from outside the European Community.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Euratom Supply Agency's report for 1988 shows that the average price of natural uranium deliveries made during the year to the electricity utilities of the European Community under spot contracts was 35·5 ecu per kilogramme of uranium.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many flue gas desulphurisation plants have been installed in coal-fired and oil-fired power stations.

Mr. Wakeham: Work is currently under way on the first of the flue gas desulphurisation retrofits: the 4,000 MW Drax power station.

Electrical Accidents

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many people have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in electrical accidents in each year since 1978-79, distinguishing between domestic and other users and electricity industry staff.

Mr. Wakeham: The following figures are applicable:

	Domestic fatalities[1]	*Electric shock*[2]
1978	52	n/a
1979	59	64
1980	58	82
1981	54	102
1982	66	88
1983	42	99
1984	31	72
1985	40	108
1986	40	89
1987	46	79
1988	28	n/a

[1] Domestic fatalities reported by the electricity boards.

[2] Electric shock injuries reported to Department of Trade and Industry by 20 hospitals strategically situated.

Fatalities and Injuries to Electricity Board Employees:

	Fatalities	*Major injuries*	*Over three day injuries*
1978	n/a	n/a	n/a
1979	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981	1	11	61
1982	2	12	64
1983	1	15	n/a
1984	3	10	n/a
1985	nil	7	n/a
1986-87	3	53	63
1987-88	5	41	56

Fatalities and injuries to employees involved in contact with electricity in all industries

	Fatalities	*Major injuries*	*Over three day injuries*
1978	n/a	n/a	n/a
1979	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981	13	92	557
1982	23	126	565
1983	18	136	n/a
1984	19	151	n/a
1985	12	148	n/a
1986-87	23	328	532
1987-88	20	308	552

Coal Imports

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list for each year since 1979 the tonnage and country of origin of the five principal sources of coal imported into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wakeham: The information is as follows:

Coal Imports

Thousand tonnes

Country of origin[1]	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*Total 1979-88*
Australia	2,164	2,847	1,791	1,143	1,987	1,859	5,456	3,822	3,459	3,536	28,064
United States of America	1,031	3,653	1,954	2,053	1,142	3,344	3,145	3,560	2,890	4,261	27,033
Poland	658	446	142	320	509	1,359	1,418	1,217	1,083	1,270	8,422
Federal Republic of Germany	229	80	132	334	482	959	746	439	256	182	3,839
South Africa	38	66	80	67	58	257	725	312	188	276	2,067

[1] This list shows the five principal exporting sources over the whole of the 10-year period requested. For 1988 the principal exporters to this country were:

	Thousand tonnes in 1988
United States of America	4,261
Australia	3,536
Poland	1,270
Colombia	574
Canada	553

Source: Customs and Excise. Overseas Trade Statistics as published in D. Energy, Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics.

Electricity Boards

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the names of the board members of electricity boards in England and Wales, giving the date of their appointment, salaries and, where full time, their previous job and, where part time, their other jobs.

Mr. Wakeham: The information is as follows:

Board membership of the electricity boards of England and Wales as at 8 November 1989.

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appointment*
Central Electricity Generating Board		
Lord Marshall of Goring, Kt, CBE	Chairman	1 July 1982
G. A. W. Blackman, CBE	Deputy Chairman	16 April 1986
J. W. Baker	Full-time Member	5 September 1980
D. A. Davis	Full-time Member	5 June 1984
F. Ledger, OBE	Full-time Member	16 April 1986
R. V. Giordano	Non-executive Member	1 July 1982
Sir Terence Beckett, KBE	Non-executive Member	1 January 1987
D. A. Walker	Non-executive Member	1 May 1987

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appointment*
London Electricity Board		
J. J. Wilson	Chairman	10 March 1986
C. A. Prendergast, CBE	Non-executive Member	1 August 1983
L. W. G. Priestley	Non-executive Member	1 October 1983
R. B. Yearsley	Non-executive Member	1 September 1984
The Right Hon. Baroness Gardner of Parkes, JP	Non-executive Member	19 November 1984
M. Young	Non-executive Member	26 January 1987
G. M. W. Owen	Non-executive Member	1 May 1989

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appoinment*
South Eastern Electricity Board		
G. A. Squair	Chairman	1 June 1983
D. A. Lovesey	Deputy Chairman	29 April 1987
Dame Margaret Weston, DBE	Non-executive Member	23 February 1981
R. A. Cox, CBE	Non-executive Member	1 June 1983
Sir Ian McLeod, JP	Non-executive member	1 August 1983
M. J. Calvert, JP	Non-executive Member	14 January 1985
A. Ferry, MBE	Non-executive member	6 April 1987
Sir Keith Stuart	Non-executive Member	2 October 1989

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appoinment*
Southern Electricity Board		
D. A. Ross	Chairman	1 April 1984
H. R. Casley	Deputy Chairman	1 October 1986
A. G. Stoughton-Harris	Non-executive Member	1 February 1981
R. J. Cowley	Non-executive Member	1 December 1986
N. G. L. Timpson	Non-executive Member	1 January 1987
G. H. Wilson	Non-executive Member	30 May 1989

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appointment*
South Western Electricity Board		
A. W. Nicol	Chairman	29 April 1987
J. J. Seed	Deputy Chairman	1 June 1986
J. O. Gough, MBE	Non-executive Member	1 October 1980
J. R. W. R. Carew Pole	Non-executive member	1 June 1981
A. P. Hichens	Non-executive member	3 July 1989
A. N. Thatcher	Non-executive member	3 July 1989
C. M. Fisher	Non-executive member	10 July 1989

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appointment*
Eastern Electricity Board		
J. C. Smith, CBE	Chairman	1 October 1982
W. Waring	Deputy Chairman	18 July 1983
I. D. Coutts, CBE	Non-Executive Member	26 May 1982
R. C. G. Chesterman, OBE	Non-Executive Member	1 September 1984
Professor R. J. Eden, OBE	Non-Executive Member	1 June 1985
J. N. Duncan	Non-Executive Member	15 September 1989
M. S. Schreiber	Non-Executive Member	15 September 1989
Sir Graham Wilkins	Non-Executive Member	15 September 1989

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appoinment*
East Midlands Electricity Board		
J. F. Harris	Chairman	1 October 1982
D. W. Cowe	Deputy Chairman	1 November 1985
G. H. Boyle	Non-executive Member	1 June 1981
Mrs. D. J. Parker	Non-executive Member	1 July 1983
G. N. Corah	Non-executive Member	12 March 1984
A. G. Schroeder	Non-executive Member	3 March 1986

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appoinment*
R. N. Gunn	Non-executive Member	1 August 1989
A. N. R. Rudd	Non-executive Member	1 August 1989

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appointment*
Midlands Electricity Board		
B. S. Townsend	Chairman	1 April 1986
R. K. Young	Deputy Chairman	1 July 1987
F. C. Graves, OBE	Non-executive Member	1 October 1980
Dr. M. D. Skillicorn	Non-executive Member	23 March 1981
Dr. B. E. Marsh, JP	Non-executive Member	1 January 1984
P. B. G. Williams	Non-executive Member	1 January 1984

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appoinment*
South Wales Electricity Board		
J. W. Evans	Chairman	1 April 1984
D. H. Jones	Deputy Chairman	10 October 1988
J. Foley, MBE	Non-executive Member	1 January 1984
P. J. Phillips, OBE	Non-executive Member	11 June 1984
Mrs. V. Pollard	Non-executive Member	1 January 1988
D. J. Prosser	Non-executive Member	3 April 1989
P. W. L. Morgan	Non-executive Member	1 August 1989

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appoinment*
Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board		
B. H. Weston	Chairman	3 September 1985
R. T. Gales	Deputy Chairman	1 March 1978
Dr. R. H. Cummings, OBE	Non-executive Member	7 January 1980
J. M. Griffiths, OBE, JP	Non-executive Member	8 January 1981
Mrs. S. M. N. Garston	Non-executive Member	9 March 1981
R. B. de Zouche, OBE	Non-executive Member	1 April 1984
J. A. Hooson	Non-executive Member	1 August 1984

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appointment*
Yorkshire Electricity Board		
J. Porteous	Chairman	1 November 1984
J. S. Tysoe	Deputy Chairman	3 September 1985
D. B. Clark, CBE	Non-executive Member	1 November 1980
P. A. Smith	Non-executive Member	1 June 1981
J. P. M. Denny	Non-executive Member	19 March 1984
J. A. Rigg, CBE	Non-executive Member	1 May 1989
J. N. Hardman	Non-executive Member	1 May 1989
Mrs. D. C. Eccles	Non-executive Member	1 September 1989

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appoinment*
North Eastern Electricity Board		
D. R. Morris	Chairman	5 June 1989
J. A. Harmsworth	Deputy Chairman	1 January 1978
J. R. Holdsworth	Non-executive Member	1 April 1989
Professor J. L. J. Machin	Non-executive Member	1 June 1984
P. D. Nicholson	Non-executive Member	16 December 1985

Name	*Status*	*Date of Appoinment*
North Western Electricity Board		
K. G. Harvey	Chairman	6 November 1989
A. Crowder	Deputy Chairman	24 January 1983
J. V. Parsons	Non-executive Member	16 January 1984
J. Brown, MBE, JP	Non-executive Member	3 February 1984
N. D. Root	Non-executive Member	18 April 1984
Mrs. J. M. Wilson	Non-executive Member	1 February 1988

All the dates of appointment listed are first dates of appointment. Some members have been reappointed since those dates.

The list does not include the area electricity consultative council chairmen who are members of the area electricity boards but are appointed by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The following salaries are paid to board members:

(i) *Salaries for CEGB chairman and deputy chairman:*
The chairman is paid £111,000 per annum. The deputy chairman is paid in the salary range £75,000-£80,000.

(ii) *Salaries for CEGB full-time members:*
Full-time members are paid in the salary range £60,000-£70,000 per annum.

(iii) *Salaries for CEGB non-executive members:*
Two members are paid under £8,000 per annum; One member is unpaid.

(iv) *Salaries for area electricity board chairmen:*
The chairmen are paid in the salary range £45,000-£80,000 per annum.

(v) *Salaries for area electricity board deputy chairmen:*
The deputy chairmen are paid in the salary range £45,000-£50,000 per annum.

(vi) *Salaries for area electricity board non-executive members:*
Non-executive members receive under £5,000 per annum.

It is not possible without disproportionate cost to provide details of each appointee's background.

Coal Prices

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the basis of his Department's assumption that the price of coal at delivered pence per therm will remain stable between now and 1999.

Mr. Wakeham: Relatively little weight can be attached to assumptions about coal prices as far ahead as 1999. The delivered price of coal will depend on commercial negotiations between coal suppliers and their customers.

Fuel Exports and Imports

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what was the total of coal exported by the United Kingdom in each year since 1973-74 *(a)* in tonnes and *(b)* in value at constant prices;

(2) what was the total of coal imported by the United Kingdom in each year since 1973-74 *(a)* in tonnes and *(b)* in value at constant prices;

(3) what was the total of oil and gas exported by the United Kingdom in each year since 1973-74 *(a)* in tonnes and *(b)* in value at constant prices;

(4) what was the total of oil and gas imported by the United Kingdom in each year since 1973-74 *(a)* in tonnes and *(b)* in value at constant prices;

Mr. Wakeham: The information for exports and imports for each year since 1973 is shown in table 1 (volumes) and table 2 (values at constant 1985 prices). Gas is natural gas (there are no exports), and oil is the sum of crude oil and refined petroleum products:—

Table 1

Thousand tonnes

	Exports (f.o.b.)		*Imports (c.i.f.)*		
	Coal	*Oil*	*Coal*	*Gas (coal equivalent)*	*Oil*
1973	2,693	19,882	1,675	1,200	135,862
1974	1,865	16,183	3,541	1,000	129,164
1975	2,182	15,079	5,083	1,300	103,174
1976	1,436	19,907	2,837	1,600	102,994
1977	1,941	30,483	2,439	2,100	84,832
1978	2,266	37,415	2,352	6,700	80,139
1979	2,339	53,172	4,375	12,600	73,890
1980	4,042	54,517	7,334	15,400	58,890
1981	9,513	66,740	4,290	16,400	47,437
1982	7,387	74,812	4,062	15,600	45,456
1983	6,340	84,157	4,456	16,600	40,120
1984	2,440	92,236	8,894	20,200	53,480
1985	2,558	98,511	12,732	20,100	51,877
1986	2,748	102,309	10,554	18,800	55,471
1987	2,342	99,165	9,781	17,300	53,590
1988	1,737	89,078	11,993	15,500	53,995

Source: Customs and Excise, Overseas Trade Statistics as published in D. Energy, Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics. (The 1988 oil exports figure reflects subsequent revisions.)

Table 2

£ million at 1985 prices[1]

	Exports (f.o.b.)		*Imports (c.i.f.)*		
	Coal	*Oil*	*Coal*	*Gas*	*Oil*
1973	104	3,682	90	90	21,917
1974	72	3,031	189	75	20,837
1975	84	2,826	272	98	16,644
1976	55	3,673	152	120	16,615
1977	75	5,367	130	158	13,684
1978	87	6,475	126	504	12,927
1979	90	9,053	234	947	11,918
1980	156	9,315	392	1,158	9,498
1981	366	11,265	229	1,233	7,650
1982	284	12,591	217	1,173	7,329
1983	244	14,154	238	1,248	6,468
1984	94	15,486	475	1,519	8,620
1985	98	16,576	681	1,511	8,363
1986	106	17,229	564	1,413	8,944
1987	90	16,673	523	1,301	8,641
1988	67	15,026	641	1,165	8,706

Source: Volumes from table 1 revalued at 1985 prices.

[1] Figures at 1985 constant prices have been derived by applying the unit value for exports and imports in 1985 to the relevant published volumes in each of the years 1973 to 1988.

PCBs (Continental Shelf)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf have equipment containing polychlorinated biphenyls.

Mr. Wakeham: There are no significant quantities of polychlorinated biphenyls on any offshore installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Nuclear Safety Research

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what guidance he has given to the Health and Safety Commission on the exercise of the responsibilities for nuclear safety research which it is to take over from his Department.

Mr. Wakeham: I wrote to the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission in August enclosing a set of guidelines within which I wish the commission to work when it takes over these responsibilities on 1 April next year. The guidelines describe the objectives which I wish the commission to pursue; the area and nature of the research for which it is to become responsible; and the principles by which the commission should define the programmes which it sponsors, and by which the executive should recover the costs of these programmes from the nuclear power industry. A copy of the guidelines has been placed in the Library of the House.

Gas Explosions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in accidents involving gas explosions in each year since 1978-79, distinguishing between domestic and other users and gas industry staff.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

The available information for injuries involving domestic and other users, and gas industry employees is show in the tables.

Table 1

Injuries caused by gas explosions involving domestic and other users of piped flammable gas in Great Britain reported[1] *to enforcing authorities*

	Fatal[2]	*Non-fatal*[3]
1981-82	37	168
1982-83	28	116
1983-84	27	124
1984-85	41	181
1985-86	27	166
1986-87	12	58
1987-88	12	72

[1] Injuries arising from incidents reported under the 1972 Gas Act for the years 1981-82 to 1985-86 and under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR) for later years.

[2] Under the Gas Act initially non-fatal injuries which later became fatal were updated and reclassified. Under RIDDOR, the supplier/fitter is only required to notify HSE upon the receipt of an injury notification and may not be aware of the subsequent death of an injured person.

[3] Under RIDDOR figures relate to injuries causing hospitalisation for more than 24 hours. Under the previous legislation, overnight stays in hospital were the basis of the reporting requirement.

Table 2
Injuries to employees involving gas explosions in the gas production and distribution sector[1] *reported*[2] *to enforcing authorities*

	1986–87[5]	*1987–88*[5]
Fatal	—	—
Major[3]	3	—
Over 3 day[4]	4	1

[1] The production and distribution of gas sector is defined as Standard Industrial Classification 1968 Minimum List Heading 601.

[2] Injuries reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR). Under the reporting regulations applying to earlier years it is not possible to distinguish injuries from explosions from other injuries.

[3] As defined under RIDDOR.

[4] Injuries causing incapacity for work for more than 3 days.

[5] Year beginning 1 April.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside Scheme

14. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the progress of the set-aside programme.

Mr. Maclean: This year we have received applications from about 1,400 United Kingdom farmers to set-aside more than 55,000 hectares of land. This encouraging further response brings the total amount of land set aside under the scheme to 110,000 hectares.

23. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much land has now been set aside.

Mr. Maclean: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham).

Livestock (Slaughter)

15. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what codes of practice the Government propose to issue in response to the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on the welfare of livestock at slaughter.

Mr. Gummer: I am proposing to issue codes covering the welfare of livestock at slaughter, the construction and layout of slaughtering premises and the use of electrical stunning equipment. These will give effect to recommendations made by the Farm Animal Welfare Council.

Sheep (Hill Farms)

16. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about levels of support for sheep which are to be used for breeding on hill farms, which are not put to the ram until they are 18 months old, under the new sheep regime.

Mr. Curry: The special concession will continue under which these sheep will be able to receive premium at the same special rate which applies to goats. This will be set at 80 per cent. of the rate for ewes in 1990 and 70 per cent. thereafter.

Sheepmeat Regime

17. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further discussions he plans to hold regarding the future of the sheep meat regime.

Mr. Curry: We will continue to consult the industry on the implementation of the revised sheepmeat regime.

Chemical Fertilisers

18. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice his Ministry is offering to farmers about reducing the quantity of chemical fertilisers they are using to prevent high nitrate build-ups in the soil.

Mr. Maclean: ADAS advises farmers on the avoidance of excessive or untimely fertiliser usage, particularly autumn nitrogen applications. We are also introducing a pilot scheme to limit nitrate leaching in sensitive areas.

Countryside

19. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policies his Department will be developing to help maintain the present character of Britain's countryside.

53. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his Ministry's plans to further conservation of the countryside.

Mr. Gummer: A number of important measures have been introduced by my Department in the last few years aimed at maintaining and improving the character of our countryside. The effectiveness of these measures is being monitored and the assessments will help in the determination of future policies having the same objectives.

Salmonella

20. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action his Department has taken in the last three months further to safeguard egg supplies from the effects of salmonella.

Mr. Maclean: I have introduced two amending orders on the testing of poultry laying and breeding flocks and hatcheries, and five codes of practice on the control of salmonella in protein and feedingstuffs.

Pesticides

21. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to improve the effectiveness of his Department's policies on minimising the harmful effects of pesticide spray drift.

Mr. Gummer: Users of pesticides must avoid the harmful effects of spray drifts, and we have published a draft code of practice to help farmers and growers comply with their legal obligations.

66. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the operation of the advisory committee on pesticides.

Mr. Maclean: Yes.

69. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what publications his Department has recently produced on pesticides.

Mr. Maclean: During 1989 my Department has produced, or collaborated in the production of :

> "The Pesticide Register" a monthly list of new approvals;
>
> "Pesticides 1989" an annual list of approved products;
>
> "Pesticides and Food: A Balanced View" a free booklet which answers the questions most often asked by consumers;
>
> "Report of the Working Party on Pesticides Residues 1985-1988";
>
> "Wildlife Poisoning Incidents Report 1987";
>
> plus evaluations by the advisory committee on pesticides of five new active ingredients and various ad hoc surveys.

Untreated Milk

22. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will be introducing regulations to control the sale of untreated milk in England and Wales.

Mr. Curry: The sale of untreated milk is already controlled under the Milk (Special Designation) Regulations 1988. I expect to lay new regulations before the House shortly, which will require untreated milk to be labelled more fully and to be subject to more sophisticated testing.

Horticultural Research

24. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his planned reforms for the organisation of horticultural research will take effect.

Mr. Gummer: The aim is for the new organisation to be in place by 1 April 1990.

Fishing Industry

25. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from organisations representing the fishing boat building industry regarding the state of the industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have received one representation from the fishing boat building industry.

47. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he is making towards publishing proposals which will reduce capacity of the fishing fleet in line with the target set under the multiannual guidance programme.

Mr. Curry: Fisheries Ministers hope to be able to announce before the end of the year what additional measures, if any, are considered necessary to achieve the target reductions.

Milk Products (Labelling)

26. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will reconsider introducing a scheme to label milk products when hormone treatment has been used on the cattle.

Mr. Curry: I have no plans at present to introduce a mandatory requirement to this effect, but it is open to the industry to introduce voluntary arrangements if they wish.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

27. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what matters were discussed at the last meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 25 October to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) at column *507*.

Pigmeat

28. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to oppose European Council proposals to change the formula used to calculate pigmeat sluicegate prices and import levies.

Mr. Curry: At the Agriculture Council on 23 and 24 October, I argued that the pig industry needed a chance to recover their 1988 losses and now was not the time to be reducing levies in the way the Commission had proposed.

Hormone Growth Promoters

29. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will re-examine the law relating to the prosecution of farmers who implant hormone growth promoters in cattle.

Mr. Gummer: The Animals and Fresh Meat (Hormonal Substances) Regulations 1988 already provide for substantial penalties for farmers convicted of using hormone implants in their animals. Additional controls will be the subject of an announcement shortly.

Microwave Ovens

30. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the makers of microwave ovens on the subject of improved user instructions.

Mr. Maclean: My officials regularly meet relevant organisations, including representatives of the oven manufacturers, to discuss all matters relevant to the safe use of microwave ovens. I attended one such meeting in July at which I stressed the importance the Government attach to this issue.

Butter

31. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount of butter exported by the European Economic Community over the past 12 months; and what was the range of prices at which it was disposed of.

Mr. Curry: The most recent 12-month period for which final figures are available is from July 1988 to June 1989 inclusive. Some 483,000 tonnes of butter were exported by the European Community, at prices ranging from about £150 per tonne for old intervention stock sold to the USSR, to around £1,100 per tonne for fresh product exported on to the world market.

Food From Britain

32. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what overseas trade fairs Food From Britain has participated in during the last six months.

Mr. Curry: Food From Britain has participated in the following nine overseas events since 1 April 1989:

Date	*Event*	*Place*
12 to 13 April	Foodex '89	Dublin
7 to 10 May	FMI	Chicago
6 to 10 May	MIAD	Milan
23 to 24 May	PLMA	Brussels
28 to 30 May	Fine Food Show	Toronto
25 to 28 June	Fancy Food Show	Atlanta
3 to 6 September	Fine Food Show	Sydney
14 to 19 October	ANUGA	Cologne
20 to 24 October	Expo CT	Milan
5 to 8 November	Gulf Food Exhibition	Dubai

Fisheries Policy

33. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to attend a meeting of the Council of Ministers to discuss fisheries policy.

38. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to attend a meeting of the Council of Ministers to discuss fisheries policy.

58. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to attend a meeting of the Council of Ministers to discuss fisheries policy.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 9 November 1989.

Pigs

34. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the pig sector of the agricultural industry.

Mr. Curry: We remain in close touch with the representatives of the pig industry and trade about matters of concern to them.

Food White Paper

35. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations he has received from the food industry since his White Paper was published.

Mr. Maclean: Since publication of the White Paper "Food Safety—Protecting the Consumer" in July this year I have received numerous comments from a wide range of food industry interests, including those of food manufacturers, distributors and retailers.

Eggs

36. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on health standards of imports of eggs into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 1 November at column *210*.

65. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will institute a review of the overall effectiveness of recent legislation affecting the egg producing industry.

Mr. Gummer: We are continuing to monitor the effects of the measures introduced to tackle the problem of salmonella in eggs.

Horticulture (Gas Prices)

37. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the effect on horticultural gas prices of the response by British Gas to the seven-point plan put forward by Ofgas.

Mr. Curry: I have received no representations specifically on the seven-point plan. I am, however, keeping in touch with the horticultural industry on the question of gas supplies in general and know that producers are currently evaluating the proposals. This subject was discussed at a recent meeting between Baroness Trumpington and NFU representatives.

National Fruit Collection

39. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are his current plans for the maintenance and development of the national fruit collection; where he intends that it should, in the future, be located; who he intends to manage it; how it will be funded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have made clear their intention to continue to fund the national fruit collection. My Department is in active discussion with three organisations interested in taking over responsibility for the management of the national fruit collection in the event of the closure of Brogdale as a Ministry experimental horticultural station. The East Malling Trust and Wye college would transfer it to their sites whilst Swale borough council is co-ordinating local initiatives to retain it under the direction of a trust at Brogdale. Whichever option may be taken up, the collection will be maintained to a high standard as a living, growing collection.

Hormone Implants

40. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on stockpiles of hormone implants held within the European Community.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 31 October 1989 to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) at column *212*.

Agricultural and Food Research Council

41. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the agricultural and food research council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have received a number of letters about the council's plans for restructuring its research institutes, particularly in relation to the Langford laboratory of the Institute of Food Research. These are matters for the council itself and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Organic Agriculture and Horticulture

42. **Mr. Malins:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department is taking to encourage the development in the United Kingdom of organic agriculture and horticulture.

Mr. Curry: A major step taken by my Department was to initiate the setting up by Food From Britain of the United Kingdom register of organic food standards (UKROFS) which on 2 May launched production and processing standards for organic produce and an independent certification and inspection system.

But the development of organic agriculture and horiculture is being helped in a number of other ways. I recently announced that we are introducing a comprehensive economic survey of organic farming, the results of which should provide organic farmers and growers with a better understanding of the economics of production. The fallow option of the set-aside scheme enables farmers wishing to switch to organic farming to prepare their land without forgoing income entirely. We are considering an organic option under the forthcoming extensification scheme. Organic farmers are able to benefit from the farm and conservation grant scheme and from assistance towards the establishment of co-operatives. A sizeable part of our R and D programme is of interest to the organic sector and we are receiving advice from the organic sector, co-ordinated by UKROFS, or specific R and D requirements. Finally ADAS is offering a specialised countrywide service to organic farmers and growers.

Council of Fisheries Ministers

43. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to attend a meeting of the European Community Council of Fisheries Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: On 27 November. The draft agenda is not yet available but I will seek to ensure that the United Kingdom's concerns are properly met.

Fishing Ports

44. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to visit fishing ports before the next meeting of the European Community's Council of Fisheries Ministers.

Mr. Curry: I have already visited Fleetwood, Grimsby and Lowestoft and will be going to Hull, Brixham and Newlyn before the next Fisheries Council.

Overseas Food Fairs

45. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which overseas food fairs his Department has visited in the last three months.

Mr. Curry: Together with two of my officials I attended the ANUGA food fair in Cologne on 16 October, when I visited a number of stands in the British pavilion. I must congratulate the British companies exhibiting there for their marketing effort which I felt compared favourably with that of other countries.

Poultry (Testing)

46. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce amendments to the Testing of Poultry Flocks Order to assist small egg producers.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the written reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary on 3 November 1989 at column *397*.

National Consumer Council

48. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the National Consumer Council; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: I last met representatives of the National Consumer Council on 14 August when we had a broad discussion on various food law and food safety issues.

Egg Imports

49. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the levels of imports of foreign eggs.

Mr. Curry: Confirmed data are only available to the end of September.

In the first nine months of this year imports of eggs were about 30 per cent. up on those in the comparable months of 1988. But, as imports from such a small proportion of total United Kingdom supply, it is likely that these will represent no more than around 3 per cent. of United Kingdom output in 1989. Over the same nine-month period exports in 1989 increased by about 100 per cent. over 1988 levels and, to the end of September, exports exceeded imports by over 200,000 cases (each of 360 eggs).

Research and Seed Certification

50. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what support is given by the food and agricultural industries to agricultural research and seed certification.

Mr. Gummer: Our best estimates are that the private sector spends around £320 million on research and development on agriculture and food. No direct support is given by the agriculture and food industries to seed certification. The costs incurred by the Agriculture Departments in connections with statutory certification schemes are recovered in full from the seed industry through fees currently prescribed in the Seeds Fees (Amendment) Regulations 1987.

Food Safety

51. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his priorities for food safety.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's priorities for food safety were set out in the recent White Paper "Food Safety

—Protecting The Consumer" (CM. 732). The Bill to be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits is a major priority.

52. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his role in protecting food from contamination by radioactivity.

Mr. Maclean: My Department plays a key role and takes whatever means are necessary to protect food from contamination by radioactivity.

Food Advisory Committee

54. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his food advisory committee last met; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: The agendas of food advisory committee meetings are published in advance. The committee last met on 19 October 1989 and I have sent the hon. Member the press release of 28 September 1989 which listed the main agenda items.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *317*, if he will list the organisations to which he writes prior to a food advisory committee meeting requesting comments on agenda items; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: As I indicated in my earlier reply, the agendas are published in a press notice so that it is open to any organisation or individual to comment to the secretary of the food advisory committee on matters currently before the committee. Approximately 900 persons or organisations are also sent copies of food press notices. I will write in due course to the hon. Member giving the list of names.

Battery Fowls

55. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of battery fowls suffer broken limbs on the way to slaughter.

Mr. Maclean: Recent MAFF-funded research has indicated that about 30 per cent. of end of lay hens from battery units suffer from broken bones. Most of these are thought to occur when the birds are removed from the cages. The problem is not confined to battery units as further research indicates that birds from other systems —percheries and free range—have more old breaks than birds kept in cages.

Both MAFF and the industry are funding more research into the problem. The Government are supporting action by the industry to reduce the incidence of broken bones and plans to introduce legislation designed to improve cage design in order to minimise injury when the birds are removed.

Dairy Sector

56. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessments his Department has recently undertaken on the present profitability of the dairy sector.

Mr. Curry: My Department carries out annual assessments of profitability in the dairy and other farming sectors, the results of which are published in February each year in reports entitled "Agriculture in the United Kingdom". The most recent report, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, shows the net income from dairy farming in 1988-89 rose in real terms to its highest level since 1982-83.

Scottish Fishermen's Federation

57. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation; and what subjects were discussed.

63. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Gummer: Since taking up my post in July, I have not yet met the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, but I know my Scottish colleagues, with whom I am in close touch, are in frequent contact.

Farm Visits

59. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last made an on-farm visit; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Gummer: Since my appointment in July, I have made a number of tours in the regions, including on farm visits. During the most recent such visit, on 3 November, a range of countryside matters were discussed, including in particular the maintenance of wildlife habitat.

Animal Products (Licensing)

60. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to consider socio-economic criteria in assessing whether to grant licences to animal products under the Medicines Act 1968.

Mr. Maclean: The purpose of licensing under the Medicines Act is to protect public and animal health and I do not believe that socio-economic or other additional criteria contribute to this purpose.

Pigmeat Prices

61. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what improvements in pigmeat prices his Department has recorded during the last 12 months.

Mr. Curry: Over the past 12 months the monthly average of the all pigs price, as calculated by the Meat and Livestock Commission, has been as follows:

	Price
1988	
October	93·07
November	97·54
December	101·23
1989	
January	99·08
February	100·62

	Price
March	102·56
April	105·83
May	109·43
June	113·44
July	115·85
August	116·94
September	127·41
October[1]	133·21

[1] To week ending 21 October 1989.

Fish (Drugs)

62. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what drugs he has licensed for use with fish in the past 12 months.

Mr. Curry: In the last 12 months licences have been issued for Aquaguard, an ectoparasiticide for use against infestations of sea lice, and for furogen immersion vaccine and furogen injection vaccine for use against certain strains of Aeromonas salmonicida.

Farm and Conservation Grants

64. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contributions to pollution control have resulted from grants made under the farm and conservation grants scheme.

Mr. Maclean: Under the farm and conservation grant scheme grants of 50 per cent. are available throughout the country for the installation, replacement and improvement of facilities for handling, storing and treating slurry and silage effluent. This is the highest rate of grant available in Europe. It underlines the Government's determination to assist farmers in the vital task of preventing pollution of water courses by farm waste. The industry have reacted very positively and uptake of new grants is high.

Nitrate Fertilisation

67. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average level of nitrate fertilisation of United Kingdom farmland for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Curry: Data in the precise form requested is not available, but average total inorganic nitrogen usage on all crops and grass in England and Wales has been as follows (expressed in kg/ha):

Year	*kg/ha*
1979	114
1980	120
1981	130
1982	132
1983	139
1984	147
1985	146
1986	146
1987	147
1988	133

Whaling

68. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards a continuation after 1990 of the moratorium on commercial whaling.

Mr. Curry: We played a leading role within the International Whaling Commission in the achievement of the moratorium on commercial whaling. We have worked hard to ensure that IWC members adhere to it. It is to be reviewed next year on the basis of major scientific work on whale stocks and appropriate management procedures. We shall consider these results very carefully. If we are not satisfied we shall press for the continuation of the moratorium.

Salmon Fishing

70. **Mr. French:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policies his Department is pursuing in order to improve the prospects for the United Kingdom salmon fishing industry.

Mr. Curry: The Government are pursuing a wide range of policies for the conservation and management of salmon stocks which are beneficial to the United Kingdom salmon fishing industry, whether recreational or commercial. In England and Wales, the National Rivers Authority, established in September 1989, has the duty of maintaining, improving and developing salmon fisheries. In Scotland, district salmon fishery boards have similar powers and duties within their district. In Northern Ireland, the Department of Agriculture in conjunction with the Fisheries Conservancy Board and the Foyle Fisheries Commission are responsible for the conservation and protection of salmon.

There are substantial programmes of research and development on salmon which contribute to these aims. Finally, the United Kingdom—through the Commission of the European Communities which is a contracting party—plays an active role in the work of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation.

Food Irradiation

71. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement about his plans for the introduction of food irradiation.

Mr. Maclean: I have nothing to add to my reply given on 27 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) at column *947*.

Skilled Labour

72. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to ensure an improvement in the current shortage of skilled labour within the agriculture industry.

Mr. Curry: It is for the industry to respond to changing circumstances and to assess the levels of skilled labour required to sustain viable enterprises. In so doing full advantage should be taken of the excellent skills training facilities available from the agricultural training board and the agricultural colleges.

Farmland Sales

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's policy towards the practice of dividing farmland in the south of England into small plots and selling them off separately.

Mr. Maclean: This is not a matter for Government intervention. Owners have a fundamental right to dispose of their property as they see fit.

Research and Development

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on his policy regarding research and development in agriculture.

Mr. Curry: I remain firmly committed to supporting work directed at public good issues such as food safety, environmental protection and animal welfare, and to the underpinning of industry's commercial research base through support for far market strategic research.

Monetary Compensatory Amounts

Mr. Gale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out in the *Official Report* a timetable indicating the anticipated progress, for the various commodities, towards the eventual removal of monetary compensatory amounts arising from green currencies.

Mr. Curry: Following pressure from the United Kingdom Government the Council and the Commission have agreed that monetary gaps, and therefore monetary compensatory amounts, should be removed by the end of 1992. The devaluations that were agreed at the last two price settlements represented steps towards this objective. The Commission is to report shortly on ways of completing the process of dismantlement.

Papain

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce guidelines on the administration of the meat tenderising enzyme papain.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 1 November to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) at column *211*.

Oilseed Rape

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the presence of pollen and other airborne material derived from flowering crops of oilseed rape giving the concentration in the atmosphere above the crop and the maximum extent of detectable contamination; and if he will give comparable information for other agricultural crops.

Mr. Curry: My Department has no information on the concentration of airborne material from oilseed rape in the atmosphere above the crop, nor comparable information on other crops. I am aware that some experiments have been carried out by individuals to detect the presence of oilseed rape pollen in the atmosphere in the vicinity of the crop and further afield.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take any steps to encourage the breeding and production of varieties of oilseed rape which minimise the dispersal of pollen and other airborne material into the atmosphere.

Mr. Curry: If it were shown conclusively that existing varieties of oilseed rape caused serious problems for human health we would consider what measures were necessary to tackle the problem. The breeding of varieties with specific properties could be one such measure.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hectares of oilseed rape were harvested in 1989; what tonnage was produced; what was the value of the crop; and what subsidy was paid from public funds for its production or processing.

Mr. Curry: The 1989 oilseed rape production survey of England published a 25 October estimated production at 821,000 tonnes from 284,000 hectares. The value of the 1989 crop in the United Kingdom as a whole is still being assessed. Value estimates will be included in "Agriculture in the United Kingdom" due to be published early in 1990. Production aid under the EC oilseeds scheme is being paid on the 1989 crop; final estimates of the amount paid will not be known until at least the end of the 1989-90 marketing year.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the countries in the European Community where evidence of cattle contracting the disease bovine spongiform encephalopathy has been discovered.

Mr. Gummer: The Republic of Ireland.

Cattle Offal

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the organisations with which he consulted about his proposed ban on the use of cattle offal for human consumption.

Mr. Gummer: The following organisations were consulted:

Agricultural Research Council—Meat Research Institute
Agriculture and Food Research Council
Animal Health Distributors (UK) Ltd
Association of British Abattoir Owners
Association of County Councils
Association of District Councils
Association of London Authorities
Association of Meat Inspectors (GB) Ltd
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of Sea and Airport Health Authorities
Bacon and Meat Manufacturers' Association
British Association of Canned and Preserved Food Importers and Distributors
British Food Manufacturing Industries Research Association
British Hotels and Restaurants Association
British Medical Association
British Multiple Retailers Association
British Ports Association
British Retail Association
British Veterinary Association
Butterworths Law of Food and Drugs
Caterers Association of Great Britain
Chemical Industries Association
College for the Distributive Trades
Consumers Association
Consumers in the European Community Group (UK)
Co-operative Meat Trade Technical Panel
Co-operative Union Ltd
Customs and Excise
Dairy Trade Federation
EC Commission

Environmental Health Briefing
Faculty of Community Medicines
Farm and Food Society
Federation of Agricultural Co-operatives
Federation of Freshmeat Wholesalers
FMC (Meat) Limited
Food and Drink Industry Council
Food Manufacturers' Association
Grain and Feed Trade Association
Greyhound Racing Association
Hide and Allied Trades Improvement Society
Infant and Dietetic Food Association
Institute of Food Science and Technology (UK)
Institute of Meat
Institute of Trading Standards Authorities
Institution of Environmental Health Officers
International Meat Trade Association
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce
Joint Animal By-Products Parliamentary and Advisory Committee
Joint Consultative Council for the Meat Trade in the UK
Joint Industrial Council for the Slaughterhouse Industry
JS Engineering (Norfolk) Ltd.
Lard Association
Licensed Animal Slaughterers and Salvage Association
Livestock Auctioneers Market Committee for England and Wales
Livestock Traders Association of Great Britain
Local Authorities Committee on Trading Standards
Local Authority Conditions and Services Advisory Board
Master of Bassetthounds Association
Master of Deerhounds Association
Master of Draghounds Association
Master of Foxhounds Association
Meat and Livestock Commission
Meat Industry Liaison Group
Meat Manufacturers' Association
Meat Trade Journal
Meat Trades Annual
National Animal Health Panel
National Association of Tripe Dressers
National and Local Government Officers Association
National Cold Storage Federation
National Committee of the Wholesale Provision Trade
National Consumer Council
National Council of Freshmeat Wholesalers
National Farmers Union
National Federation of Consumer Groups
National Federation of Meat Traders
National Federation of Wholesale Grocers and Provision Merchants Association
National Greyhound Racing Club
National Office of Animal Health
National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers
Natural Sausage Casing Association
Non-UK Provision Trade Association
Parliamentary Committee Co-operative Union Limited
Pet Food Manufacturers' Association
Port of London Health Authority
Retail Consortium
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Royal Society for the Promotion of Health
Smithfield Market Tenants' Association
United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trade Association
United Kingdom Provision Trade Federation
United Kingdom Renderers' Association
United Kingdom Association of Frozen Food Producers
United Kingdom Fellmongers Association

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to introduce his ban on the use of cattle offal for human consumption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 9 November 1989 to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell).

Food Safety Directorate

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the money allocated for his food safety directorate in *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* 1990-91.

Mr. Gummer: Not all the areas of the Ministry's work that constitute the new food safety directorate are currently subject to decentralised budgetary control for running costs and capital expenditure. Accordingly, there is no readily available estimate of the budgeted costs for this work in 1989-90. For 1990-91, the directorate as a whole will be subject to decentralised budgetary control for running costs and capital expenditure. Budget allocations for 1990-91 remain to be decided. Subject to the outcome of the current public expenditure survey we are planning significant increases in staffing for a number of areas of the directorate's work.

Dr. David Clarke: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date he expects his food safety directorate to start operating.

Mr. Gummer: The new food safety directorate will be in full operation by 20 November. I am proceeding to establish the new consumer panel as quickly as possible.

EEC Foods

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the foods and the tonnage of surplus EEC foods that have been distributed to pensioners in the United Kingdom during the current year.

Mr. Curry: The information sought by the hon. Member is not available in the form requested. However, under the EC surplus food scheme the United Kingdom has some 3,000 tonnes of butter and 3,000 tonnes of beef available for distribution. All this produce has been released from intervention stores, and I have no reason to believe that most of it will not be distributed before the end of 1989. The timing of distribution is a matter for the designated organisations to decide according to local needs and their own capacity. Those who qualify for assistance under this Scheme are people in receipt of income support or family credit and those of no fixed abode or living in welfare hostels. Pensioners falling into one or other of these categories are, of course, eligible to receive produce.

Landlord and Tenant Survey

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the Country Landowners Association landlord and tenant survey.

Mr. Curry: The Country Landowners Association has, of course, informed my right hon. Friend the Minister and me about the results of its survey but no further representations have been received.

WALES

Health Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* for each year since 1978 the number of *(a)* private beds in non-National Health Service hospitals by hospital, *(b)* private beds in National Health Service hospitals by health authority and hospital and *(c)* amenity beds in National Health Service hospitals by health authority and hospitals.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 2 November 1989]:* The information requested is given in the following tables in respect of:

(a) the number of private beds in non National Health Service Hospitals (1982 onwards)—table A;

(b) the number of private beds in National Health Service hospitals by health authority and hospital—table B;

(c) the number of amenity beds in the National Health Service by health authority, (1980 onwards)—table C.

A table showing the distribution of amenity beds in NHS hospitals by hospital could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Table A

Number of beds in non NHS hospitals

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	[1]*1989*
St. Josephs, Gwent	56	56	56	56	56	56	50
North Wales Medical Centre, Gwynedd	61	52	52	52	52	52	52
BUPA, South Glamorgan	48	48	48	48	64	74	74
St. Winifreda, South Glamorgan	50	50	50	50	—	—	—
Sancta Maria, West Glamorgan	40	40	40	40	40	33	33
The Yale Hospital, Clwyd	—	—	—	—	—	—	19
Total	255	246	246	246	212	215	228

[1] Figures are for 31 December each year up to and including 1987. The next available figures subsequent to 31 December 1987 are for 31 March 1989.

Table B

Authorisations of private in-patient facilities in NHS hospitals in Wales

	1978		*1979*		*1980*		*1981*		*1982*		*1983*	
Clwyd												
Royal Alexandra *(a)*	4	9*(r)*	4	7*(r)*	—		—		—		—	
Prince Edward WM *(b)*	1		1		—		—		—		—	
HM Stanley	3		3		3	5*(r)*	3	5*(r)*	3	5*(r)*	3	5*(r)*
Colwyn Bay and West Denbigh *(c)*	4		4		2		2		2		2	
Abergele	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd	—		—		3		3		4		4	
Wrexham and East Denbigh WM *(d)*	5	7*(r)*	5	7*(r)*	5	7*(r)*	5	7*(r)*	5	7*(r)*	5	7*(r)*
Maelor	4		4		4		4		4		4	
East Dyfed												
West Wales General	3		3		3		3		3		3	
Pembrokeshire Cwm *(e)*	3		—		—		—		—		—	
Bronglais	3		3		3		3		3		3	
Llanelli	—		—		—		—		1		1	
Pembrokeshire												
Withybush	—		3		3		3		3		3	
Gwent												
Mount Pleasent	1		1		1		1		1		1	
St. Woolos	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Royal Gwent	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Neville Hall	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Gwynedd												
Tywyn and District WM	1	10*(r)*	1	10*(r)*	1	8*(r)*	1	8*(r)*	1	8*(r)*	1	8*(r)*
Eryri *(f)*	1		1		1		1		1		1	
St. Davids	2		2		2		2		2		2	
Llandudno	4		4		4		4		4		4	
Caernarfon Eye and Cottage *(g)*	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Caernarfon and Anglesey *(h)*	4		4		4		4		4		4	
Ysbyty Gwynedd *(i)*	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Mid Glamorgan												
Mountain Ash	1		1		1		—		—		—	
East Glamorgan	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Prince Charles	—		—		—		1		1		1	
Bridgend	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Princess of Wales *(j)*	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Powys												
Nil												

	1978		*1979*		*1980*		*1981*		*1982*		*1983*	
South Glamorgan												
Prince of Wales (Rhydlafar)	2		2		2		1		1		1	
UHW	—		—		—		7	*(k)*	7	*(k)*	7	*(k)*
Llandough	—		—		—		5		5		5	
CRI	—		—		—		4		4		4	
Velindre	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Sully	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Rookwood	—		—		—		—		—		—	
West Glamorgan												
Singleton *(m)*	2	2*(r)*	2	2*(r)*	2	2*(r)*	2	2*(r)*	2	2*(r)*	2	2*(r)*
Morriston	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Neath *(m)*	—		—		—		—		—		—	

	1984		*1985*		*1986*		*1987*		*1988*		*1989(p)*	
Clwyd												
Royal Alexandra *(a)*	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Prince Edward WM *(b)*	—		—		—		—		—		—	
HM Stanley	3	5*(r)*	3	5*(r)*	1,095[1]	*(s)*	1,095[1]	*(s)*	1,095[1]	*(s)*	1,095[1]	*(s)*
Colwyn Bay and West Denbigh *(c)*	2		2		—		—		—		—	
Abergele	1		1		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]	
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd	4		4		1,460[1]		1,460[1]		1,460[1]		1,460[1]	
Wrexham and East Denbigh WM *(d)*	5	7*(r)*	5	7*(r)*	—		—		—		—	
Maelor	4		4		2,555[1]		2,555[1]		2,555[1]		2,555[1]	
East Dyfed												
West Wales General	3		1,095[1]		1,095[1]		1,095[1]		1,095[1]		1,095[1]	
Pembrokeshire Cwm *(e)*	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Bronglais	3		1,095[1]		1,095[1]		1,095[1]		1,095[1]		1,095[1]	
Llanelli	1		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]	
Pembrokeshire												
Withybush	3		3		1,095[1]		1,095[1]		1,095[1]		1,095[1]	
Gwent												
Mount Pleasent	1		1		1		1		1		—	
St. Woolos	—		—		2		2		2		3	
Royal Gwent	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Neville Hall	—		—		3		3		3		3	
Gwynedd												
Tywyn and District WM	1	5*(r)*	365[1]	*(t)*	365[1]	*(t)*	365[1]	*(t)*	365[1]	*(t)*	365[1]	*(t)*
Eryri *(f)*	—		—		—		—		—		—	
St. Davids	2		730[1]		730[1]		730[1]		730[1]		730[1]	
Llandudno	4		1,460[1]		1,460[1]		1,460[1]		1,460[1]		1,460[1]	
Caernarfon Eye and Cottage *(g)*	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Caernarfon and Anglesey *(h)*	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Ysbyty Gwynedd *(i)*	3		2,190[1]		2,190[1]		2,190[1]		2,190[1]		2,190[1]	
Mid Glamorgan												
Mountain Ash	—		—		—		—		—		—	
East Glamorgan	1		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]	
Prince Charles	1		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]	
Bridgend	1		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]	
Princess of Wales *(j)*	—		—		—		—		—		—	
Powys												
Nil												
South Glamorgan												
Prince of Wales (Rhydlafar)	1		—		—		—		—		—	
UHW	7	*(k)*	7	*(k)*	7	*(k)*	7	*(k)*	7	*(k)*	7	*(k)*
Llandough	5		5		5		5		5		5	
CRI	4		4		4		4		4		4	
Velindre	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Sully	1		1		1		1		1		1	
Rookwood	1		1		1		1		1		1	
West Glamorgan												
Singleton *(m)*	3	3*(r)*	1,095[1]	*(n)*	1,095[1]	*(n)*	1,095[1]	*(n)*	1,095[1]	*(n)*	1,095[1]	*(n)*
Morriston	1		—		—		—		—		—	
Neath *(m)*	1		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]		365[1]	

Notes:

- *(a)* Change of use to long-stay psychiatric hospital.
- *(b)* Closed 1980.
- *(c)* Maternity hospital as of 1986.
- *(d)* Closed 1986.

(e) Closed 1987.
(f) Hospital for the elderly as of 1984.
(g) GP beds only.
(h) Closed 1984.
(i) Opened 1984.
(j) Opened 1985.
(k) Two beds to be used solely for emergency admission and only when the basic number of 10 beds is already occupied.
(m) One emergency bed for flexible use (at either hospital but not at both).
(n) Maximum of 1,095 bed days with no more than 365 bed days at Morriston.
(p) All figures are as at 31 December except for 1989 which are as at 30 September.
(r) Total number of beds/bed days allocated to health authorities which must not be exceeded at any given time.
(s) 1,825 bed days (see *(r)*).
(t) 2,920 bed days (see *(r)*).
[1] Authorisations in terms of bed days (1 bed = 365 bed days).

Table C
Number of amenity beds at financial year end (March)

	1978	*1979*	*[1]1980*	*[1]1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*[2]1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Clwyd	n/a	n/a	24	16	27	18	15	15	17	12	12	12
East Dyfed	n/a	n/a	18	18	12	18	17	17	17	21	21	21
Gwent	n/a	n/a	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gwynedd	n/a	n/a	17	15	15	15	15	13	12	17	17	17
Mid Glamorgan	n/a	n/a	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	6
Powys	n/a	n/a	11	12	10	12	6	10	10	8	8	8
South Glamorgan	n/a	n/a	3	3	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
West Glamorgan	n/a	n/a	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	9	5	—
Pembrokeshire	n/a	n/a	—	—	5	6	6	6	6	5	6	5
Wales	n/a	n/a	95	86	91	93	83	85	86	85	82	72

[1] East Dyfed and Pembrokeshire recorded under East Dyfed.
[2] at 31 December 1983.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 10 November 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Head Teachers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from head teachers of schools in the Bilborough area of Nottingham; and what reply has been made.

Mr. Alan Howarth: None.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the head teacher of Warren Hill school, Nottingham; and what reply has been made.

Mr. Alan Howarth: None.

Professional Association of Teachers

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any representations about recognition for the Professional Association of Teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Professioal Association of Teachers has represented to my right hon. Friend that some local education authorities still decline to recognise the association. That is a choice which they can make, but the Government recognise the PAT as one of the six schoolteacher unions with whom they deal. Under delegated budgeting schools governors will acquire more extensive responsibilities for employment matters and will be free to recognise unions not recognised by the local education authority.

Teacher Training

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will publish the Government's conclusion on future arrangements for the accreditation of courses of initial teacher training.

Mr. MacGregor: My Department and the Welsh Office are publishing today a joint circular on the approval of initial teacher training courses. The circular takes account of the many comments which we received in reply to the consultation document "Future Arrangements for the Accreditation of Courses of Initial Teacher Training" which was published in May of this year.

The circular provides for the reconstitution of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education from 1 January and for a revised system of local committees and sets out new criteria for course approval together with a commentary of guidance.

A separate circular will be issued in Northern Ireland, where the same new arrangements and criteria will apply to initial teacher training courses. Copies have been placed in the Library.

I have also today reappointed Professor William Taylor, Vice-Chancellor of Hull university, as chairman of CATE until June 1993.

City Technology Colleges

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, in granting leave for notice to be served to discontinue the Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham schools in Deptford, what decision he has taken in principle on whether to fund one city technology college or a pair of city technology colleges to take the place of the two existing schools in 1991.

Mrs. Rumbold: The proposal put forward by the Haberdashers' Company was for one funding agreement to be made with my right hon. Friend. In granting leave to the governors of the existing schools to discontinue them and to establish a CTC in succession, my right hon. Friend has proceeded on the basis that a single institution would be established but that single sex provision would continue. Further discussions are being held with the company to determine the detailed institutional and administrative arrangements necessary to achieve this.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Eye Tests

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether there has been any change in the number of persons seeking eye tests in Northern Ireland since changes were introduced.

Mr. Needham: Reliable information about the effect of the changes introduced from 1 April 1989 on the number of persons seeking eye tests in Northern Ireland is not yet available.

Environmental Research

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his Department's role in the radioactivity, research and environment monitoring committee since its inception.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Northern Ireland interest on the radioactivity research and environmental monitoring committee has been represented since its inception in 1986 by the chief alkali and radiochemical inspector of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, who has played a full part in the committee's work of reviewing and collating the programmes of research and monitoring undertaken by both Government and industry.

Saintfields Road, Castlereagh

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what complaints he has received from residents at Saintfields road and Ivanhoe avenue in connection with the manhole cover at 590 Saintfields road, Castlereagh, relating to the distress arising from the noise caused by traffic travelling over this cover; what steps he has taken over this matter in 1989; and if he will consider the re-location of the manhole and cover so that it is in the centre of the traffic lane.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We received one complaint. We acted to solve the problem. We are pleased to have received a further letter which ends: "I am most grateful to you for having this complaint attended to so quickly and efficiently". I have passed the praise to those who do the work. It would not be feasible to relocate the manhole as this would involve the realignment of the sewer.

Sheep

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many non maedi-visna tested sheep were accepted to the Department of Agriculture's sheep improvement scheme, in each year since 1980.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* We do not know. I will write to the hon. Member about the testing procedure for accreditation.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what requirements must be met before sheep will be accepted on to the Department of Agriculture's Northern Ireland sheep improvement scheme in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The sheep improvement scheme has two main parts: on-farm recording of lambs and performance testing of ram lambs.

To be registered as a recording flock a veterinary surgeon must have certified that all sheep in the flock are free from disease and physical defects. The flock must contain at least 20 ewes, in the case of a flock containing sheep of the blackface breed, and in the case of any other flock, five ewes.

Ram lambs accepted for performance testing must be from fully maedi-visna accredited flocks and have been vaccinated for the main clostridial infections and pasturella pneumonia at least four weeks before the commencement of the test. The Department also assesses ram lambs for weight and size for age, quality and soundness to determine suitability for entry to test.

Schools (Promotional Allowances)

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the six secondary schools in Northern Ireland which have promotional allowance values which are higher than that appropriate to their group; and why this is the position.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 6 November 1989]:* The six schools are the following junior high schools:

Clounagh, Portadown
Killicomaine, Portadown
Lurgan Boys
Lurgan Girls
St. Mary's Lurgan
Tandragee

The reason these schools have a promotion allowance value higher than that appropriate to their group is to ensure that they are at no disadvantage in terms of promotion opportunities when compared with other secondary schools of similar size.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy there have been in Northern Ireland to date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 7 November 1989]:* Twenty-three.

Staff Midwives

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many staff midwives employed in hospitals throughout Northern Ireland have been given an F grade in the recent clinical grading exercise; and what percentage this represents of the total staff midwives employed.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 November 1989]:* At the date of regrading (1 April 1988) the number of whole-time equivalent staff midwives in post in Northern Ireland was 779 and of that number 11 posts were given an F grade in the new clinical grading structure. This represents 1·4 per cent. of the total number of staff midwife posts.

In Northern Ireland the health and personal social services are fully integrated and the above figures include those staff midwife posts in a community setting as these cannot be identified separately at this time.

Beef Exports

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what quantity of beef is exported annually to West Germany from Northern Ireland for human consumption.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 7 November 1989]:* Exports of beef from Northern Ireland to West Germany were:

	Beef Exports (tonnes)
1989 (Jan-Sept.)	853
1988	660
1987	1,104
1986	997

Fixed Penalties, Larne

Mr Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many fixed penalty fines of £12 were levied by Larne traffic wardens during 1989 in respect of parking in the unmarked, unrestricted car park area of Narrow Guage road, Larne, adjacent to the entrance to the Larne shopping complex and Larne Guardian prior to proper restrictive road markings being put down; and how many fixed penalty tickets have been issued in respect of the same area since proper markings to prohibit parking were laid down in 1989; (2) whether he will seek powers to arrange for the £12 fixed penalty fines paid in respect of parking in this formerly non-restricted area, prior to road markings being put down to prohibit parking, to be refunded.

Mr. Cope: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

CIVIL SERVICE

Leaded Petrol

Dr. Marek: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if any vehicles belonging to, or used by, the Civil Service run on leaded petrol.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 8 November 1989]:* I cannot answer for the Civil Service as a whole, but in my Department all vehicles which can be adapted to use unleaded petrol have now been adapted.

Environmentally Beneficial Policies

Dr. Marek: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will give details of any initiatives he has taken in the last year within the Civil Service to adopt environmentally beneficial policies.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 8 November 1989]:* It is for each Government Department to decide which environmentally beneficial policies it adopts. In my Department we have initiated the use of unleaded petrol and recycled paper, and adopted a number of energy efficiency measures.

TRANSPORT

Motorways (Lighting)

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents have occurred in the last year on the M1 motorway in the dark on unlit sections that are within one mile of a lit section.

Mr. Atkins: The road accident report form records the light condition at the scene of an accident. The lighting condition of nearby sections of road are not readily available. In 1988, there were 948 accidents on the M1, with 282 occurring during the hours of darkness. For the accidents in darkness, 193 were on lit sections of road, 86 on unlit sections, and three on sections where light conditions were not recorded.

Emergency Transport Plans

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the main findings of the review of the inland transport organisation conducted by his defence planning and emergencies division.

Mr. Atkins: The inland transport organisation is maintained by the Department to provide a control structure for the surface transport industries, should it be necessary, in a time of international crisis or war. The main changes recommended by the review were:

(a) all levels of the organisation should be activated relatively early in crisis to avoid a change in control arrangements during a war;

(b) requests for transport which could not be obtained, during a crisis or war, by normal commercial means, should be fed into the organisation at the district or equivalent level;

(c) the arrangements for the earmarking of road vehicles in peacetime should be improved;

(d) the initial training in civil defence for members of the organisation should be provided by county (or equivalent) emergency planning officers as part of the training they provide to volunteers generally;

(e) regional seminars should no longer be linked with those of the regional port and shipping organisation, and should last no more than half a day.

These recommendations are now being implemented.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which option has been chosen from those arising out of the DVIOT division feasibility study into location of road vehicles in an emergency; when he expects arrangements for the location of vehicles in an emergency to be in operation; how much the implementation of these proposals will cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The preferred option would allow on-line inquiries of the goods operator licensing database within each traffic area office. It is estimated that development of this option would cost £22,600, with an annual support cost of £14,300 thereafter. No decision has been taken about development.

Air Traffic Controllers

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of air traffic controllers *(a)* recruited in each of the last three years, and *(b)* who have left the service in the last three years; what are the estimated figures for recruitment and wastage for each of the next three years; and if he will give all these figures for each air traffic control centre in Great Britain.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority and the management of the national air traffic services. I will draw the hon. Member's question to the attention of the authority's chairman.

SS Derbyshire

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make available to the bereaved families of the crew of the SS Derbyshire the draft report on the sinking of this vessel.

Mr. McLoughlin: In January 1989 copies of the typescript report of court were distributed to the solicitors to the parties to the formal investigation into the loss of MV Derbyshire. Copies of the supplemental report and order as to costs were distributed to the solicitors last month. At the formal investigation two firms of solicitors acted for dependants of those lost in the Derbyshire tragedy.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the cost to date and the estimated final cost of British Rail's publicity consultation process both to those along the rail link route and those in the vicinity of Waterloo and King's Cross main line stations.

Mr. Portillo: I do not have this information. This is a matter for British Rail.

Roads (Chelmsford)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a further announcement on the implementation of those proposals in the White Paper, "Roads to Prosperity", which apply to roads in the Chelmsford area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend expects to publish a roads report later this year, setting out in a little more detail the schemes in the expanded road programme.

We are pressing ahead with the appointment of design agents for our new schemes and studies. We recently announced details of the appointments made so far of consultants and agent authorities to prepare 53 new road schemes and seven new studies. Further announcements on the remaining schemes, including the new motorway scheme from M25 to Chelmsford and the A12 Chelmsford bypass widening, will be made over the next few months.

DEFENCE

Aircraft (Fluid)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, further to his answer on 6 November, *Official Report*, column 486, he will make a further statement on the circumstances which led to the discharge of fluid from an aircraft operated by A and AEE Boscombe Down on 25 October.

Mr. Neubert: The aircraft was involved in a routine training exercise during which it was intended to release chemical agent training mixture over troops exercising on the Porton battle run. The agent used was polyethylene glycol 300, which is harmless to humans, plants and animals. The purpose of the exercise was to provide the troops with as realistic as possible a simulation of a chemical attack. Because of technical problems with the aircraft's communications equipment, the pilot was unable to complete the release of the liquid as planned and had to jettison the remaining contents in order to bring the aircraft below the safe maximum landing weight. It was this discharge of liquid which probably caused damage to paintwork on a number of cars in the area.

An investigation is under way into this incident. It will include a review of existing procedures.

As I have already indicated, the Ministry of Defence will consider claims for compensation from those whose property has been damaged.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Dwellings

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was *(a)* the number of dwellings let by local authorities between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989, *(b)* the number of local authority dwellings taken out of management during that period and not available for letting, *(c)* the number of local authority dwellings vacant and available for letting on 31 March 1989 in (i) Greater London, (ii) metropolitan areas outside London, (iii) non-metropolitan areas in the south-east, (iv) all non-metropolitan areas and (v) England as a whole;

(2) what was *(a)* the number of local authority dwellings let to new non-secure tenants, *(b)* the number of local authority dwellings let to new non-secure tenants who were homeless households between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989 in (i) Greater London, (ii) metropolitan areas outside London, (iii) non-metropolitan areas in the south-east, (iv) all non-metropolitan areas and (v) England as a whole;

(3) what was *(a)* the total number of households and *(b)* the number of homeless households housed by local authorities (i) through NMS or LAMS, (ii) through HALO, (iii) through other mobility schemes, between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989 in (i) Greater London, (ii) metropolitan areas outside London, (iii) non-metropolitan areas in the south-east, (iv) all non-metropolitan areas and (v) England as a whole;

(4) what was *(a)* the total number of households and *(b)* the number of homeless households housed by local authorities through nomination to housing associations between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989 in (i) Greater London, (ii) metropolitan areas outside London, (iii) non-metropolitan areas in the south-east, (iv) all non-metropolitan areas and (v) England as a whole;

(5) what was the number of dwellings let by local authorities to homeless households referred by other authorities under the Housing Act 1985, section 68, between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989 in *(a)* Greater London, *(b)* metropolitan areas outside London, *(c)* non-metropolitan areas in the south-east, *(d)* all non-metropolitan areas and *(e)* England as a whole.

Mr. Chope: The information for April 1989 is not yet available. I will write to the hon. Member when it becomes available.

House of Commons Terrace (Guano)

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual budget for the cost of removal of guano from the Commons Terrace; and what was the actual cost of this operation in the last complete financial year.

Mr. Chope: There is no separate annual budget for this task, which is carried out as part of the cleansing contract. The actual cost in 1988-89 for removing guano from the entire Terrace was £4,000.

Asylum Seekers (Turkey)

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the outcome of the meeting held at his Department on 9 November with representatives of the Association of London Authorities and certain London boroughs and with hon. Members in response to their requests for financial assistance in respect of the extra expenditure incurred by authorities in 1989-90 as a result of the recent influx of asylum seekers from Turkey.

Mr. David Hunt: At the meeting at which my hon. Friends the Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Home Affairs were also present, I announced a scheme of Government grants to help local authorities with substantial unforeseen and unavoidable expenditure incurred this year directly as a result of the influx. Grant will be payable towards eligible expenditure on the basis of claims submitted by local authorities. The scheme will be administered by the Department of the Environment. Proposals for detailed rules will be discussed with the local authority associations.

I also said that that we would look at the boroughs' case for meeting extra housing needs in the context of this year's and future housing investment programme rounds, and that the Housing Corporation had indicated that it would take account of bids from housing associations for schemes for housing asylum seekers when making allocations to associations.

The association was also told that the Government were reviewing current arrangements for receiving unplanned arrivals and would consult the local authority associations as appropriate.

Water Authorities (Criminal Proceedings)

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department intends to finance expenditure incurred by the residuary water authorities in relation to any criminal proceedings brought against them.

Mr. Howard: Substantive provision for this new service will be sought in a winter Supplementary Estimate for class x, vote 9. Pending parliamentary approval of the Estimate, urgent expenditure will be met by repayable advances from the Contingency Fund.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Palace of Westminster (Health and Safety)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Lord President of the Council on which dates environmental health officers from Westminster City council have carried out health and safety inspections at the Palace of Westminster over the last five years; which areas were inspected; and if he will place copies of each report in the Library.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: At the invitation of the authorities of the House, an environmental health officer from Westminster city council carried out inspections in the House on 12 March, 23 April, 5 and 13 June 1986, 29 January 1987 and June 1988. All inspections were of the Refreshment Department kitchens. A further series of such visits is planned for the end of the year. The reports of environmental health officers are internal management documents but are available to the Catering Sub-Committee.

Library (Public Information Desk)

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make arrangements for the public information desk in the Library to be manned from 9 am on working days.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I will ask the Library Sub-Committee of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) to consider the opening time of the Library's public information office at its next meeting.

Creche Facilities

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he will consider equipping and staffing hospitality rooms A and B for use as a crèche for parliamentary staff and members.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. Planning for a day nursery is being considered in the context of the new parliamentary buildings.

Hospitality Rooms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he will list the number of occasions on which the hospitality rooms A and B have been booked by *(a)* Labour and *(b)* Conservative Members during the past two years.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: During the past two years Dining Rooms A and B have been reserved on 1,399 occasions by Conservative Members; 167 times by Labour Members; 81 times by Members of other opposition parties; and 57 times by Members of the other place.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he will list the numbers of outside groups that have used hospitality rooms A and B in the Commons broken down into *(a)* commercial organisations, *(b)* voluntary bodies and charities and *(c)* other groups during the past two years.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Functions organised in accordance with the banqueting regulations are the responsibility of the sponsoring Member. It is therefore the practice of the Catering Sub-Committe not to divulge the information requested.

PRIME MINISTER

Advisers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what guidance she issues about when advisers *(a)* should and *(b)* should not speak in public.

The Prime Minister: All civil servants are subject to rules of conduct which are set out in the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code. Similar rules apply to other advisers. General guidance on the application of those rules to the question of speaking in public is given in chapter 6 of the personnel management handbook, copies of which are available in the House Libraries.

Iraqi Business Men

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister whether she is satisfied that no involvement of Iraqi business men in chemical-defence and communication industries in the United Kingdom exists which compromises national interests.

The Prime Minister: We use all information and legal powers available to us to control illegal or improper procurement activities in this country. The export of chemical, nuclear and defence and other sensitive goods is subject to strict export licensing regimes. In addition, supplies of British defence equipment to Iraq and Iran continue to be governed by the guidelines introduced in 1985.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drugs

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison staff have been either suspended or disciplined since 1986 for the alleged or actual possession or importation of an unlawful drug into a prison establishment in England or Wales.

Mr. Mellor: Since January 1986 11 members of staff have been prosecuted or subjected to disciplinary proceedings for drug-related offences.

Civil Service Dispersal

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to relocate his Department's offices to the north-west of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: There are already several Home Office establishments in the north-west. I am at present considering the possible relocation from the London area of a number of Home Office functions, but decisions have not yet been reached either in principle or on the areas to which relocation might take place.

Parties

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is proposed to make it a criminal offence to organise a party for over 500 people for which admission is charged without a licence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is already an offence under the London Government Act 1963, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 or the Private Places of Entertainment (Licensing) Act 1967 to provide music and dancing without a licence if it is for the public entertainment or at a private entertainment promoted for private gain. We are considering whether penalties under these Acts need to be increased; and whether steps should be taken to confiscate profits where an event is in breach of entertainment licensing law.

Prisoners (Drugs)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of inmates who were put on report in prisons in England and Wales during the last 12 months for being in unlawful possession of drugs.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available in the form requested. But some 1,974 charges of possession of a controlled drug were dealt with by governors or boards of visitors in prison service establishments in 1988.

Category A Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held as category A prisoners and who are over 65 years of age in prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: According to information available centrally, which is approximate, two men and no women aged 65 and over were held in security category A in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 September 1989.

Drug Offences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of United Kingdom citizens now living abroad who are wanted by police in the United Kingdom for suspected drug-related offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available. No separate record is kept of the number of wanted persons thought to be living abroad who are suspected of drug-related offences. The police work closely with their colleagues abroad to identify wanted persons and to take action were possible.

Rule 43 Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held on rule 43 in prisons in England and Wales on 1 November.

Mr. Mellor: The latest readily available information is given in the table.

Prisoners held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales under Prison Rule 43 and Young Offender Institution Rule 46: by type of segregation, age group and sex, 30 June 1989

	Own protection	*Good order or discipline*
Aged under 21		
males	200	40
females	6	2
Adults		
males	1,970	189
females	33	6

Prisoners (Drug Addicts)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of registered drug addicts in prisons in England and Wales on 1 November.

Mr. Mellor: There is no system of registration of addicts. The number of addicts in prison service establishments at any one time is not known. During 1988, 1,644 addicts were notified to the chief medical officer at the Home Office by prison medical officers in the United Kingdom. An addict may be notified more than once during a year and counting addicts at their first notification in 1988, 1,311 were first notified by prison medical officers, as shown in table 10a of Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 13/89, "Statistics of Drug Addicts Notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom, 1988", a copy of which is in the Library.

Birmingham Pub Bombing

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the replies by the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), *Official Report*, 26 October at columns 1032-33, from which month in 1986 the period covered by the Assistant Chief Constable of Yorkshire's inquiry commences; and whether the inquiry will look at material collected by the Devon and Cornwall police in the course of their investigations into the conviction of those found guilty of the Birmingham pub bombing.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The investigation being carried out by the Assistant Chief Constable from West Yorkshire into the work and practices of the West Midlands serious crime squad will concentrate on the period since 1 January 1986. However, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) indicated in his reply on 26 October, if the inquiry were to give rise to doubt about earlier cases, any convictions which arose from those cases would be examined.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the present work projects being undertaken at Wandsworth prison; and if he will list them and the money that has been allocated for each project.

Mr. Mellor: The following major building projects are in hand at Her Majesty's Prison Wandsworth:

Project	*Latest available estimate of cost £*
General security upgrade	865,000
Improve drainage	1,690,000
New reception building	2,282,000
Improve perimeter security	220,000

Slopping Out

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of prisons in England and Wales where there is only a slopping-out toilet system for inmates.

Mr. Mellor: There are at present 36 establishments where prisoners have no access to night sanitation and 31 where not all prisoners have such access.

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the considerations that led to the decision being taken that the scenarios for the regional civil defence exercises in the United Kingdom should be built around periods of international tension or conventional war.

Mr. John Patten: Regional civil defence exercises are designed to test local authority plans. The local authorities involved have agreed that it would be sensible for the first series of such exercises to concentrate on the initial phase of a possible war crisis, covering a period of international tension. In due course, consideration will be given to whether these exercises should be extended to include a period of possible hostilities.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the reasons for the renaming of the Civil Defence college at Easingwold.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 5 June at columns *514-15*.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by region, all the civil defence exercises planned for the remainder of 1989 and for the whole of 1990.

Mr. John Patten: Civil defence exercises are held by a number of organisations, and a comprehensive list is not maintained centrally. In England and Wales, regional civil defence exercises to be held jointly by local authorities and the Home Office are planned for region 3 (East Midlands) and region 4 (Eastern) in November this year, and for region 2 (North East) in 1990.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those items of exercise-related expenditure eligible for civil defence grant from his Department.

Mr. John Patten: All expenditure incurred by local and police authorities in connection with their participation in civil defence exercises is eligible for grant, provided that the conditions of the Civil Defence (Grant) Regulations 1953 (S.I. No. 1953/1777) (as amended) are met.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will update the arrangements his Department has made towards competitive tendering for civil defence in *(a)* wartime emergencies and *(b)* peacetime emergencies.

Mr. John Patten: Home Office procurement policy is to place contracts with competent suppliers which represent, as far as possible, the best overall value for money after inviting firms to submit tenders in competition.

Party Conferences (Security)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional resources were made available for policing and security at the 1989 *(a)* Labour party conference at Brighton, and *(b)* Conservative party conference at Blackpool; and what were the costs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief officers of the forces concerned that the additional costs of policing the 1989 party conferences were estimated as follows:

Conference	*Force*	*Additional cost (£)*
Labour	Sussex	4,000
Conservative	Lancashire	1,080,000

The level of resources provided for the policing of party conferences is an operational matter for the chief officer of police in the light of all the circumstances, including an assessment of the threat of terrorist attack and a recognition that there is a serious threat to members of the Government.

The additional costs of policing will be met by the Sussex and Lancashire police authorities. Under the normal funding arrangements, the Government contribute both directly through police grant—which is at 51 per cent. —and indirectly through block grant.

The parties themselves also incur costs on specific security measures at their conferences.

Police (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what requests he has received for increases in the manpower of the South Yorkshire police in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Applications have been made in the years set out in the following table:

Year	*Posts applied for*	*Posts approved*
1980-81	278	120
1983-84	[1]54	—
1985-86	9	—
1986-87	213	9
1987-88	52	50
1988-89	50	20
1989-90	50	27
1990-91	50	[2]—

[1] Letter from the Chief Constable rather than from the police authority.

[2] Not yet decided.

Hon. Members (Age Limit)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to review the minimum age limit for persons wishing to become hon. Members.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Cyclists (Prosecutions)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of prosecutions of pedal cyclists for riding without proper lights on the cycle in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: Information held centrally for 1986 to 1988 is given in the table.

Persons proceeded against for lighting and reflector offences on pedal cycles[1]
England and Wales

Year	*Total proceeded against*
1986	2,751
1987	1,732
1988	1,593

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[1] Offence under section 74 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 and RVL Regulations 1984.

Tote

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions his Department has commissioned an independent inquiry or investigation into the privatisation of the Tote; who conducted the inquiry; and what were the conclusions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The only independent inquiry into the feasibility of privatising the Tote has been conducted by Lloyd's Merchant bank; its conclusions were submitted in confidence to the Government in April and are still under consideration.

Mr. John Kamara

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has yet received a report from Merseyside police into allegations by Mr. John Kamara of wrongful conviction; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: No. Mr. Kamara has submitted further representations about his case which require investigation. Once the inquiries are complete and we have received the report, we will decide whether there are grounds to justify our intervention.

Overseas Visitors

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Jamacian citizens were initially refused leave to enter the United Kingdom as not being genuine vistors *(a)* between January and October 1988, inclusive and *(b)* between January and October 1989 inclusive;

(2) how many overseas visitors were initially refused leave to enter and were removed from the United Kingdom *(a)* between January and October 1988, inclusive and *(b)* between January and October 1989, inclusive; and what were their nationalities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 3 November 1989]:* The total numbers of passengers by nationality who were refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom between January and August of 1988 and 1989 are given in the table; figures for September and October 1989 are not yet available. It is not possible from the information available centrally to ascertain how many sought entry as visitors.

Of the 258 Jamaican citizens removed between January and August 1988 and the 561 removed between January and August 1989, 191 and 484 respectively failed to satisfy the immigration officer that they qualified as genuine visitors under paragraph 22 of the rules. Some of the remainder may also have sought entry as visitors and, if so, would have been refused for other reasons.

Passengers refused leave to enter and removed from the United Kingdom

Nationality	*Number*	
	January to August 1988	*January to August 1989*
Europe	3,050	3,652
Austria	53	85
Belgium	21	1
Bulgaria	8	12
Cyprus	142	131
Czechoslovakia	11	12
Denmark	3	7
Finland	26	56
France	89	31
Germany (Democratic Republic)	2	4
Germany (Federal Republic)	52	16
Greece	7	4
Hungary	10	16
Italy	41	9
Luxembourg	—	1
Malta	11	15
Netherlands	40	15
Norway	42	64
Poland	56	96
Portugal	434	117
Romania	7	11
Spain	340	112
Sweden	86	129
Switzerland	71	60
Turkey	1,159	1,930
USSR	15	35
Yugoslavia	324	683
Americas	1,960	2,695
Argentina	45	48
Barbados	5	21
Brazil	288	474
Canada	61	68
Chile	62	61
Colombia	376	418
Cuba	—	1
Guyana	16	28
Jamaica	258	561
Mexico	60	98
Peru	40	71
Trinidad and Tobago	19	49
United States of America	712	766
Uruguay	5	11
Venezuela	13	20
Africa	3,968	5,123
Algeria	1,363	1,768
Egypt	14	23
Ethiopia	8	13
Ghana	242	296
Kenya	86	107

Nationality	*Number* *January to August 1988*	 *January to August 1989*
Libya	18	16
Mauritius	124	123
Morocco	941	1,327
Nigeria	481	518
Sierra Leone	69	125
Somalia	8	17
South Africa	201	276
Sudan	27	20
Tanzania	57	65
Tunisia	130	132
Uganda	116	146
Zambia	32	71
Zimbabwe	51	80
Asia	2,614	2,501
Bangladesh	293	286
China	25	61
Hong Kong BDTC	233	106
India	468	314
Indonesia	7	12
Iran	252	319
Iraq	66	33
Israel	109	149
Japan	133	151
Jordan	20	16
Kuwait	2	17
Lebanon	49	46
Malaysia	332	445
Pakistan	267	221
Philippines	82	83
Saudi Arabia	37	36
Singapore	70	52
Sir Lanka	96	78
Syria	31	35
Thailand	42	41
Australasia	147	190
Australia	91	99
New Zealand	56	91
Others	1,070	1,282
British Overseas Citizens	35	22
Other countries not elsewhere specified	525	750
Stateless	510	510
All Nationalities	12,809	15,443

Duty Solicitor Scheme

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by location, for the last 12 months, where the 24-hour duty solicitor scheme has been withdrawn.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

In the last 12 months local 24-hour duty solicitor schemes have ceased in the areas covered by the St. Albans and Tunbridge Wells committees (four police stations in all).

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to review payment to solicitors who carry out the 24-hour duty solicitor arrangement.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to eply,

Payments to solicitors who carry out the 24-hour duty solicitor arrangements are reviewed annually as part of the discussions on legal aid rates between the Lord Chancellor and the Law Society.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Unemployed Persons

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what information he has on the work of the independent agency commissioned to explore the impact of the increased maximum period of disqualification on decisions about leaving or taking work as well as the effects on the circumstances of those who are disqualified;

(2) if he will report on the results of a survey conducted by his Department in the first three months of the current year into the effects of increasing to 26 weeks the maximum period of disqualification for unemployment benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on 8 November 1989 at columns *672-73*.

Claimants (Stockton)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are receiving benefits from his Department in the parliamentary constituency of Stockton, South; and what is the total cost of such benefits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Family Credit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the reduction in spending on family credit in 1989-90 if child benefit was increased in line with inflation.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Estimates based on the current caseload are that family credit spending in 1989-90 will be £16 million more than if child benefit had been increased in April 1989 in line with inflation.

Elderly People

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of elderly persons who are *(a)* residents of independent sector residential nursing homes and *(b)* in receipt of benefit and unable to meet the full costs of that accommodation and are being subsidised by relatives to the extent of 0-£10 weekly; £10-£20 weekly and above £20 weekly, and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information in the form requested is not available.

Child Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would have been the cost of increasing child benefit in line with earnings in each of the last two years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The cost (net of savings on other benefits) would have been about £260 million in 1988-89 and a further £320 million in 1989-90.

Offices (Doncaster and Wath-on-Dearne)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people served by the social security offices in *(a)* Doncaster and *(b)* Wath-on-Dearne have been refused loans by officers of the social fund since its inception on the grounds that the applicants lacked sufficient income to repay such loans.

Mr. Nicholas Scott: From April 1988 to September 1989, on 58 occasions in the Doncaster East local office area, 146 in the Doncaster West local office area and 27 in the Wath-on-Dearne local office area, the social fund officer refused a loan application giving as a reason the applicants' inability to repay. This represents 0·8 per cent., 2 per cent. and 0·6 per cent. of the applications processed for these areas respectively.

Hardship Allowance

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the figures for *(a)* applications and *(b)* the take-up of the special hardship allowance for under 18-year-olds with no YTS.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In the period 12 September 1988 to 3 November 1989 a total of 17,996 applications were considered for a direction by the Secretary of State under the severe hardship provision. In 11,902 cases (66 per cent.) a direction was given to enable payment of income support to be made.

London Pay Area

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many EOs-LO1s currently work in the London pay area; and how many will be required following the implementation of the operational strategy.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In October 1989 there were 3,257 EOs-LO1s employed in the London pay areas.

It is not possible to give an answer as to how many EOs-LO1s will be required after the implementation of the operational strategy.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many higher executive officers in his Department's offices will be surplus to requirements in the London pay area following the changes brought about by the operational strategy.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is not possible to give an answer as to how many, if any, HEOs will be surplus to requirements after the implementation of the operational strategy.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many EOs-LO1s in the London pay area have fitted for promotion markings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: EO-LO1s' fitness for promotion is assessed only if they apply for a promotion exercise. In the most recent competitions for promotion to higher executive officer in the Department's London regions and headquarters, there were 780 applications from EO-LO1s in the London pay area who were assessed by their line managers as being fitted for promotion.

Crisis at Christmas

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he is planning to give help to the charity Crisis at Christmas towards the cost of its work for homeless people over the Christmas period; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government are well aware of the valuable work being done by Crisis at Christmas but they have not approached my right hon. Friend for assistance this year.

Pensioners

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Walsall, North on 6 March, *Official Report*, column *465*, what percentage of single pensioners in 1986 had a total income of less than £50 at today's prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A gross income of £50 at April 1989 prices was equivalent to a gross income of £42·79 at 1986 prices. In 1986 9 per cent. of single pensioners had a gross income below £42·79 per week. Source: Family Expenditure Survey.

Disabled People

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of the cost of each of the 10 immediate improvements in benefits for disabled people and their carers, announced in his uprating statement on 25 October, *Official Report*, columns 841 to 854.

Mr. Scott: The costs of each measure in the first full year (1991-92 unless otherwise stated) are set out as follows:

1. Increase in the adult disability premium: £18 million.
2. Alignment of disabled child premium with adult rate: £8 million.
3. Carer's Premium: £15 million.
4. Abolition of Attendance Allowance six month waiting period for the terminally ill: £26 million.
5. Attendance Allowance for children under two years old: £5 million.
6. Extension of Invalid Care Allowance to many carers as a result of 4 and 5 above: £3 million.
7. Extension of Mobility Allowance to the deaf-blind: £5 million.

8 and 9. Increases in the Invalid Care Allowance earnings rule and in the incapacity benefits Therapeutic Earnings Limit together with the extension of Invalidity Benefit to those on Employment Rehabilitation Courses: less than £1 million.

10. Additional funds for the Independent Living Fund (1990-91): £19 million.

Families With Children

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of the cost of the extra £70 million he is spending on families with children by each measure announced in his uprating statement on 25 October, *Official Report*, columns *841* to *854*.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The cost of extra measures to help least well-off families with children in the first full year (1991-92) will be as follows:

Addition of 50p to family premium in Income Support —£34 million.

Addition of £1 to adult credit in Family Credit—£16 million.

Addition of £1·10 to lone parent premium in Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit—£2 million.

Raising of Housing Benefit disregard on earnings to £25 for lone parents—£11 million.

Raising Social Fund Maternity Grant from £85 to £100 —£3 million.

Two other measures will extend further help to less well off families:

Raising Disabled Child Premium to level of adult Disability Premium—£8 million.

That part of the cost of extending Attendance Allowance for children under 2 which will benefit families in Income Support—£1 million.

Child Benefit

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* families with children and *(b)* children which would not be brought into income-related benefits if child benefit were increased in line with inflation in 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: The effects of not increasing child benefit should not be viewed in isolation. For example, it is important to have regard to the extra help which will be made available to families with children. However, in very broad terms, the decision not to uprate child benefit this year is expected to increase the family credit caseload by up to 5,000 in 1990-91; by a few thousand for income support; and by an even smaller number for housing benefit. It is estimated that these families may include up to 16,000 children overall.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of uprating child benefit in line with inflation in 1990-91.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To increase the rate of child benefit in line with the increase of 7·6 per cent. in the retail prices index between September 1988 and September 1989 would cost around £250 million net of savings on other benefits.

Social Fund

Ms. Harriet Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the budget for the social fund will be in 1990, broken down into community care grants, budgeting loans and crisis loans, in both gross and net terms.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	Community care grants	*Budgeting and crisis loans*
Gross	61	144
Net	61	39

Disability

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what date he expects section 7 of the Disabled Persons Act 1986 to be implemented.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

We have received proposed guidelines from a disability organisation for the implementation of section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. The Government's position on the implementation of section 7 will be made clear in the White Paper on Community Care which will be published shortly.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what date he expects to publish the first report to Parliament on the development of community care services under section 11 of the 1986 Disabled Persons Act.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

The first report will be laid before Parliament before the end of this year.

SCOTLAND

Domiciliary Care

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet representatives of Scottish local authorities to discuss the new arrangements regarding Department of Social Security payments to local authorities for domiciliary care, to be introduced in April 1991.

Mr. Lang: I met the social work committee of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities about the Government's proposals for community care on 8 September and agreed that further discussions would be arranged, as appropriate, after publication of the Government's detailed proposals in a White Paper.

Scottish Enterprise

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make it his policy to include in the plans for Scottish Enterprise a body to ensure that no funds from Scottish Enterprise go to businesses or activities which are likely to increase pollution or to endanger the environment;

(2) what requirements will be included in the plans for Scottish Enterprise to ensure that no funds from Scottish Enterprise go to businesses or activities which are likely to increase pollution or to endanger the environment.

Mr. Lang: We intend that Scottish Enterprise will promote economic development and training in lowland Scotland, and further the improvement of the environment. There is already a range of statutory and other safeguards designed to prevent businesses from causing unacceptable pollution or damage to the environment.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the requirement to provide the ages of those included on the poll tax register; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations on this issue.

X-ray Equipment (Roodlands Hospital)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the age and condition of X-ray equipment at Roodlands hospital, Haddington; and what steps are taken to ensure that the equipment complies with required standards for the examination of patients.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about the equipment at Roodlands hospital is a matter for Lothian health board.

Young People

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the numbers of *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds who stayed on at school, non-advanced further education or higher education in the current year; and what percentage these totals represented of the estimated total population in these age groups in Scotland in 1989.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 9 November 1989]:* The information for 1989 and in the form requested is not available.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the numbers and age group percentages of *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds (i) continuing in school education, (ii) entering non-advanced further education, (iii) entering higher education, (iv) entering YTS, (v) entering employment, in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 9 November 1989]:* The information requested is not available in the form requested since young people may enter the various categories of education and employment more than once in a year. Information on the educational and economic activity of 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland at autumn 1986 and 1987 is given in the table.

	1986				*1987*			
	16-year-olds		*17-year-olds*		*16-year-olds*		*17-year-olds*	
Activity at autumn	*number*	*per cent.*	*number*	*per cent.*	*number*	*per cent.*	*number*	*per cent.*
Full-time education:								
School	48,600	59	19,200	23	48,600	61	19,400	24
Non-advanced FE (excluding YTS)	3,600	4	5,200	6	3,100	4	4,500	5
Higher education	—	—	3,500	4	100	—	3,400	4
Youth training scheme	17,100	21	13,700	16	16,500	21	19,700	24
Unemployed and claiming benefit	7,700	9	15,400	18	7,100	9	11,800	14
Other (including employment)	5,300	6	26,800	32	4,200	5	23,300	28
Total population	82,400	100	83,800	100	79,600	100	82,000	100

Notes:

1. School pupils include some 16-year-olds who were too young to leave school the previous session.
2. Many of the young people on YTS are also participating in part-time non-advanced FE.
3. Because of rounding the columns may not sum to the totals shown.

Note—Similar information for earlier years is not readily available.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

House of Fraser Holdings

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the number of the Department of Trade and Industry report into House of Fraser Holdings which was leaked to Lonrho/*The Observer;* whether this numbered copy is or was in the possession of the fraud squad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have been asked to reply.

Investigations into the leak of the report are continuing and I cannot comment on the matters to which the hon. Member refers.

Car Imports and Exports

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what tax is levied on cars imported from Japan; and what tax is levied on British cars exported to Japan.

Mr. Redwood: Cars imported into the United Kingdom from Japan are subject to an import duty of 10 per cent. Like all other cars they are also subject to a car tax of 10 per cent. and, at point of sale, VAT of 15 per cent. No import duty is levied on cars imported into Japan; however, all new cars are subject to consumption tax of 6 per cent. and acquisition tax of 5 per cent. Each time a car is sold secondhand in Japan, it is subject to consumption tax of 3 per cent.

Jaguar plc

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the exact time on the afternoon of Tuesday 31 October at which he informed the board of Jaguar of his decision to relinquish the Government's golden share.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Sir John Egan was informed at 11.45 on the morning of Tuesday 31 October.

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is his estimate of the import content of heavy commercial motor vehicles exported from the United Kingdom in 1988 and 1989 to date having regard to their provenance; what was the corresponding figure in 1959, 1972 and 1979; and what effect free trade with the EEC has had on the United Kingdom content and on output and employment in the United Kingdom heavy commercial vehicle industry;

(2) what is his estimate of the import content of motor cars exported from the United Kingdom in 1988 and in 1989 to date having regard to their provenance; what was the corresponding figure in 1959, 1972 and 1979; and what effect free trade with the EEC hs had on the United Kingdom content and on output and employment in the United Kingdom motor car industry;

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 9 November 1989]:* The information is not available.

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1963, 1968, 1974, 1979, 1984 and 1989 to date the ratio of imports to output of *(a)* textiles and clothing and *(b)* chemicals, and man-made fibres, together with the relevant weights in the index of manufacturing output;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1963, 1968, 1974, 1979, 1984 and 1989to date the ratio of imports to output of (i) metals and (ii) rubber and plastics together with the relevant weights in the index of manufacturing output.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 November 1989]:* The readily available information is:

	Textiles and clothing[1]	*Chemicals and man-made fibres*[2]	*Metals*[3]	*Rubber and plastics*[4]
Imports as percentage of output				
1975	22·8	20·2	30·9	13·3
1979	33·6	26·9	28·7	17·7
1984	48·1	35·5	41·1	26·1
[5]1988–89	55·9	38·7	50·0	27·7
Weights in index of manufacturing output[6] *(Parts per thousand)*				
1963	89·2	95·1	64·3	26·3
1970	77·5	87·8	63·9	33·2
1975	74·1	89·3	56·5	34·6
1980	58·8	91·9	34·3	38·3
1985	57·7	103·6	37·8	38·1

[1] For 1963–75 defined as order XIII and order XV plus part MLH 473 less MLH 411, 429/1 and 450 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1968 (SIC 68). For 1979–1989 defined as class 43 plus group 453 and 455 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980 (SIC 80).

[2] For 1963–75 defined as order V plus MLH 411 of the SIC 68. For 1979–89 defined as class 25 and 26 of the SIC 80.

[3] For 1963-75 defined as order VI less MLH 313 of the SIC 68. For 1979-89 defined as class 22 of the SIC 80.

[4] For 1963-75 defined as MLH 491, 492 and 496 of the SIC 68. For 1979–89 defined as class 48 of the SIC 80.

[5] Latest available 12-month period (quarter 2 1988 to quarter 1 1989).

[6] For 1963-75 manufacturing is defined as order 111 to order XIX of the SIC 68. For 1980–85 defined as division 2-4 of the SIC 80.

WALES

Conservation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress on his proposals for changes to the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission in Wales; and if he will publish the date by which he hopes such changes will be operational.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Detailed discussions with the statutory agencies concerned on the practical arrangements for establishing the new Countryside Council for Wales are continuing. Subject to parliamentary approval, the changes will take effect from 1 April 1991.

Health Service

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) to how many medical units in Wales he expects to award self-governing status in April 1991;

(2) if he will list those medical units in Wales which have expressed an interest in self-governing status.

Mr. Grist: Since to date no applications have been received from health units in Wales seeking self-governing status it is not possible to calculate how many will be agreed by April 1991.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has set a date by which medical units in Wales must express interest in applying for self-governing status.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has not set a deadline for the receipt of applications for self-governing status.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intends to award self-governing status to medical units in Wales other than acute hospitals with over 250 beds.

Mr. Grist: Whilst self-governing status is likely to be particularly appropriate to major acute hospitals, all hospitals and health units in Wales are potentially eligible.

Porthmadog Bypass

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement of his policy with regard to the construction of a bypass for the town of Porthmadog on the A487 trunk road; and whether a projected route exists for such a bypass.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: As indicated in "Roads in Wales —Progress and Plans for the 1990s" the case for improving the A487 at Porthmadog is under consideration. That is still the position. No route has been projected for a by-pass.

"Action on Litter"

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the additional cost on district councils in Wales which would arise from the full implementation of the proposals in the Government's White Paper entitled "Action on Litter", and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have made no specific estimate. We do not think that the cost of the proposals set out in the consultation paper need impose a major burden on local authorities since cleaning and other anti-litter measures are already an important part of their day-to-day activities.

In so far as there might be some additional cost, as with all new duties on local authorities, Ministers will take these into account in their deliberations on the revenue support grant.

Water Pollution

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the areas in Wales where domestic water supplies are affected by lead contamination.

Mr. Grist: All areas in Wales should, by the end of next month, comply with the lead standard in the EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption (80/778/EEC).

The new Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989 No. 1147) set a tighter standard for lead in drinking water than the EC directive, reflecting the Government's long-standing policy of reducing exposure to lead in the environment. These regulations provide that where there is a risk that even a single sample might exceed the standard, the water undertaker shall treat the water to remove the risk, if this is practical, or consider replacement of the lead piping. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has accepted an undertaking from Dwr Cymru that all supplies which might potentially breach the new standard will be identified and, where appropriate, remedial measures determined by April 1991. This exercise is in hand.

NHS Spending

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange for the total per capita spending on the National Health Service in Wales to be increased to the same amount as that of Scotland.

Mr. Grist: Both the health care needs of the population and the cost of providing appropriate services depend on many factors, some of which vary significantly between Wales and Scotland. To provide the same standard of health care does not require the same per capita expenditure in each country therefore, planned spending on the National Health Service in Wales in 1989-90 is £1,382·8 million (gross) which includes £10 million to fund the review body pay awards which were announced in February 1989 and £5 million additional provision towards the cost of implementing the NHS review. We are now spending over £37 per week per household on the National Health Service compared with £11 per week per household in 1978-79.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Angola

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will raise within the United Nations the new evidence of the atrocities perpetrated on SWAPO detainees in its prison camps in Angola, and that hundreds of Namibians are being prevented from returning to take part in the current elections under the special arrangements agreed to by the Administrator-General; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We have on a number of occasions raised with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and with the South West African People's Organisation the question of detainees held in Angola. We will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to trace those missing.

If the United Nations special representative certifies the elections to have been free and fair, it is vital that all sides accept that judgment, whatever the result.

Dr. Sadel Jawed Kadhum

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received as to the activities of Dr. Sadel Jawed Kadhum in relation to Iraqi intelligence matters.

Mr. Maude: None.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any member of his Department has ever communicated to persons outside his Department information concerning the relationship between Dr. Sadel Jawed Kadhum and Iraqi intelligence.

Mr. Maude: No.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any member of his Department has ever met Dr. Sadel Jawed Kadhum, director of Matrix Churchill, to discuss matters relating to Iraqi intelligence.

Mr. Maude: No.

Kampuchea

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* letters and *(b)* telephone calls have been received by his Department in the last three months concerning Government policy towards Kampuchea; and how many of these supported the policies of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Maude: We have received more than 3,600 letters and about 40 telephone calls over the last three months about our policy towards Cambodia. The majority of correspondents were critical of what they understood to be our policy.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council on 6 November.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I represented the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 6 November.

There was brief discussion, on the basis of a Presidency progress report, of work on the various aspects of Frontiers policy. Like the Presidency, my right hon. Friend stressed the importance of effective action against the drugs menace.

In a brief discussion of economic and monetary issues, the Presidency, member states and the Commission indicated that further work should take account of the United Kingdom paper "An Evolutionary Approach to Economic and Monetary Union".

The Council formally adopted the EC/United States steel voluntary restraint arrangement and discussed various other EC/United States trade issues, including the dispute on hormones in meat.

As a further part of its programme to assist economic reform in Poland and Hungary, the Council agreed to liberalise as from 1 January 1990 all discriminatory import restrictions applied against Poland and Hungary. The Council also agreed in principle to add both countries to the list of countries benefiting from the EC's generalised scheme of preferences.

The Commission reported on progress in the GATT Uruguay round. The Council confirmed the importance it attached to a successful outcome to the round and welcomed the acceptance of the EC's offer of Brussels as a venue for the final meeting.

The Council approved in principle the generalised scheme of preferences for 1990.

The Council discussed follow-up to the audio-visual conference in Paris in October.

In the margins of the Council, I attended a biennial meeting of the EC/Egypt Co-operation Council. Separately, and in advance, my right hon. Friend also had a separate meeting with the Egyptian Foreign Minister.

HEALTH

Salaries

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the salary of *(a)* a community health council secretary, *(b)* a hospital secretary and *(c)* a family practitioner committee administrator, or their equivalent grades for (i) 1974 and (ii) currently.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Community health council secretaries are paid on grades and payscales negotiated in the administrative and clerical staffs Whitley council. It is for employing authorities to grade individual posts according to their particular range of responsibilities and activity. Information is not held centrally on individual posts, but the majority at 1 April 1974 were graded scale 9 (salary range £2,856 to £3,552 per annum) and from 1 April 1989 grade 6 in a new grading system (£11,962-£13,994). Changes in NHS organisation and the introduction of general management mean that the posts of hospital secretary and family practitioner committee administrator have no equivalent in the current structure. I shall write to the hon. Member setting out past information on these posts and the nature of changes affecting them.

Shropshire Health Authority

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he expects the West Midlands regional health authority to allocate funds to the Shropshire health authority on the same basis of calculation applied by his Department to the regional allocation.

Mr. Freeman: Ultimately, district health authorities will be funded on broadly the same basis as regional health authorities, although district allocations may need to take account of additional factors which reflect local circumstances. Regional health authorities will be expected to manage a smooth and careful transition to the new arrangements for funding districts, over a period of several years.

Domiciliary Care (Scotland)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to meet representatives of Scottish local authorities to discuss the new arrangements regarding Department of Social Security payments to local authorities for domiciliary care, to be introduced in April 1991.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) have already met my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office to discuss community care. As part of preparations for implementing the Government's proposals for community care, Department of Health officials are holding a series of meetings with representatives of the local authority associations to discuss, among other matters, the arrangements for transferring to local authorities the resources which the Government would otherwise have provided to finance care through social security payments to people in residential and nursing homes. Representatives of COSLA have taken part in these discussions.

Water Fluoridation

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when his Department expects to confirm an indemnity to Yorkshire water authority in connection with the fluoridation of water supplies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Yorkshire Water has indicated that because of the interconnected nature of the water supply system, it is prepared to consider requests to add fluoride to the water supply in future only provided that requests are received from all district health authorities within its water region boundaries. Such unanimity has not been achieved. A new indemnity has therefore not been requested by Yorkshire Water.

HIV

Mr. Chris Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the interval between a person being infected with HIV and the time when HIV antibodies can be ascertained by testing.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is usually an interval of six to 12 weeks from infection with HIV to the development of antibodies detectable by routine screening methods. In some individuals the appearance of antibodies may be delayed, but in 95 per cent. of cases they are detectable within six months.

Women Doctors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women doctors are employed by the Trent regional health authority; how many are in *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time employment; and what are the required hours of work in each category.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As at 30 September 1988 Trent regional health authority employed 785 (whole-time equivalent) full-time and 160 (wte) part-time permanent paid female medical staff in the hospital and community health service.

For junior hospital doctors—that is, senior registrars, registrars, senior house officers and house officers—the standard hours are 40 per week. For consultants and other grades the figure is 38·5 hours. Part-time junior hospital staff are contracted for a maximum of 36 hours per week, hospital practitioners for 17·5 hours per week and consultants and others for 31·5 hours. In community medicine full-time clinical staff are contracted for 37 hours per week and part-time staff for a maximum of 30 hours.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the incidence of salmonella Manchester.

Mr. Freeman: The public health laboratory service, division of enteric pathogens confirmed 33 human isolations of salmonella Manchester between 1 January and 3 November this year. Annual totals of human isolations of salmonella Manchester confirmed by the division of enteric pathogens for the period 1981-88 were 2, 0, 34, 9, 4, 28, 0 and 2 respectively.

Rapes (HIV Infection)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women are known to his Department to have tested seropositive for HIV subsequent to their being raped.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally by the communicable disease surveillance centre. One case of HIV infection following rape in the United Kingdom has been reported in the *British Medical Journal* (16 September 1989).

Social Workers

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average number of social workers per 100,000 head of population in each of the London borough councils.

Mr. Freeman: The number of field social work staff as a rate per 100,000 population is set out in the table for each of the London boroughs and for the City of London.

London borough	*Rates per 100,000 population September 1988*
Camden (1984)	180·4
Greenwich	99·6
Hackney	99·1
Hammersmith	129·6
Islington	145·8
Kensington	162·7
Lambeth	155·4
Lewisham	132·2
Southwark	127·6
Tower Hamlets (1987)	124·1
Wandsworth	145·9
Westminster	152·2
City of London	527·8
Barking	48·5
Barnet	51·2
Bexley	49·2
Brent	86·7
Bromley	53·4
Croydon	47·2
Ealing	34·0
Enfield	74·5
Haringey	75·0
Harrow	90·7
Havering	45·0
Hillingdon	65·4
Hounslow	73·2
Kingston upon Thames (1978)	63·2
Merton	53·7
Newham	84·5
Redbridge	32·6
Richmond upon Thames	42·0
Sutton	72·7
Waltham Forest	105·0

The staff numbers are in whole-time equivalent terms and relate to returns for 30 September 1988. Where this return is not available, data from the most recent year's return has been used; the year of the return is shown.

Rates per 100,000 population are based on the mid-year population estimates for 1988. Where a previous year's return has been used, the appropriate year's population figure has also been used. Field social work staff includes field social work practitioners, community workers, trainee social workers, and social work (welfare) assistants.

Nineteen-eighty-eight data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Mental Health

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received during the past six months concerning the need to amend section 73 of the Mental Health Act 1983, relating to the discharge of part III patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: A number of representations have been received, all originating from the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds, or its local branches.

The effect of an amendment to the legislation such as is proposed would be to turn the clock back to the situation as it was before the 1983 Act. I am not aware of any widely held view that this would be desirable. This particular aspect of the change in the law, promulgated in 1983, followed the judgment given on 5 November 1981 in X *v* United Kingdom, in which the European Court of Human Rights held that under article 5(4) of the European convention, a detained patient has a right of periodic access to a judicial body to determine the justification for continued detention. A mental health review tribunal, having an advisory power only, did not constitute a judicial body.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many projects for women undergoing post-abortion trauma are funded by his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: One; the joint Royal College of General Practitioners and Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists study into "Attitudes to Pregnancy", which commenced in 1976.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce a requirement for clinics to inform his Department of the fees charged and monies collected for termination of pregnancy.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department already approves the general level of fees in the case of registered pregnancy advice bureaux, and nursing homes with more than six beds, or more than 25 per cent. of their total beds, approved for the use of abortion cases. Bureaux and nursing homes are required to issue receipts. Copies of these are examined by officials of the Department on inspection visits.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to require that the unborn child about to undergo abortion should be administered an anaesthetic prior to the operation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is entirely a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctor responsible.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to report to the ministries of justice in those countries which have time limits lower than the United Kingdom's the details of abortions which would violate their domestic laws.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. Medical treatment of such patients in this country is subject to the usual rules of confidentiality.

Visually Handicapped People

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress his Department has made on the guidance to accompany the new BD8 form; and to what extent that guidance will be based on the recommendations of the working group established in 1987.

Mr. Freeman: Work is currently in hand on the guidance to accompany the new form. The guidance will be based on the recommendations in the report "Co-ordinating Services for Visually Handicapped People" published earlier this year.

Pain Relief X-ray, Waltham Forest

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a central Government donation to Dr. Beverly Collett's appeal for a new pain relief X-ray machine in Waltham Forest health district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The distribution of resources to districts is a matter for regional health authorities. It is up to district health authorities to decide how best to allocate the resources available to them in the light of local health care needs and circumstances.

Life-saving Equipment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what bids he has received from Waltham Forest district health authority for provision of essential life-saving equipment at Whipps Cross hospital; what bids have been met; and what consideration he has given to the replacement life of current equipment at that hospital, and its implications for funding.

Mr. Freeman: The level of provision of health care services within a particular area is a matter for the health authority concerned, which is best able to judge the priorities for provision of services and equipment in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Community Care

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if his Department has drawn up any guidelines for the implementation of section 7 of the Disabled Person's (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1989; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if his Department has received any guidelines drawn up by disability organisations for the implementation of section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

We have received proposed guidelines from a disability organisation for the implementation of section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. The Government's position on the implementation of section 7 will be made clear in the White Paper on Community Care which will be published shortly.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of psychiatric patients discharged from hospitals in the Greater London area into community care in each of the last three years.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not readily available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the role of community nurse managers and by whom they will be employed under the Government's proposals for care in the community.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Community nurse managers will continue to have central responsibility for the management of the community nursing services. The Government's proposals for community care will not affect their employment position.

Haemophiliacs (AIDS)

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received recent representations from the Haemophilia Society regarding compensation to haemophilia sufferers who contracted AIDS as a result of contaminated blood supplied to them through the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Representations have been received from the Haemophilia Society about compensation for people with haemophilia and HIV infection-AIDS.

Some haemophiliacs are now pursuing compensation through the courts and I am advised that this matter is now sub-judice.

Carl McGoldrick

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the reason for the delay in replying to the letter of 25 August from the hon. Member for Copeland asking for publication of the inquiry report into the death of Carl McGoldrick; when copies of the report will be made available; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have written to the hon. Member.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received recent representations from the trade union movement about the ambulance drivers' dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Representations have been received by the Department from trade unions on the staff side of the ambulance Whitley councils. Representations have also been received from the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel, which claims to have within its membership over 20 per cent. of all ambulance personnel but is not represented on the staff side of the Whitley councils. No recent representations have been received from elsewhere in the trade union movement.

Foster Parents

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue instructions to local authority social services departments that their race-matching policy for children needing foster parents shall not be retrospective and that children happily placed with foster parents over a long period shall not be removed solely for racial reasons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authorities have a statutory duty to give first consideration to the need to promote and safeguard the welfare of each child in care. A child's racial origin, cultural background and religion are important factors to be taken into account. But any decision made about a child on the basis of generalised and rigidly applied rules would not accord with the authority's duty to the child. It follows that a child should not be removed from a foster placement which is otherwise satisfactory solely because of the foster parents' race. We are considering what further guidance is needed to make this clear.

Medical Research

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to review the legislative control of non-National Health Service medical research practices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 9 November 1989]:* The Government have no general proposals for legislation in this area. However, proposals for dealing with embryo research are set out in the White Paper "Human Fertilisation and Embryology: A Framework for Legislation". We intend to bring forward legislation on this as soon as possible.

Drugs (Development and Prescription)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new safeguards he intends to introduce for the development and the prescribing of drugs that act on the brain's 5HT receptors.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 9 November 1989]:* Satisfactory controls already exist under the Medicines Act to ensure that newly developed drugs are examined for safety quality and efficacy by the Committee on Safety of Medicines before a product licence is granted. Doctors exercise clinical judgment in deciding whether to prescribe new drugs and in doing so have regard to information from a wide variety of sources including product data sheets. We have no plans at present to introduce any further safeguards.

ENERGY

Sellafield

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from Länder administrations in the Federal Republic of Germany on health and safety standards at BNF Sellafield in relation to contracts with Federal German Utilities to reprocess spent fuel at Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No such representations have been made.

Power Stations (Coal)

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list for each year from 1980 to 1988, inclusive, the annual figure for consumption of coal at *(a)* Cottam, *(b)* High Marnham and *(c)* West Burton power stations in Nottinghamshire; how many tons of this coal was supplied from Harworth colliery, Bevercoats colliery, Shireoaks-Steetley colliery and Manton colliery in Nottinghamshire; and how much from other United Kingdom collieries or imports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Arrangements for the delivery of coal from individual collieries to power stations are a matter for the day-to-day management of the Central Electricity Generating Board and British Coal. I am asking the chairmen to write to the hon. Member.

Quality Industrial Users Scheme

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has carried out on the impact of privatisation of the electricity supply industry on the cost of electricity to large industrial users currently eligible for QUICS.

Mr. Spicer: The terms on which electricity is supplied after privatisation are a matter for negotiation between customers and their suppliers, subject to applicable statutory and licence obligations.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what consultations he has had with the chairmen of the 12 area boards about the impact on electricity prices of withdrawing Magnox and advanced gas-cooled reactors from the sale of the generating companies after vesting day under the Electricity Act;

(2) what consultations he has had with the chairmen of the 12 area boards about the withdrawal of nuclear power stations from the privatisation of the electricity generators under the terms of the Electricity Act 1989;

(3) what consultations he has had with the 12 area board chairmen in the electricity supply industry on the signing of contracts for nuclear power with the generating boards and companies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I have discussions from time to time with area board chairmen on a wide range of issues.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his current estimate of the date for starting negotiations on nuclear power contracts between the Central Electricity Generating Board and its successor generating companies and the area boards;

(2) what is his latest estimate for the completion date of negotiations of nuclear power contracts between the Central Electricity Generating Board or National Power and the area boards;

(3) what is his latest estimate of the length of time required for negotiating nuclear power contracts between the nuclear generating companies and boards and the area boards.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Negotiations on nuclear contracts are under way. I hope they will be brought to a conclusion as soon as possible.

Electricity (Sale of Assets)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his latest estimate of the net proceeds of the sale of the assets of the electricity supply industry under the terms of the Electricity Act;

(2) what is his latest estimate of the proceeds from the sale of the electricity supply industry;

(3) what is his current estimate of the Exchequer proceeds from the sale of the 12 area boards under the terms of the Electricity Act 1989, net of flotation and advertising costs;

(4) what is his current estimate of the Exchequer proceeds from the sale of the generating companies under the terms of the Electricity Act 1989 net of all flotation and advertising costs.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The market value of the generating companies and distribution companies will depend on a wide range of factors including the profitability of the companies, their capital structures, their future prospects and the state of the market. It is therefore too early to estimate the likely proceeds for the sale of the companies.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most up-to-date estimate of the total cost of decommissioning and nuclear waste management for the advanced gas-cooled reactors in England and Scotland.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are matters for the CEGB and SSEB. I have asked the chairmen to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has for capping the liability of National Power to decommissioning and nuclear waste management costs after vesting day under the terms of the Electricity Act.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the statement that my right hon. Friend made on 9 November at column 1175.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his current estimate for the completion of the privatisation of the electricity supply industry under the terms of the Electricity Act 1989.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Our aim remains to privatise the industry within the lifetime of this Parliament.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his current estimate of the date for flotation of the electricity generating companies under the terms of the Electricity Act;

(2) what is his current estimate of the proportion of the total assets of the electricity supply industry of Great Britain that will have been privatised under the terms of the Electricity Act by the end of *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government intend to float the successors to the area boards in the autumn of 1990, and to bring National Power and PowerGen to the market in the first half of 1991.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his current estimate of the date of vesting day under the Electricity Act.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Our aim is to vest the new structure of the industry at the end of March 1990.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the level of the non-fossil fuel quota in England and Wales under the terms of the Electricity Act 1989.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy on 9 November.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most up-to-date estimate of the level of tax losses to be carried forward in the balance sheets of the Central Electricity Generating Board and its successor generating companies under the terms of the Electricity Act.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The tax position of the CEGB is a matter for the board and the Inland Revenue, and is currently the subject of discussions between the two. The level of tax losses available to the successor companies will be determined in accordance with schedule 11 of the Electricity Act.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most up-to-date estimate on the level of capital write-offs to be made to the balance sheets of the Central Electricity Generating Board and its succcessor generating companies under the terms of the Electricity Act.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Asset values in the acccounts of the CEGB and its successor companies are a matter for the bodies concerned and their respective auditors.

Electricity Council

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his current estimate of the date for the abolition of the Electricity Council under the terms of the Electricity Act 1989.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There will be certain residual and transitional operations which the Electricity Council will not be able to complete before the transfer date. The Electricity Act 1989 therefore provides for the council's continued existence until such operations are completed, when it will be dissolved by order.

The transitional period between the transfer date and the dissolution of the council is likely to be of several years' duration.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce the average level of change in electricity prices in England and Wales for the first quarter of 1990, relative to the 1 April to 31 December 1989 level.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the Electricity Council. I shall ask the chairman of the council to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce the terms of the bulk supply tariff agreement for the first quarter of 1990 between the area electricity boards and the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Spicer: This is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I shall ask the Chairman of the CEGB to write to the hon. Member.

EMPLOYMENT

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has concluded his inquiry into the future supply of occupational therapists; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 November 1989]*: I have been asked to reply.

We will not have the manpower planning advisory groups' report on the future supply of occupational therapists until spring next year. I am aware of the recent publication of the report, "Occupational Therapy, An Emerging Profession In Health Care", by a commission headed by Louis Blom-Cooper QC. This report is one of a number of topics that will be discussed with the College of Occupational Therapists when my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health meets it later this month.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Expenditure

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will give *(a)* the total public expenditure for each year from 1978-79 to 1989-90 showing the cost of each service in real terms and also as a percentage of the total and *(b)* the percentage growth of each service and of total expenditure in real terms.

Mr. Lamont: A breakdown of the public expenditure planning total by function for the years 1978-79 to 1989-90 in real terms (base year 1987-88), from which percentage changes can be derived, was given in table 21.4.7 of chapter 21 of the 1989 public expenditure White Paper (Cm 621). The proportions of total departmental spending devoted to particular functions was given in table 21.4.8 of the same publication.

The figures in both these tables are based on the definition of the planning total used in the 1988 and earlier public expenditure surveys. As announced in Cm 441, the Government have decided to change the definition of the planning total. The plans to be published in the Autumn Statement will be on the new definition.

Investment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the percentage rate of growth of business investment for each year from 1979 to 1989 on the assumption that all firms transferred from the public sector to the private sector in the decade had been in the private sector from before 1979;

(2) what is the percentage rate of growth of capital investment for each year from 1979 to 1989 on the assumption that all firms transferred from the public sector to the private sector in the decade had been in the private sector from before 1979;

(3) what is the year by year rate of growth of *(a)* business investment in the United Kingdom for each year 1979 to 1989, *(b)* business investment in the United Kingdom for each year 1979 to 1989, excluding all investment by firms transferred from the public sector to the private sector during the decade, *(c)* capital investment by manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom for each year from 1979 to 1989 and *(d)* capital investment by manufacturing industry from 1979 to 1989, excluding all firms transferred from the public sector to the private sector during the decade.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 November 1989]*: For reasons of confidentiality, information of the kind requested relating to the movement of firms between sectors cannot be published. Estimates of total investment in fixed capital of public and private sector investment and of investment by manufacturing industry are given in chapter 13 of the 1989 edition of "United Kingdom National Accounts". Estimates, from 1979, of business investment in total are at current prices. They are given in the table.

Business investment [1] *at current market prices, annual per cent. growth rates*

	Per cent.
1979	17·6
1980	11·6
1981	−0·3
1982	6·8
1983	5·1
1984	13·4
1985	12·8
1986	3·1
1987	15·8
1988	22·1

[1] Business investment is defined as private sector and public corporations gross domestic fixed capital formation excluding purchases less sales of land and existing buildings and private sector investment in dwellings.

Agricultural Set-aside Schemes

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the costs to the Exchequer of set-aside schemes, showing income received from the EEC expenditure to farmers and the net expenditure saving to the Exchequer.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

The expected cost to the Exchequer of payments in the current financial year is about £11 million, of which approximately 42 per cent. is reimbursable from the European guidance and guarantee fund. The net expenditure saving to the Exchequer depends on a number of factors: I will be in a better position to assess this once I have the results of an economic evaluation of the first year of the scheme. This evaluation is currently in progress.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Phytophthora Infestans

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been carried out in his Department into phytophthora infestans and with what result.

Mr. Maclean: Research conducted post-war by the advisory services has demonstrated the relationship between potato blight, caused by the fungus phytophthora infestans, and the economics of yield, and has determined the effects of weather on the proliferation of the disease from primary sources of infection in or near crops. This work has led to the formulation, in collaboration with the Meteorological Office, of weather-based schemes to forecast the initiation of epidemics and the need to begin protective programmes of fungicide sprays to control the disease.

The most recent research has been concerned with the control of potato blight with fungicides representing groups with different modes of action. Recently the main objective has been to monitor the distribution and incidence of strains of p. infestans resistant to the commonly used systemic fungicides and to evaluate the efficacy of proprietary products against natural epidemics in the field.

Since 1986, resistance to phenylamide fungicides has been widespread in England and Wales. In 1988 and 1989, about 80 per cent. of potato blight samples contained p. infestans resistant to phenylamides. Consequently, the phenylamide component of fungicides for the control of potato blight has become unreliable. There have been no observations of resistance developing to other fungicide groups. Research has led to recommendations for the use of fungicides which will control the disease in the presence of phenylamide-resistance.

The effect of the timing of fungicide sprays in relation to irrigation has also been investigated. Applications of the fungicide mancozeb one day before, one day after or five days after irrigation were equally effective in controlling potato blight.

A survey of British potato crops (1986 and 1987) has shown that strains of p. infestans capable of stimulating sexual reproduction have entered the country. The risks of consequent genetic evolution towards more virulent strains of the pathogen, towards the development of insensitivity of fungicides, and towards the ability of such strains to persist in soil as viable spores are being evaluated.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has also funded work, co-ordinated by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, on the evaluation of new varieties of potatoes. This work includes an assessment of varietal resistance to p. infestans, the results of which are made available in the National Institute of Agricultural Botany farmer's leaflet "Recommended Varieties of Potatoes."

Straw and Stubble Burning

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to stop straw and stubble burning by farmers on their land in 1990.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 9 November 1989 to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter), *Official Report,* column *1158.*

EC (Guarantees)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the relative proportions of expenditure, in percentage terms, by the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund on *(a)* guarantee, and *(b)* guidance sections for each of the last five years, for (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) the European Community as a whole.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of Guarantee/Guidance Expenditure for United Kingdom and European Community as a whole (1984-88)

	Guarantee	*Guidance*	*Total*
1984			
United Kingdom	94·66	5·34	100
European Community	96·43	3·57	100
1985			
United Kingdom	94·18	5·82	100
European Community	96·48	3·52	100
1986			
United Kingdom	95·87	4·19	100
European Community	96·62	3·38	100
1987			
United Kingdom	95·22	4·78	100
European Community	96·19	3·81	100
1988			
United Kingdom	95·93	4·07	100
European Community	96·04	3·96	100

Source: Financial reports on the E.A.G.G.F.

EC (Financial Support)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what financial support was given to agriculture in each of the member states of the European Economic Community in each of the last three years.

Mr. Maclean: Payments to member states for agricultural support under the common agricultural policy from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund (EAGGF) in each of the last three years were as follows:

EAGGF payments to member states for budget years 1986-88

million ecu

	1986	*1987*	*1988*
Belgium	998·20	842·60	739·40
Denmark	1,087·60	1,077·80	1,226·10
Germany	4,510·10	4,125·20	5,036·10
Greece	1,476·50	1,421·80	1,452·30
Spain	271·45	626·70	1,977·70
France	5,635·80	5,908·40	6,491·10
Ireland	1,279·60	1,047·60	1,163·00
Italy	3,241·30	4,085·30	4,549·30
Luxembourg	4·40	6·00	5·30
Netherlands	2,295·70	2,746·30	3,837·00
Portugal	30·80	177·10	257·40
United Kingdom	2,073·60	1,836·50	2,077·60
Total EC	22,910·80	23,876·40	28,829·80

Source: Financial reports on the EAGGF.

Nuvan 500

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy in regard to the use of the chemical Nuvan 500 in fish farming.

Mr. Curry: Aquagard sea lice treatment (formerly Nuvan fish 500 EC) is licensed under the Medicines Act 1968 for the treatment of farmed salmon. The terms of the licence include strict conditions which must be observed by the user and are set out in the product labels. These include the need first to obtain a discharge consent from the local water authority. The licence is subject to review in June 1990.

Eggs

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the incidence of release of eggs on to the open market after being found by the port authority to be salmonella contaminated.

Mr. Curry: The arrangements for sampling imported eggs for salmonella contamination were explained in my answer to the hon. Member for East Lothian of 1 November, at column *210*. Eggs are not detained and therefore the question of them being released (or not) when the test results become available does not arise.

PCBs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in which British coastal waters the greatest contamination of PCBs have been discovered.

Mr. Curry: As a consequence of world-wide PCB use and release PCBs can be detected in most marine species, using sensitive analytical techniques. Within British coastal waters levels are generally highest in the north-east Irish sea/Liverpool bay area.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence of PCB contamination of British coastal waters has been discovered following the analysis of dead cetaceans.

Mr. Curry: Concentrations of PCBs in British coastal waters and cetaceans reflect inputs from world-wide sources. The analyses of dead cetaceans give no grounds for suspicion that PCB concentrations found were caused by a particular local discharge.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 159**

SESSION 1988–89

30th October—10th November 1989

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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